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**Analysis of strategies, problems and potentials for the
expansion of Japan's rural tourism market**

- case study Beppu city -

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*Alle mie nonne,
mamma, babbo e Gabri*

ABSTRACT

The tourism sector in Japan accounts for 7.3% of the GDP. For the most part, tourists tend to focus on well-known metropolitan areas, but lately the general interest of tourists is pushing them to destinations with more cultural attractions, such as the suburbs. This study focuses on a Japanese peripheral town that is well known nationally as a tourist destination but still little known internationally: the city of Beppu.

The first objective of this study is to see if the city of Beppu can expand its market on an international level and grow economically.

To conduct the research, in chapter 2 was conducted a qualitative analysis on the city through in-person visits and two interviews with local hotel entrepreneurs. The main problems that result from the analysis on Beppu are two: first, tourists stay one or maximum two nights, which keeps the amount they spend locally low; second, foreign tourists are 40% Korean. This dependence on Korea has led to a crisis in the industry in 2019, as the number of Korean tourists who arrived in Beppu dropped by 43%.

The second part aims to verify whether Italian tourists can be a solution to the problems the city is experiencing. Can they be an alternative to Koreans? Would they spend longer overnights and thus higher expenses?

To answer these questions and ascertain the possible interest of Italians in Beppu's offering, in chapter 3 was made a quantitative analysis on the needs and interests of Italians through an online questionnaire.

Finally, based on the data collected, were formulated strategies that could help grow the connection between Beppu City and Italian tourists and thus grow Beppu's economy.

Keywords: Tourism, Japan, Beppu, Italian tourists, rural tourism

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要旨

観光産業とそれが生み出す雇用は近年着実な成長を遂げており、2019年の世界GDPに占める同分野の影響力は10.3%と、国際的な知名度も高まっている。世界各国は、できるだけ多くの観光客を呼び込むために戦略を練っているが、その中でも日本は際立っており、2019年の旅行・観光業のGDPへの総貢献率は7.3%、2617億米ドル（USD）に達する。現在、この国を旅行する最も多くの外国人観光客は人気エリアへ行きがちだが、近年では、本調査が対象とするような、より地方のエリアへの関心も高まっている。

本研究の目的は、別府という周辺都市がイタリア人観光客にとって魅力的な旅行先になれるかどうかを検証することである。

国内的にも韓国人にとってもよく知られているが、国際的にはほとんど知られていないこの町に注目した理由は、修士課程で別府市の隣にある大分大学に留学していたからである。この町を何度も訪問して、この地域には大きなポテンシャルがあることに気がついた。しかし、同時に、韓国人以外の外国人観光客の少なさを目の当たりにし、なぜ国際的に認知されていないのかを調査することにしたのである。

この問いに答えるため、まず、このエリアの色々な観光スポットを実際に訪れて現地調査を行った。次に地元ホテル業界の代表者2人とのインタビューを行った。別府市のホテル業界が置かれている現状、Covid-19で経験した困難、そして成長のための目標や戦略についてのデータを市民から直接収集した。

別府市に関する情報を収集した後、需要と供給が一致しているかどうかを確認するために、イタリア人にオンラインアンケート調査をした。

本論文は4つの章に分かれている。そして、2つの調査段階（まず質的調査、次に量的調査）で使用した方法論を紹介している。最後に付録として、アンケートの質問事項を掲載している。

第 1 章の第 1 セクションでは、観光産業全般について分析し、社会と世界経済に対するプラスとマイナスの影響について研究している。第 2 セクションでは、グローバルな視点から、日本に焦点を当てたナショナルな視点へと移行する。ここでは、国際的な意味での観光セクターを成長させるために、地方自治体が長年にわたって実施してきた戦略について分析する。第 3 セクションでは、地域、県、そして都市計画へと進む。九州地方、大分県、別府市の観光がもたらす経済への影響と、別府市の成長のために自治体を実施した戦略について詳しく述べている。本章の最後では、ここまでのセクションの構造的なレベルを受け継ぎながら、コロナがこの分野に及ぼした影響について扱っている。

第 2 章は、別府市とその供給に焦点を当てる。特に、市の公式ブログで紹介されている情報を分析し、どのようなデータが不足しているのかを明らかにすることを試みた。さらに、二つのインタビューから得られた結果を紹介する。

第 3 章では、イタリア人観光客と日本、九州、そして大分県との関係に焦点を当て、アンケートの結果を分析した。

最後に、イタリア人の希望やニーズを別府市が提供しているかどうかを明らかにする。そして、不足している点を実施するためのいくつかの戦略を補足する。

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

Tourism and the jobs it generates report steady growth in recent years, and with the sector's influence on global GDP at 10.3% in 2019, it has gained increasing visibility internationally. World countries are trying to refine strategies to succeed in attracting as many tourists as possible and, among them, Japan stands out, where the Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in 2019 is 7.3%, or 261.7 billion of U.S. dollars (USD). Currently, the largest number of international tourists traveling to this country spend their vacations in a few popular areas, but in recent years there has been growing interest in more rural areas, such as the one this research focuses on.

The ultimate goal of this research is to see if the suburban town of Beppu could be an attractive destination for Italian tourists.

The reason for focusing on this town, which is mostly unknown internationally although famous domestically and in the Korean market, can be traced back to the period of study at Oita University, adjacent to Beppu, conducted during the master's degree program. During various visits to this town were observed the great potential of the area and at the same time the small presence of foreign tourists outside of Koreans, and it was decided to investigate why it was not recognized internationally.

In order to answer this question, in the first phase were conducted site surveys through firsthand visits to some tourist attractions and then two interviews with two representatives of the local hotel industry, so that data could be gathered on the current situation the tourism industry incurs in Beppu, the difficulties experienced during Covid-19, and finally the goals and strategies for growth directly from the local community.

Once the information concerning Beppu was collected, it was presented to the Italians through an online questionnaire so as to see if the supply and demand matched.

The thesis is divided into 4 chapters plus a first part that introduces the methodology used in the two phases of research, first the qualitative and then the quantitative. At the end in the appendix A and B are provided the English and the Japanese version of the interview questions, while the appendix C shows the questionnaire questions.

In paragraph one of the first chapter there is a general analysis of the tourism industry, with the study of its positive and negative effects on societies and the world economy. In paragraph two it moves from a global to a national perspective, with a focus on Japan. Here it was analyzed the strategies implemented over the years by local authorities to grow the industry in an international sense. The section 3 moves to a regional, prefectural and finally city perspective. In detail, are studied the effects on the economy brought by tourism in the Kyushu region, Oita prefecture and the town of Beppu, followed by the strategies implemented by the authorities to grow the latter. The last part of the chapter deals with the effects Covid-19 has had on the sector, picking up the structural levels of the previous sections.

Chapter two focuses on Beppu and its supply side. In particular, information that is presented on official city blogs is analyzed and an attempt is made to identify what data are missing. In addition, the results obtained during the two interviews are presented.

Chapter three focuses on Italian tourists, their relations with Japan, Kyushu, and Oita, and analyzes the results of the questionnaire.

At the end there are conclusions that test the consistency between the desires and needs of Italians with what Beppu has to offer, supplemented by some strategies that aim to implement the missing points.

Methodology

As the aim of this research is to study the strategies that the local entrepreneurs are pursuing to expand the offer of the city and to see if Beppu could be suitable for the Italian market, the research method is chosen to be qualitative by doing interviews to Beppu's hotel owners, that allow to gather richer and more detailed information about the studied subject, and quantitative by making an online questionnaire to Italians to understand their needs and preferences regarding their choice of travel destinations.

Qualitative

The Chapter 2 will present the offerings of Beppu city through several site visits conducted personally and through two interviews with two representatives of the local hotel industry, which were introduced by Professor Kunio Ikari¹.

From these interviews were extracted information about: 1) services offered by the facilities analyzed; 2) the situation during the Coronavirus crisis and the strategies the local entrepreneurs adopted to overcome the crisis period and 3) the strategies they are devising to expand their businesses in both, domestic and foreign markets.

The two interviewees are respectively Mr. Jyunya HANADA, the host of the guesthouse "In Bloom Beppu" and Mr. Akihiko HAYASHI, the executive director of the "Sekiya Resort", that includes three structures: Terrace Midobaru, Gallery Midobaru and Bettei Haruki.

The first interview was held online on the zoom platform on 7th of December 2022, recorded by the same platform. The second one was held in presence in the Galleria Midobaru² on 14th of December 2022 and was recorded via a smartphone application. Both interviews were conducted in Japanese with the assistance of a Japanese student, Momoka KOYAMA³, who provided assistance in improving the clarification of the data acquired during the interviews.

The chosen form for the interviews was semi-structured and composed of three parts with 10 questions each: the first one was about general questions (as services offered in the

¹ Professor at the Department of Economics at Oita University.

² Located in Oita Prefecture, Beppu city.

³ Second year student at the Department of Economy in Oita University.

structure, kind of guests etc.), the second part was about Covid-19 related problems (how did this crisis infect the structure, measures taken by the hotel etc.) and the last one was about the strategies (principal problems of tourism in Beppu, future strategies to improve tourists etc.).

The interview cover letter with related semi-structured questions can be found in appendix A, with the English version, and in the appendix B for the Japanese one.

Quantitative

Chapter 3 reports the results of the study done to understand what the preferences of Italian tourists going abroad are and whether they match what the city of Beppu offers.

A questionnaire was conducted through the Microsoft Forms platform and disseminated through social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn). The results were registered and analyzed through Microsoft Excel.

The research was conducted in Italian because it was directed at studying the habits of Italian tourists, and the questionnaire can be found in appendix C section.

The number of responses recorded between 6th March 2023 and 11th March 2023 (form closing day) was 400.

The questionnaire included a total maximum number of questions of 27. Depending on the candidate and the answers he/she gave, however, the length of the form could change. The average time taken to answer was 9 minutes and 20 seconds.

The questionnaire had 3 different sections:

1) contained 7 general questions mandatory for all participants, aimed at understanding general attitudes about travel (what kind of experience people prefers, how people choose their travel destination, etc.);

2) consists of a maximum of 14 questions focused on Japan, to test or refute Italians' interest in the country in question, understand what elements they like or dislike, etc.

In order not to make the questionnaire too long and make those involved lose interest, it was decided to ask for participants' willingness to continue the questionnaire (for a

maximum of 2 minutes) or to stop their response. Out of 400 total people, only 38 chose not to continue with the questionnaire.

3) Specifically concerns the city of Beppu, knowledge of the town is tested (and if so, an attempt is made to understand how it came about), and some specific places in the area are presented through photos. The last question asks whether or not there is an interest in traveling to this destination.

CHAPTER 1: TOURISM SECTOR

1.1 Tourism sector before Coronavirus pandemic

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)⁴, tourism sector in 2019 represented 10.3% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), corresponding to 9.8 trillion of American dollars (USD) per year⁵. Figure 1 shows that this sector has experienced a constant growth in his contribution to global GDP of almost 5% per year from 2000s (with the exception of the 2008-2009 crisis), creating up to 330 million of jobs in 2019, making it one of the most important tools against global poverty.

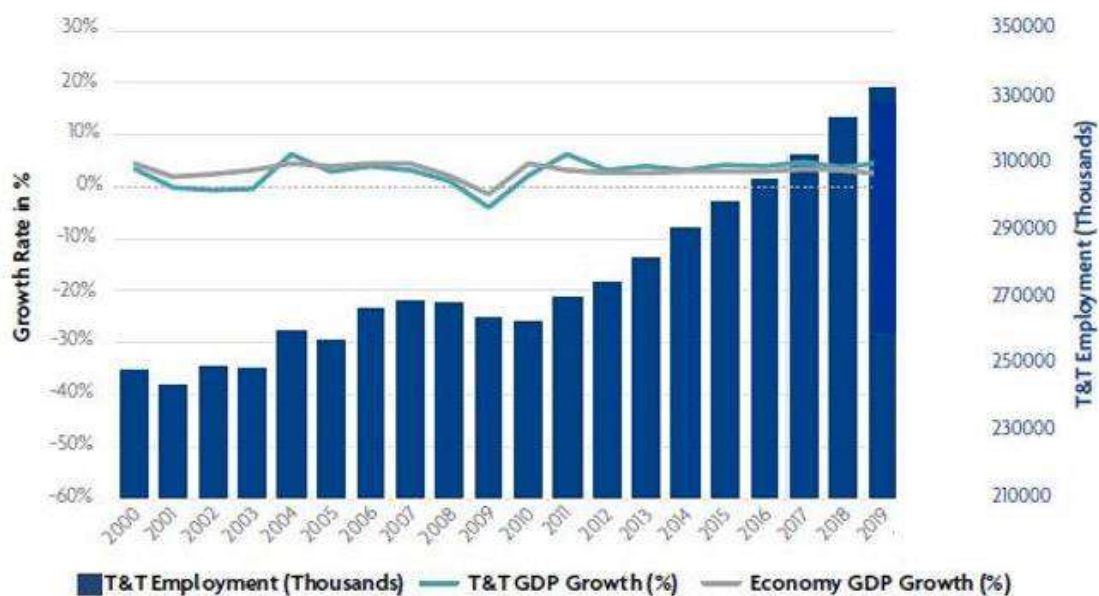


Figure 1, Travel and tourism global economic impact from 2000 to 2019 - Source: World travel and tourism council

Many studies have been carried out in recent years to understand the relationship between tourism and economic growth. The results of these studies can be grouped into four theories: 1) it is tourism that drives a country's economy; 2) it is economic growth that drives an increase in tourism; 3) their relationship is bilateral; 4) there is no connection between them. This literature is summarized by Odhiambo & Gwenthure⁶, who support the theory that it is tourism that provides a stimulus to a country's economy.

⁴ WTTC is a forum for the travel and tourism industry. It consists in members of the global business community and works with government to raise awareness about the travel and tourism industry. Every year produces reports on the economic and employment impact of Travel & Tourism for 185 countries/economies and 25 geographic or economic regions in the world in collaboration with Oxford Economics, quantifies the direct and total impact of Travel & Tourism on global economies in terms of GDP and employment growth.

⁵ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

⁶ (Odhiambo & Gwenthure, 2017).

Following their idea that it is tourism that influences the economy, they identify four types of effects that this sector produces on the system, defined as “direct”, “indirect”, “induced” and “economic and social”⁷, that are summarized in Figure 2.

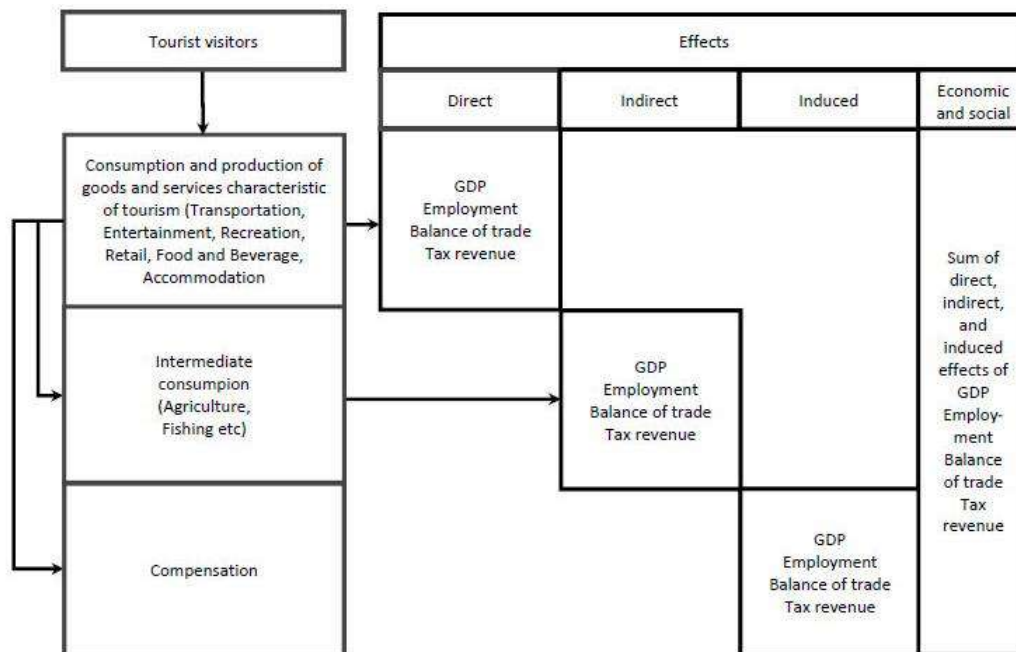


Figure 2, Impact of tourism on economic growth - Source: Odhiambo & Gwenhure, 2017.

The use of goods and services by incoming tourists represents the most easily visible effects of tourism on a country’s economy, thus defined “direct”. On the other hand, indirect effects are those that produces the goods and services needed by the tourists. For example, if one considers the consumption of food at restaurants as a direct effect of the presence of tourists, there is an indirect effect on the agriculture that provides the food that is consumed. The “induced” effects are those resulting from the taxes paid to the state by all those involved in the previous two categories. Lastly, the economic and social effects are the final result that includes all the elements analyzed above.

As evidenced by Gwenhure and Odhiambo, the connection between tourism and economic growth has multiple outcomes: it implements the amount of foreign capital in the state coffers, creates jobs and improves social inclusion, revitalizes rural areas,

⁷ (Odhiambo & Gwenhure, 2017).

stimulates infrastructure construction and increases exports⁸. Each of these elements drives economic and social improvements for national and local communities.

The income of international cash provided by international tourists can be used to pay the import of good and services necessary for the host country. The presence of foreign tourists increases the foreign currency flowing into the state coffers, which becomes a very useful tool in the hands of the Central Bank when it sees the need to intervene to stabilize the local currency⁹.

As communicated in the annual report of the World Travel & Tourism Council¹⁰, this sector involved up to 330 million workers worldwide in 2019, making it a key player in solving problems related to social inclusion, by giving work to those people for whom it is usually more difficult to find employment, such as women, young people, elderly or minorities¹¹, that are 54% of all employees¹². Nowadays the tourism sector is moving away from the mass tourism to the big cities, seeing a significant growth of interest in cultural tourism, representing 56% of total destinations in 2019¹³. Many travelers start to prefer remote areas of the world or to the hidden corners of large cities as destinations for their trips, showing interest not only in the most famous tourist spots, but also in activities and experiences related to local culture¹⁴. As a result of this change in the attitudes of tourists who demand more truthful experiences when visiting a particular place, the protagonists of these local realities who can easily answer their needs are in great demand, and often correspond to the above mentioned categories.

Particularly speaking about woman, the World Tourism Organization¹⁵ defines tourism as *“having a pivotal role to play in achieving the objectives at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the commitments to gender equality*

⁸ (Odhiambo & Gwenthure, 2017).

⁹ These “foreign exchange interventions” have been conducted during these years by many countries, including Japan (日本銀行, 2018), which has thus been able to manage domestic inflation by buying or selling foreign exchange reserves, leading to an increase or decrease in the value of its currency.

¹⁰ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

¹¹ (Comerio & Strozzi, 2018).

¹² (World Travel & Tourism Council).

¹³ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019).

¹⁴ (Arzeni, 2009).

¹⁵ The World Tourism Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations that coordinates tourism policies and promotes the development of responsible and sustainable tourism.

and the empowerment of women of Sustainable Development Goal 5¹⁶”¹⁷. At the moment, in the Asia Pacific region the woman engaged in tourism-related activities are 53% of the total employees¹⁸, making the tourism sector an important potential starting point for women’s self-determination. The reasons for these performances, according to the World Bank, lie in the nature of the sector, that requires “less emphasis on formal education and training, more emphasis on personal and hospitality skills, flexible job opportunities and more options for entrepreneurship that do not require a lot of initial funding”¹⁹.

The tourism sector also contributes to the development of infrastructure and the improvement of the lifestyle of local communities. In order to attract tourists, satisfy their needs and ensure their return, local governments have to ensure the construction of infrastructure such as roads, healthcare services and adequate availability of public transportation. Furthermore, also activities that entertain tourists are required and created, such as sporting events, theatrical performances or other social events. In recent years, there has also been a growing interest in cultural tourism, which sees the need for authorities to pay attention to and care for local traditions, such as musical or architectural ones²⁰. All these elements gradually become available to local communities, generating a virtuous circle of social welfare and economic growth available to everyone.

This is one of the reasons why countries want to host global events as Olympics Games or World Cup. These global scale events generate a big number of incoming tourists concentrated at a single time, necessitating a very high investment in the construction of all the aforementioned infrastructures. These events do not always generate enough profit to cover the costs of construction and organization, but if consider their contribution to the image of the host country, to the infrastructure that local communities will obtain and other factors such as the increase of number of jobs created during the preparation process, it becomes easier to understand why different nations want to get this task. In addition, the media visibility that these global events provide must also be considered. For example, the 2002 FIFA World Cup hosted by Japan and Korea recorded over 21 billion viewers

¹⁶ Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5 or Global Goal 5) concerns gender equality and is fifth of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by United Nations in 2015.

¹⁷ (World Tourism Organization, n.d.).

¹⁸ (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019).

¹⁹ (World Bank, 2017).

²⁰ (Zaei & Zaei, 2013).

in over 210 countries²¹, and the Tokyo Olympics Games of 2020 generated 28 billion of viewers plus almost 18 billion of engagements in the social media, and the International Olympic Committee described Tokyo 2020 as “a watershed moment in the history of Olympic broadcasting with more content made available to fans throughout the world on more screens than ever before through TV, digital streaming, websites, apps and social media”²².

Another important aspect of tourism’s contribution to the growth of a country concerns the export sector. In fact, if a place becomes famous as tourist spot, whether due to cultural or other interest, people who have already visited it or would like to visit it will gain an interest in buy local products, thus increasing the community’s profits even from distance. At the same time, the possibility to see, touch or taste some typical aspect of a country, makes people more interested in visiting it, generating a growth in tourism sector. This was for example one of the strategies of the Japanese government for attracting more tourists in Japan during the post-war era.

Of course there are important differences in the measure with which tourism affects the economy of different world regions. As it is shown in Figure 3, the tourism sector in 2019 brought better results in terms of revenue and job creation in that areas of the world where the GDP level is higher, like Asia Pacific, United States and Europe.

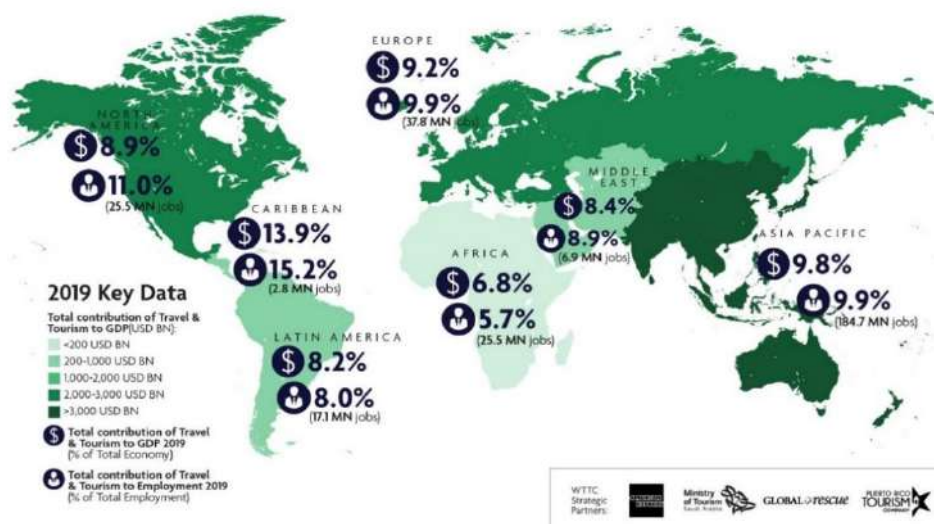


Figure 3, Regional overview of travel and tourism economic impact in 2019 - Source: WTTC

²¹ (Madrigal, LaBarge, & Bee, 2005).

²² (International Olympic Committee, 2021).

Furthermore, according to WTTC, there are important differences within the same country in terms of tourist destinations. In 2019 they made a research between 73 cities in the world, and the results showed that 44% of the total amount of incoming tourists went to a city²³. This report showed also that, considering these 73 cities, the direct travel and tourism GDP had experienced a higher growth compared to the overall city economy GDP from 2010 to 2018, with the only exemption during 2015, where the Travel & Tourism (T&T) growth was lower than the general growth. The third fastest growing city in terms of direct T&T GDP in 2018 was Moscow, thanks to the 2018 FIFA World Cup, and 7 of the 10 cities that experienced the most relevant growth were located in Asia Pacific region.

Certainly, tourism can cause also negative effects on cities and their inhabitants. The main effects of tourism related to the environment include overcrowding of cities, exploitation of natural habitats and stress on already endangered species²⁴; negative effects on society include a perceived reduction in privacy for residents, an increase in the prices of certain services they also use and an increase in crime, particularly pickpocketing. The polluting effects of tourists travelling to the various tourist spot should also not be forgotten.

When the number of incoming tourists become too big, it can create problem for the people who live that city and also for the stability of the economy. One of the best examples of this situation is the city of Venice which economy is mainly based on tourism. The inhabitants of Venice experience a complex relationship with tourists, who turn out to invade and disrespect the city, but at the same time keep it alive. Furthermore, as demonstrated by what happened during the crisis caused by Coronavirus pandemic, if a city has just one sector that produce income, a crisis of this sector can cause the absence of income for the entire city.

With regard to social aspects, a controversial case is presented by Li Yang²⁵ dealing with ethnic tourism and the construction of a theme park reproducing minority ways of life in

²³ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019).

²⁴ (The world counts, n.d.).

²⁵ Dr. Li Yang is an associate professor in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Tourism at Western Michigan University. She is an active researcher in the field of travel and tourism. Her research career has focused on tourism planning and development issues with an emphasis on ethnic tourism.

China, called Yunnan Ethnic Folk Villages²⁶ (YEFV or 云南民族村 in Chinese), in Yunnan, China. The official objectives of this park are to increase knowledge about the history and traditions of Chinese minorities, to provide employment and to integrate these groups into modern Chinese society, but, according to the author, this type of tourism increase the superficial representation of these ethnic groups as fossilized realities in the past, not dynamic and therefore less developed, thus giving legitimacy to the current reality²⁷.

Talking about the relationship between tourism and environment, the presence of tourists increases the use and waste of goods and, most importantly, of water. The same water that is being over-used causes considerable damage to the environment, such as soil erosion, which in the most extreme cases leads to the destruction of the same natural places that attract tourists. Finally, the tourism sector involves the movement of large numbers of people from one point to another, and thus cause an increase in carbon dioxide pollution, which sector derives mostly from transportation²⁸.

In order to limit the negative effects of tourism on the environment and society, a new type of tourism, called “Eco-tourism” or “Sustainable tourism”, has been emerging in recent years. The definition of this terms is quite broad: “it’s a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”²⁹.

The WTTC creates new initiatives every year to support and raise awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism. Activities at the moment include for example actions to combat climate change or protect local biodiversity and to counter the overuse of plastic, on which the arrival of Covid-19 has had a major negative effect³⁰. Documents have therefore been drawn up informing about current data on plastic use and giving practical advice on how to counter this trend, aimed at travelers but also at entrepreneurs and political spheres.

²⁶ Yunnan Ethnic Village is a theme park reproducing the architectures and folklore of 25 minority ethnic groups living in Yunan Province, an epitome of ethnic groups of Yunnan.

(<https://www.visitourchina.com/kunming/attraction/yunnan-ethnic-village.html>).

²⁷ (Yang, 2011).

²⁸ (Ahmad, Su, Draz, & Rauf, 2019).

²⁹ (The world counts, n.d.).

³⁰ (World Travel & Tourism Council, n.d.).

Given the increased attention to the needs of the environment, the numbers of sustainable tourism are growing every day, and with them the investments of different countries that want to attract tourists while protecting natural habitats. At the moment³¹, eco-tourists are around 13% of the total³², and so far in 2023 they are already over 26 million³³, with a growing trend.

However, each country experiences a different reality with problems and peculiarities that push government decisions in different directions. In this research, it was decided to analyze the specifics of the Japanese case.

³¹ data collected on 4 April 2023.

³² (Earth Changers, 2023).

³³ (The World Counts, n.d.).

1.2 Tourism sector in Japan

As far as the pre-modern period is concerned, the Japanese people have always remained rather isolated from the rest of the world, having a focus on trade relations with foreign countries instead of tourism ones. Then, during the Meiji period, the first study-trips to countries such as Germany, America and France began, with the aim of assimilating the knowledge already acquired by these countries.

Until the pre-war period, Japanese domestic tourism consisted mostly of pilgrimage to religious places inside the country, or to areas where *onsen* (温泉, Japanese hot springs) were present, for the physical benefits obtained there. In Japanese culture, thermal springs have always had a great reputation because of the benefits that the water and the minerals it contains have on people's health and skin³⁴.

Japan's oldest onsen is known to be the Dogo Onsen (道後温泉), which has a history of more than 3,000 years³⁵, and it has been mentioned in a multitude of myths, poems and movies³⁶.

The legend associated with the birth of this place tells of the healing power of the hot spring that bring back the strength of a wounded heron's leg. The story goes as follows:

“昔脛に傷して苦しんでいた一羽の白鷺が岩間から噴出する温泉を見つけ、毎日飛んできてその中に脛を浸していたところ、傷は完全に癒えてしまい、白鷺は元気に勇ましく飛び去ったと書かれています。そして、これを見た人たちは大変不思議に思い、入浴してみると爽快で疲労を回復することもでき、また、

³⁴ (Nobukiyo, 2010).

³⁵ (Dogo Onsen, n.d.).

³⁶ The main facility (本館, *honkan*), is the one that inspired Hayao Miyazaki to create the spa in the film “Spirited away”, which won the Oscar Award in 2003 for “Best Animated Feature”.

病人も入浴しているといつの間にか全快したことから、盛んに利用されるようになりました”^{37, 38}

In 1894 the Dogo Onsen started to be an official business³⁹, and the whole Japanese onsen market started to grow and expand, until it reached to generated approximately 14.21 billion USD in 2019⁴⁰.

The history of the evolution of the tourism sector in Japan after the World War II is summarized by the work of Eguchi Nobukiyo⁴¹, who divides it into 5 different phases⁴²:

1. The reconstruction period, from 1945 to 1963;
2. The period of economic growth 1964-1969;
3. The period of mass tourism 1970s-1980s;
4. The period of alternative tourism 1980s-2006;
5. The tourism nation 2006- to date.

During the reconstruction period, the government did not allow common people to travel abroad, although interest in countries such as America was growing thanks to movies and books. To compensate for the desire to get to know new cultures, this period saw a boom in travel to Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, where tourist villages were built at the end of the 19th century to expose Ainu⁴³ history and culture.

The second period started in 1964 with Japan being the first Asian country to host the Summer Olympics Games. The main objective of these Games was to represent Japan as a reborn country and a technological leader. Aim that was underlined by the inauguration

³⁷ “Mukashi suneni kizushite kurushindeita ippano shirasagiga Iwamakara funshutsusuru onsenwo mitsuke, mainichi tondekite sononakani sunewo hitashiteita tokoro, kizuwa kanzenni ieteshimai, shirasagiwa genkini isamashiku tobisatta to kakareteimasu. Soshite, korewo mita hito-tachiwa taihen fushigini omoi, nyoyokushitemiruto soukaide hirouwa kaifuku surukotomo deki, mata, byouninmo nyuyokushiteiruto itsunomanika zenkai shitakotokara, sakan’ni riyousareruyouni narimashita, “once upon a time an egret with an injured leg discovered a hot spring gushing from the rocks. The egret returned to the hot spring every day to soak its injured leg. After a while the leg completely healed, and the egret flew away as strong as ever. The people who saw this thought it very strange, and when they too began bathing in the water, they found that it relieved fatigue and speeded recovery from illness. From that time on, bathing in the hot spring became a widely popular practice.”

³⁸ (道後温泉, n.d.).

³⁹ (Dogo Onsen, n.d.).

⁴⁰ (Statista.com, n.d.).

⁴¹ Professor at Faculty of Letters at Ritsumeikan University, Japan.

⁴² (Nobukiyo, 2010).

⁴³ The Ainu are an indigenous people who primarily inhabit the island of Hokkaido, the north of Honshu and Sakhalin island in Russia, who experienced an assimilation by the Yamato clan since the 18th century.

of the *Shinkansen* (新幹線, the bullet train), the fastest train in the world, and by the innovation in the broadcasting of the Games, that were the first Olympics of world history to be transmitted in color and live all over the world's TVs. Moreover, from 1969 became easier and cheaper to flight internationally, making the Japanese government more interested in tourism sector.

In order to continue the strategy of making Japan more active in the international scene, in 1970 the city of Osaka hosted the World EXPO (for the first time in an Asian country) and the huge number of package tour generated from this event mark the beginning of the mass tourism period.

From the 1980s the attention of people and authorities moves to natural or cultural spots during the “alternative tourism”, seeing the presence of the first Japanese spot in the register of “World Nature Heritage sites” in 1993⁴⁴.

During 2000s the government decided to invest more in tourism sector and, in 2003, started the “Visit Japan Campaign” (VJC)⁴⁵, launched by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism that created also the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), that aimed to realize a “tourism nation that is good to live in and to visit”⁴⁶. Then, in 2006 was enacted the Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Law, which defines tourism as one of the fundamental pillars for economic development in the 21st century⁴⁷.

In 2012 the Japan tourism national promotion basic plan was released. It provided 5 goals for the upcoming years: 1. Increase in domestic consumption; 2. Improvement of international tourism; 3. Increase the satisfaction of international visitors; 4. Become the most important conference-host country in Asia; 5. Increase the number of Japanese travelers going overseas; 6. Improvement of domestic tourism; 7. Improve traveler satisfaction in tourist areas⁴⁸.

As can be seen from figure 4, since 2000s there have been continuously increasing numbers of incoming tourists (with exceptions in 2008 because of the global crisis and in

⁴⁴ Buddhist Monuments in the Horyuji Temple Area in Nara.

⁴⁵ (Han & Yotsumoto, 2009).

⁴⁶ (Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, n.d.).

⁴⁷ (Japan tourism agency, 2016).

⁴⁸ (Hoa & Kazem, 2021).

2011, the year marked by the fall of the Twin Towers), with the final record of 31.88 million of incoming tourists in 2019, who spent 46.1 billion of USD⁴⁹.

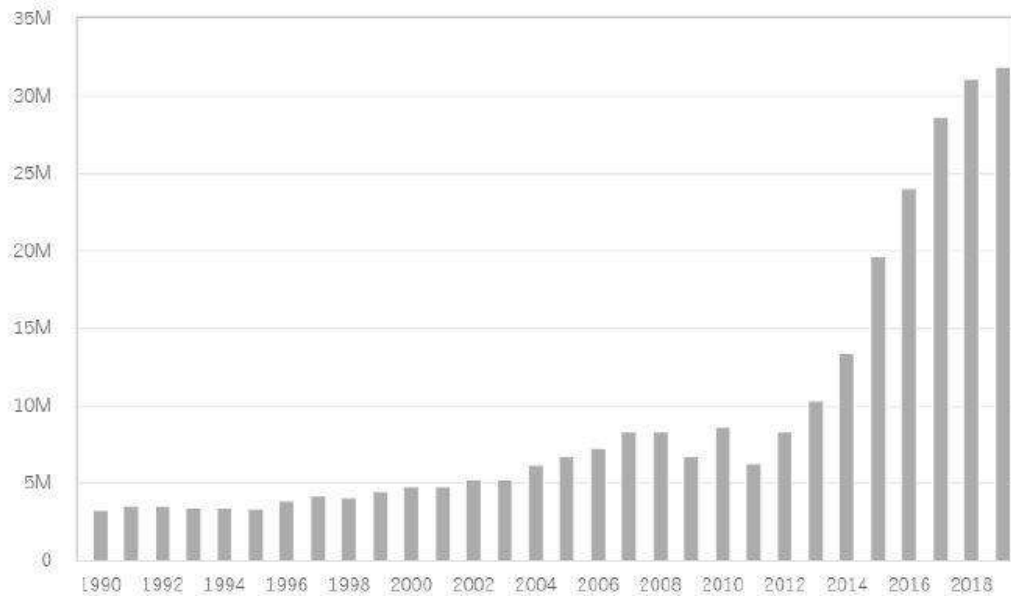


Figure 4, International tourist arrivals to Japan by year - Source: Japan national tourism organization.

However, international tourists account for only 17% of the total, while domestic tourists represent more than 78% (Figure 5).

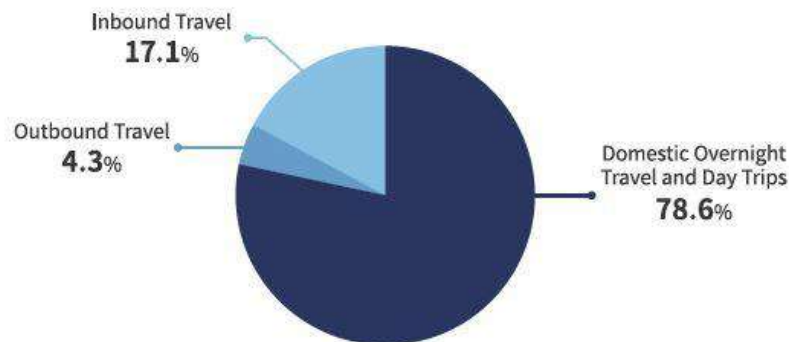


Figure 5, Travel expenditure in 2019 - Source: Japan tourism agency's travel and tourism consumption trend survey

Finally, this sector contributed to Japan's GDP of approximately 359 billion of American dollars before the Coronavirus pandemic, and scholars expect a return of growing demand in the post-Covid period⁵⁰. This optimistic indication comes from the results of a survey

⁴⁹ (Japan external trade organization, 2021).

⁵⁰ (Japan external trade organization, 2021).

conducted between 12 countries⁵¹, where Japan emerged as the most popular destination among travelers for the future (Figure 6).

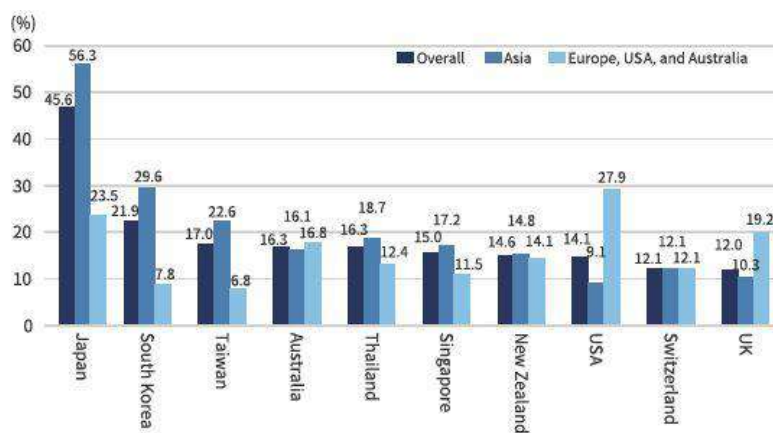


Figure 6, Top 10 trending travel destinations post-corona - Source: Development bank of Japan

With regard to the destinations chosen by tourists, it can be seen from figure 7 that in 2019 the main destination in the territory is Tokyo, with 47.2% of visitors, followed by Osaka and Chiba⁵². This trend shows that the Major Metropolitan Areas (MMA) are the area where the majority of the travelers use to spend their time in the country.

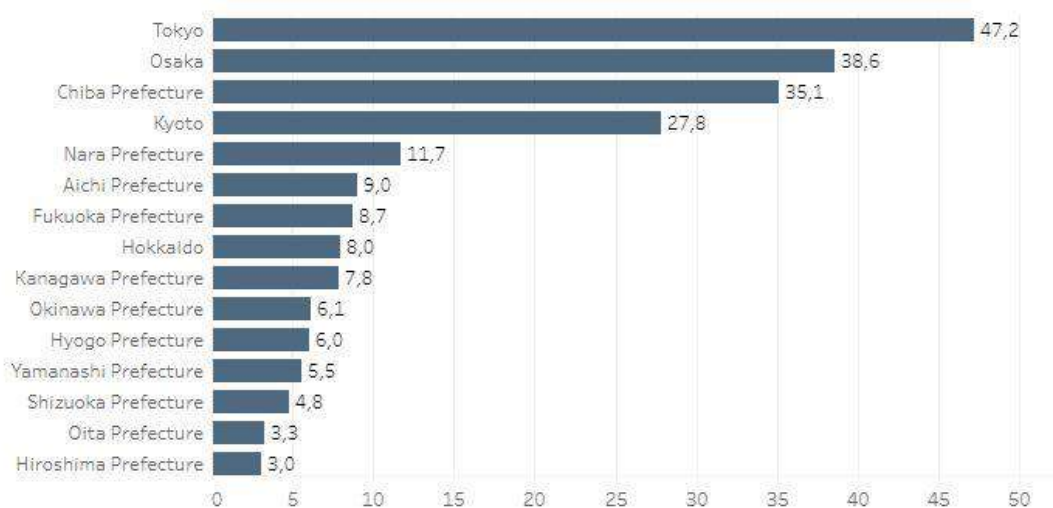


Figure 7, Visit rate ranking by Prefecture in 2019 – Source: Japan tourism statistics

⁵¹ The countries/regions are: South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, USA, Australia, England and France.

⁵² (Japan tourism statistics, n.d.).

The Japanese government has therefore been trying in recent years to encourage the growth of tourism in the rural area of Japan, using it as a way to counter the depopulation of small villages.

Government strategies include digital transformation (DX) in tourism, strengthen foreign relations to promote the incoming of the tourists, increase the consumption tax exemption for visitors and improve support for non-Japanese-speakers⁵³.

Talking about technological transformation, there are extensive provisions. For example, it was created a system that registers attendance in certain touristic areas and makes the data accessible to the public, so that tourists can decide to move in different directions in case of overcrowding. In addition, free Wi-Fi and automated systems for booking various services are being made available throughout the country. Moreover, technological innovations are essential to overcome language barriers and facilitate the transit of people who do not speak the local language, a factor in which the government has invested heavily also in view of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, but which is more complex in rural areas of Japan.

In addition, in 2020 the “*smart resort handbook*” (スマートリゾートハンドブック)⁵⁴ was made available online by the government. This is a guide that explain how to optimize the technological services available for the development of the tourism sector, also at a local level. The concept behind the world “smart resort” is to use digital technology to provide services that meet the needs of people (as living authentic local experiences, etc.), thereby attracting more guests to the region, extending their stay, promoting consumption while supporting sustainable development and creating value for local entities like residents and businesses⁵⁵.

In the first chapter, it is explained what changes are occurring in the society that are affecting the sector and there are advices on how to adapt facilities and activities to the new needs of customers. One of the most significant changes presented in this document concerns the difference in the way different generations do tourism.

⁵³ (Japan external trade organization, 2021).

⁵⁴ (経済産業省商務・サービスグループクールジャパン政策課, 2020).

⁵⁵ (日本交通公社, 2020).

As represented by Figure 8 in fact, it is possible to see that during the Showa Era⁵⁶ the objective of a trip was *to visit* and enjoy the *scenery* of the place, a phase defined as “seeing”. During the Heisei Era⁵⁷ it passes to a more active tourism, the “doing” phase, where it becomes important *to do* something in the place. Finally, in the Reiwa Era⁵⁸, it arrives at the “being” phase, with the concept of “その地でしか味わえないリアルで本物な体験ニーズ”⁵⁹, where the *experience*, the *discovery* and *learning* of *something unique* linked to the place becomes fundamental.

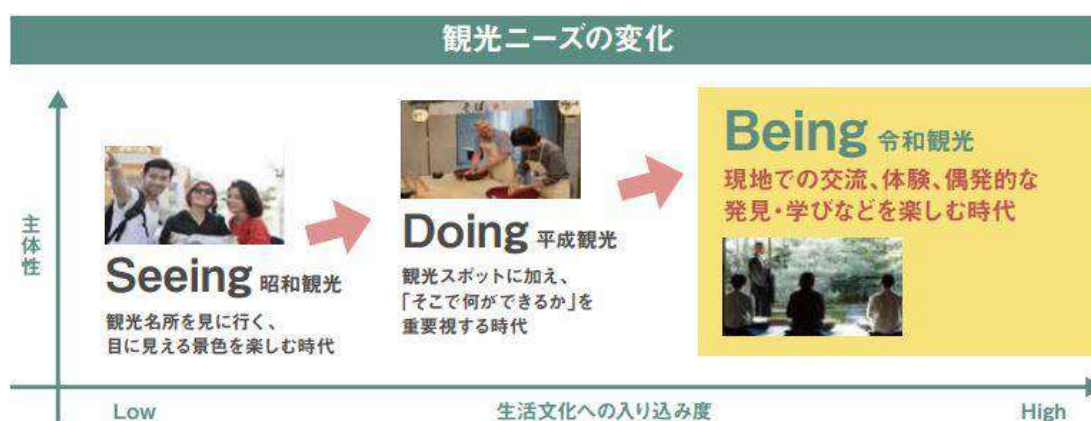


Figure 8, The changes in tourism needs – Source: Ministry of economy, trade and industry

Chapter 5 defines the 3 fundamental elements to be pursued in order to achieve the “smart resort”. Firstly, it is necessary to offer content services⁶⁰ that consider the needs of the visitors and the peculiarities of the location in order to exploit its strengths. To support these services, a platform offering transport services must be developed and a promotion system must be created with the collaboration of experts.

This document also mentions information relating to the transformation of tourism towards a sustainable sector, they mention the SDGs, the importance of protecting natural and cultural environments and the need to reduce CO2 emissions, in the section “自分の得意と現地のニーズをマッチング”⁶¹.

⁵⁶ 1926-1989.

⁵⁷ 1989-2019.

⁵⁸ 2019- to define.

⁵⁹ *Sono chide shika ajiwaenai riaru de honmonona taiken niizu*, “the need of experience something real that I can’t experience anywhere else”.

⁶⁰ “Content service” collects information from consumers, understand what their needs are and then inform them about the possibilities present in the area that can satisfy these needs.

⁶¹ *jibunno tokuito genchino niizuwo matching*, “matching your strengths with local needs”.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in this report stresses on several occasions the importance of supporting the visitors to create a trip that is an *experience*. The entrepreneurs' goal should be to understand the *personal* needs of tourists and to help them by first providing a wide range of detailed *information* centered on the *peculiarities of the place* and then *services* that are appropriate.

These strategies will make possible not only to increase the income of the tourism sector, but will bring also economic and social benefits to local communities. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, in fact, tourism creates services for tourists that become accessible to the locals (transportation, cultural activities, etc.), improving the quality of life and leading to the creation of jobs even in small centers, a factor that the government believe could limit the problem of depopulation of rural areas and overcrowding of large towns. Plans for these areas include the construction of highways, high-speed trains and tourist facilities to turn these sites into tourist destinations suitable for visitors' needs⁶². For this reason, in the Japan National Promotion Basic Law of 2006 the culture and heritage tourism, that is generally related to rural areas, is settled as the basic pillar of the country's tourism⁶³, also because on this type of trip people spend on average about 50% more than other tourists and travel several times a year⁶⁴.

Given these premises, this research wants to focus on the study of a rural area, already a famous destination for domestic and Asian tourism, but little known abroad.

In the next section will be presented the city of Beppu (別府市), in the Oita prefecture (大分県), in Kyushu (九州), one of the four major islands of the Japanese archipelago, to understand the problems and potentialities of this area.

1.3 Tourism sector in Kyushu island, Oita prefecture and Beppu city

Oita prefecture is located in the eastern part of Kyushu, the third largest island in the Japanese archipelago. Kyushu is a peripheral area compared to the country's major

⁶² (Hoa & Kazem, 2021).

⁶³ (Japan tourism agency, 2016).

⁶⁴ (Avrami, 2016).

economic centers such as Kanto and Kansai, but it has great potential. In fact, Kyushu represents 10% of Japan in terms of population, surface area and GDP, not to mention its importance in the historical, cultural and naturalistic spheres (Figure 9)⁶⁵.

Population	14.31 million	11.3%
Surface area	44,512 km²	11.8%
GDP	49.1 billion	9.0%
History	Gateway of Japan to Asian Countries GDP is a similar size to Thai and Iran.	

Figure 9, Outline of Kyushu compared to Japan - Sources: Japanese management and sustainable development class.

To be specific, Kyushu GDP is comparable to states like Austria and Thailand (Figure 10)⁶⁶.

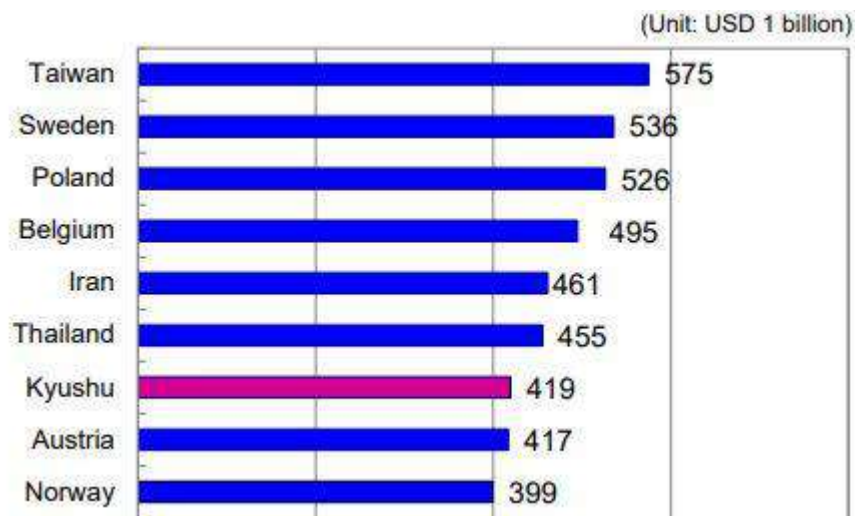


Figure 10, International comparison of regional GDP - Sources: World Statistics 2020, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

⁶⁵ (Kyushu Bureau of Economy, 2021).

⁶⁶ (Kyushu Bureau of Economy, 2021).

The main industries in Kyushu today are the automobile industry, whose export generated a profit of 16 billion Yen in 2021⁶⁷, IC chips, shipbuilding and agriculture, which represent the 20% of the production of the entire country.

Despite the high presence of industries in the region, one of the reasons why Kyushu does not enjoy the complete economic benefits from the presence of these industries stems from the fact that their HQ is off-island and therefore pays taxes elsewhere. One of the positive aspects is the jobs that these industries create in the area, despite the regional wage gap, caused by workers being paid less than in other areas of Japan⁶⁸.

Nowadays, the economic center of Kyushu is Fukuoka prefecture, with its largest city, Fukuoka, in which live approximately 1.4 million people, making it the eighth largest city in Japan⁶⁹. Furthermore, thanks to the international port of Hakata and Fukuoka airport, the city is a perfect center for the exchange of goods and people not only with the nearby East Asian countries and the capital, but also with USA and Europe⁷⁰.

Before the Second World War, Kumamoto Prefecture was the economic and political center of Kyushu. Because of its geographical location, it could defend the island from American and Chinese attacks at the same time, and it received money from the central government to protect the country.

Oita prefecture was very important in the period that saw Kyushu as the gateway for foreigners to enter Japan (around 16th century), with its name appearing big even in European maps, but when the Tokugawa took the power and the Sakoku period⁷¹ began, with the prohibition for the foreigners to enter the country was marked the end of the city's prestige.

The economic structure of Oita prefecture in 2019, according to the census carried out by the government, saw 538,900 enterprises in the territory, involving more than 5 million workers. Among them, the most relevant sector is retail, which employs 17% of local

⁶⁷ (Kyushu Bureau of Economy, 2021).

⁶⁸ Informations gathered during the course "Japanese Management and Sustainable Development" by Professor Kunio Ikari, professor in the Department of Economics at Oita University.

⁶⁹ (Population hub, n.d.).

⁷⁰ (Cabinet Public Affairs Office, 2014).

⁷¹ From 1639 to 1853.

businesses and employs 16.8% of workers. In second place for the largest number of employees is the services sector, with 15.2% and approximately 60,000 enterprises in the territory.

The tourism sector is not represented in a unique way but can be traced back to related elements by looking at the data on the “accommodation” and “food&beverage” sectors together with those on “daily services” and “entertainment” sector, which combined employ 11.8% of the workers and account for 12.6% of the local industries⁷², making it the third most important sector for the Prefecture’s economy.

The sector is growing together with the increase of the number of visitors in the prefecture, reaching 1.25 million tourists in 2018, as it can be seen in Figure 11⁷³.

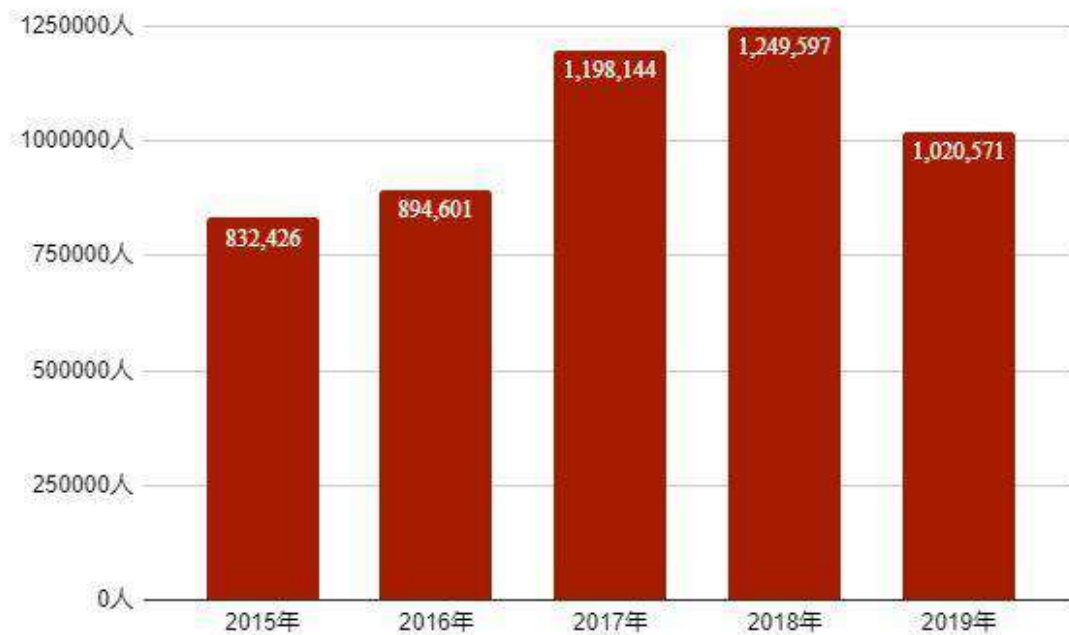


Figure 11, Trend of incoming tourists in Oita by year - Source: Fun Japan Communications

Wanting to make a national comparison, again in 2018 Oita is the 13th most visited prefecture in the whole Japan (Figure 12).

⁷² (総務省, 2021).

⁷³ (Fun Japan Communication, 2020).

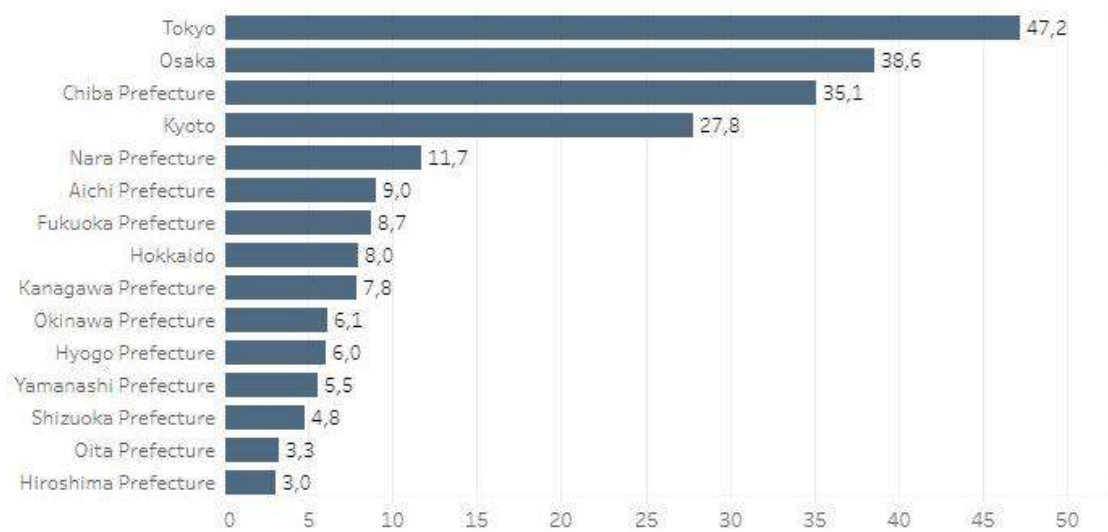


Figure 12, Visit ranking by Prefecture in 2018 - Source: Japan National Tourism Organization

International tourists who choose this prefecture come primarily from South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China (Figure 13).

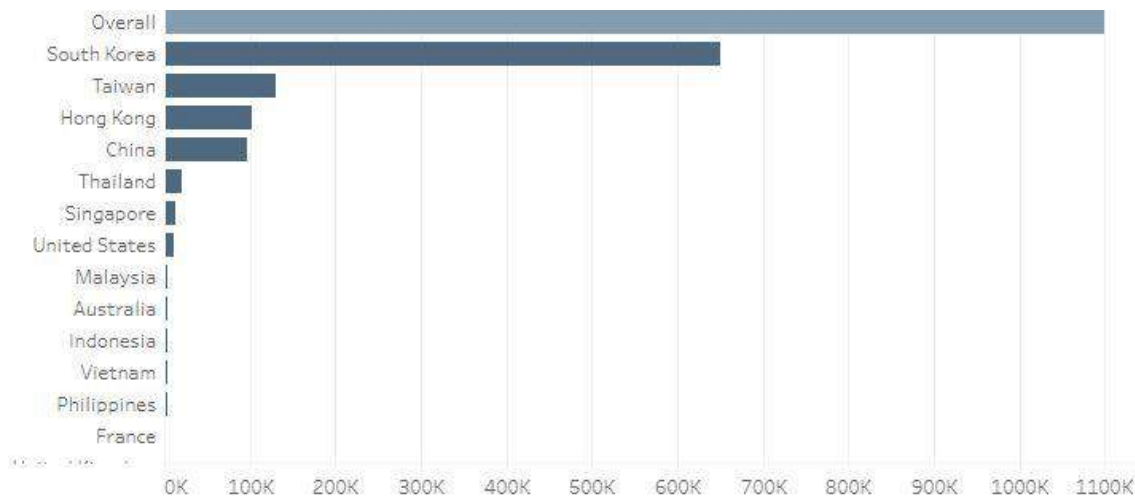


Figure 13, Number of tourists in Oita Prefecture in 2018 - Source: Japan National Tourism Organization

When it comes to preferences of places to visit in the prefecture, the city of Beppu comes in first place, as it is possible to see in Figure 14.



Figure 14, Trend of tourists in Oita Prefecture in 2018 - Source: Japan National Tourism Organization

Beppu city is located in the northeastern part of the Kyushu Island and is the second largest city in Oita prefecture, with 127,345 habitants in 2023⁷⁴.

It is a bay surrounded by volcanic mountains that made it the highest output of hot spring water in the country⁷⁵, with the 10% of all Japanese hot springs⁷⁶. For this reason, it is also known as “Japan’s capital of hot springs”⁷⁷. In this area there are spots with different quality of water and types of baths, making this city available for different costumers and different needs.

The city of Beppu was initially a small center for medical spa treatment, gradually developing as a place for rest and relax, until it became a city for spa tourism as it is known today. The evolution and changes that Beppu has experienced since the Post-Second World War are summarized in the study of the researcher Ura Tatsuo, who

⁷⁴ (Population hub, n.d.).

⁷⁵ (Han & Yotsumoto, 2009).

⁷⁶ (Beppu city, n.d.).

⁷⁷ (Japan-guide.com, n.d.).

worked at Chiba University of Commerce, Osaka University of Tourism and Kyushu Sangyo University⁷⁸.

According to Ura's study, after the end of the war took place the repatriation of Japanese soldiers who had fought in the Korean front. When they returned home started to set up businesses along the lines of what was already in use on the Korean peninsula, the conversion of villas used for holidaying into *ryokan*⁷⁹ with rooms for rent, making Beppu a special case study in 1940.

After the Second World War, the city of Beppu was chosen by the government to be the forerunner of a new strategy whose aim was to revive the economy through international tourism by exploiting thermal tourism. In 1949, the "plan for the internationalization of the spa city of Beppu" (別府国際泉都計画, *Beppu kokusai sento keikaku*) was created. Then, in 1950, the "Beppu City Act" (別府法, *beppu hou*) was proclaimed to reiterate the goal of economic recovery through the development of the thermal city⁸⁰.

Along with the implementation of the project, 1951 saw a series of urban improvements with the creation of new parks, city streets and highways, an international port and the establishment of a tourist office and a planning division. The real tourist boom in the city came in 1964, thanks to the opening of the Beppu-Asu-Kumamoto highway and the presence of the welcoming infrastructures. In fact, in 1965 there were already 168 *ryokan* in the city.

With phenomena such as mass production and mass tourism occurring all over the world, the government expected an increase in mass tourism also in the city, and decided to build tourist services in order to attract group trips, school trips and so on. Since 1957, a series of events such as the construction of the American military camp, the inauguration of the tropical museum and more than 30 other buildings leads to the arrival of more than 10,000 visitors in 6 months. From that moment there will be continuous growth, bringing the number of tourists to 10 million within 10 years.

⁷⁸ (浦, 2006).

⁷⁹ Ryokan (旅館) are Japanese-style inns incorporating elements such as tatami rooms, futon beds and Japanese-style baths (Japan-guide.com, n.d.).

⁸⁰ (浦, 2006).

Investment in tourism facilities continued with the construction of ski facilities, golf parks, theme parks, the ropeway and the Beppu tower (a year before the Tokyo tower was built⁸¹). From the mid-1960s onwards, a series of urban redevelopment works began, including the reclamation of some land, the creation of coastal areas and the construction of residential districts, which also created improvements in the everyday life of Beppu's inhabitants.

In conclusion, Ura sees investment in infrastructure, transport systems and external connections (highways, the port and rail networks) and the focus on creating the right entertainment for those who come to the area (skiing, golf, theme parks, etc.) as the main contributors to the town's growth.

Before the Corona virus pandemic, in Beppu city there were 254 accommodation facilities as hotel and *ryokan* and in the same year it had a total of more than 8 million visitors, despite a decrease of 7.8% from the previous year, in contrast to the upward trend reported in the prior decade⁸². Some of the reasons why the number dropped was the presence of a strong typhoon in August, a period that usually brings a high rate of tourists for the Obon celebrations, and the renovation of some popular tourist attractions.

Of these, however, only 2.5 million (31%) stayed overnight in the city (again with a loss of 3.1% compared to 2018), with an expenditure of 22,734 yen per person for foreigner (168,94 USD⁸³), and 27,286 yen per person for Japanese people (202,72 USD).

Before the Corona pandemic, 39% of foreign tourists were Koreans, followed by 16% from Taiwan and 13% from China, following the same trend of Oita Prefecture.

As it can be seen in Figure 15, an interesting factor is that although the number of total tourists was down in 2019 compared to the previous year, when looking in detail, it was mainly the number of Korean tourists who decreased, but other nationalities were up. This denote a growth in interest in the city outside the Asian market and highlight the necessity for the authorities to focus on multiple markets, in order to not depend only by one country.

⁸¹ Tokyo Tower was built in 1957.

⁸² (別府市観光戦略部観光課, 2020).

⁸³ Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 134,57 yen, on 20/04/2023.

Country / Region	2019			2018			Difference by year
		Daytrip	Overnight		Daytrip	Overnight	
Korea	244,306	16,196	228,110	428,443	26,032	402,411	▲ 43.0
Taiwan	99,629	15,772	83,857	93,732	11,522	82,210	+ 6.3
China	82,679	25,870	56,809	92,842	31,804	61,038	▲ 10.9
Hong Kong	72,172	16,314	55,858	79,545	15,754	63,791	▲ 9.3
Thailand	18,706	7,155	11,551	16,955	5,048	11,907	+ 10.3
Macao	17,347	7	17,340	15,053	3	15,050	+ 15.2
Singapore	7,909	2,001	5,908	9,188	1,389	7,799	▲ 13.9
Malaysia	7,117	2,957	4,160	1,798	478	1,320	+ 295.8
Indonesia	1,129	798	331	606	432	174	+ 86.3
America	13,910	5,257	8,653	9,028	3,293	5,735	+ 54.1
Canada	3,841	1,642	2,199	2,202	1,426	776	+ 74.4
Uruguay	946	0	946	-	-	-	-
England	13,860	3,824	10,036	1,294	853	441	+ 971.1
France	5,914	2,853	3,061	3,117	1,936	1,181	+ 89.7
Germany	3,160	2,288	872	2,312	1,519	793	+ 36.7
Swiss	2,317	49	2,268	2,963	78	2,885	▲ 21.8
Belgium	720	11	709	-	-	-	-
Russia	467	376	91	306	224	82	+ 52.6
Australia	11,780	3,491	8,289	4,562	2,064	2,498	+ 158.2
New Zealand	3,511	963	2,548	829	187	642	+ 323.5
Others	9,421	7,932	1,489	8,901	5,795	3,106	-
Total	620,841	115,756	505,085	773,676	109,837	663,839	▲ 19.8

Figure 15, Trend of incoming tourist by region/country in 2018 and 2019 - Source: Beppu City Tourism Strategy Department

For this reason, this study aims to see if Italian tourists can constitute a new player to attract to Beppu in order to expand the market outside the Asian area.

1.4 Tourism sector and Coronavirus Pandemic

Tourism sector is vulnerable to different types of crises from natural to economical, but in the latest years it was clear that the crisis due to pandemic it's the most dangerous for this area⁸⁴. The first example was the crisis caused by the 2003 SARS virus outbreak in Asia, which caused a loss of 8.8% in the tourism sector in the Northeast Asian regions. Unlike the Covid pandemic, however, the virus and its economic consequences remained confined to the region, without spreading globally⁸⁵.

According to the report of the WTTC, due to the Corona crisis in 2020 the contribution to the global GDP of the tourism was just the 5.3%, with a loss of more than 50% compared to the previous year, that means 4.9 trillion of USD. Talking about the jobs related to the travel and tourism, it was registered a global loss of 62 million⁸⁶, as represented in Figure 16.

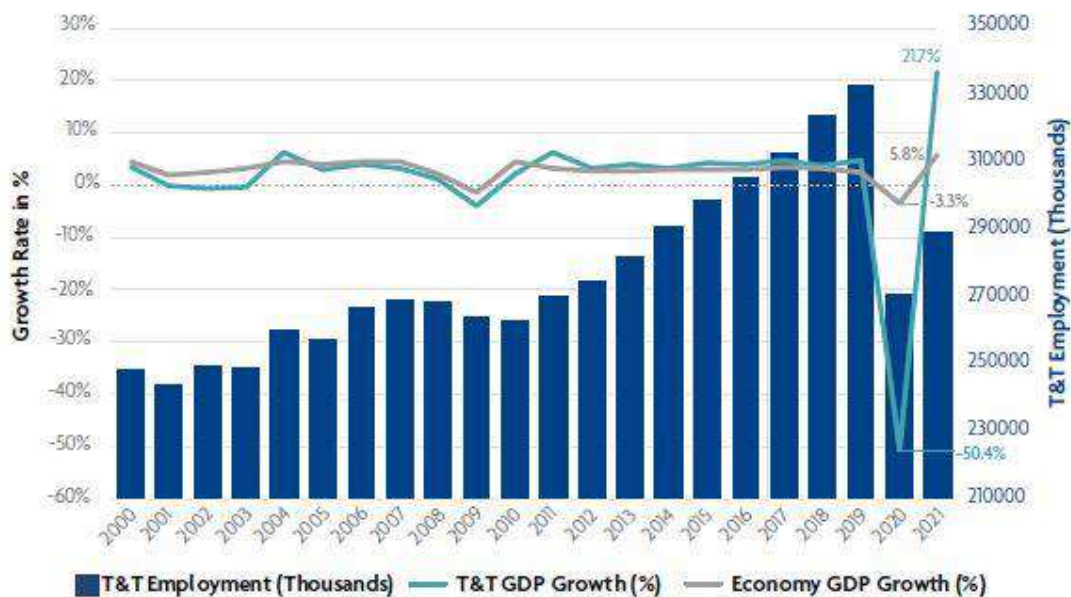


Figure 16, Travel and tourism global economic impact from 2000 to 2021 - Source: WTTC

⁸⁴ (Zhong, Sun, Law, & Xiaonan, 2021).

⁸⁵ (World tourism organization, 2004).

⁸⁶ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

The different area of the world experienced the crisis of the sector in different ways. As shown in Figure 17, the Asia-Pacific region experienced the worst economic lost with 1.900 billion of USD but the value of job losses was relatively low with the 18.9%.

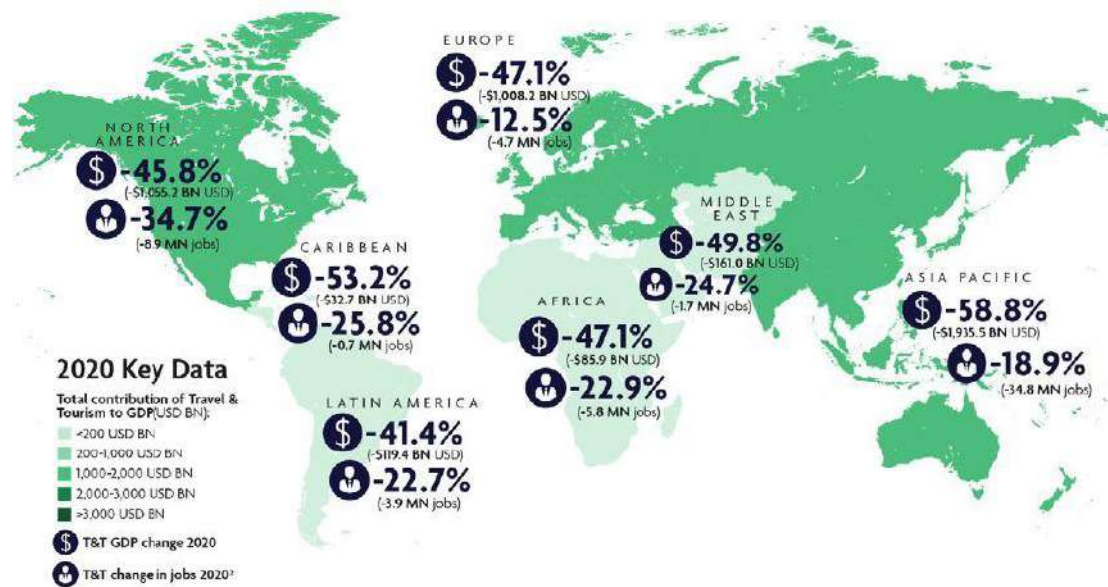


Figure 17, Regional overview of travel and tourism economic impact in 2020- Source: WTTC

As the world never experienced a situation like that and there were no rules or guideline, every country tried to find the best way to avoid the spread of the new Coronavirus.

Japan is one of those countries where the number of victims has remained relatively low and is therefore believed that has managed the pandemic successfully. In reality, however, the number of infected and the slowness to proceed with vaccinations shows a different version⁸⁷.

The real spread of Covid in Japan began in mid-February. The government asked citizens to avoid non-essential travel, wear masks, close schools and ask people to work from home. In April, borders are closed to non-Japanese and a state of emergency was declared until 25 May. In the following period this measure will not be carried out, but rather full economic activity is pushed to recover the losses of the closure.

⁸⁷ (Song, Chen, Tang, & Kokudo, 2021).

The economy of the country was already compromised because of the rise of the consumption tax on October 10th 2019⁸⁸ from 8% to 10% and, due to the lockdown in April 2020, the Real GDP had a loss of about 50.000 (thousands of yen) between the first and the second period of 2020 (Figure 18).

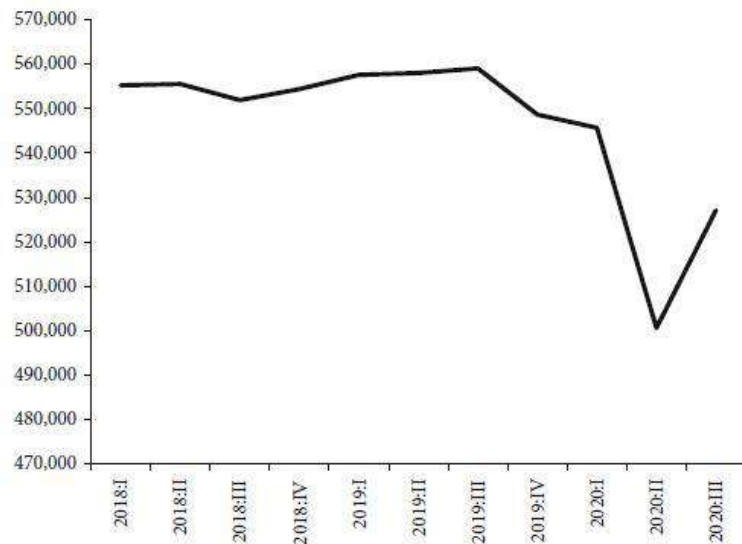


Figure 18, Real GDP (thousands of yen) - Sources: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan -

In addition, the rescheduling of the Tokyo Olympics 2020 for the following year due to the pandemic aggravated the country's economic situation. In fact, the postponement costs the citizens 6 trillion of USD⁸⁹. The decision was also frowned upon from a public safety perspective, as it was feared that the athletes, staff and all the people arriving from the outside for the Olympics could cause an increase in cases. In reality, the Olympic village was monitored daily by swabs and all the people inside had undergone vaccinations, showing a stark contrast to the situation outside, which saw only 18% of Japanese people being vaccinated⁹⁰.

The bankruptcies all around the country have risen by 23% during the 2020 and the most affected sector was tourism, where the bankruptcies reach a rise of almost 40%⁹¹. Since the beginning of 2020 there was a decrease of incoming tourists because of the

⁸⁸ (Hisanaga, 2022).

⁸⁹ (Hoa & Kazem, 2021).

⁹⁰ (Borpujari, 2021).

⁹¹ (Abe, 2021).

government policy of curfews⁹² and, from April 2020, the definitive closure of borders made the number of arrivals close to zero.

In the country, therefore, tourism does not come to a complete standstill thanks to government measures pushing domestic tourism.

The contribution of tourism to Japanese GDP was 371.7 billion of dollars in 2019⁹³, and 167.9 billion dollars in 2020 when only the domestic tourism was possible. These data show a considerable loss for the sector but, at the same time, indicate how domestic tourism remains a fundamental pillar in Japan's tourism structure, which has been able to continue to exist despite the almost zero number of foreign entries.

The most important measure made by the Japanese government is the "Go To Campaign". The campaign began on 22 July 2020 and was suspended on 14 December of the same year. Its aim was to give a boost to domestic tourism to cover the losses caused by the absence of international tourists. The action included a 35% discount for day or overnight trips; coupons reimbursing the equivalent of 15% of the expenditure on accommodation to be used in the prefecture and further discounts of up to ¥20,000⁹⁴ per person per night or ¥10,000⁹⁵ for day trips⁹⁶.

According to government estimates, the funds used for this measure amounted to 534 billion yen⁹⁷ between July and December, and the number of overnight stays obtained with the help of these funds covered about 84% of the total had the previous year when foreign tourists were allowed in.

Furthermore, in order to limit the loss, the Japanese government implemented economic measures as employment adjustment subsidy (雇用調整助成金, *koyo chosei josei kin*) for the structures that decided to close⁹⁸.

⁹² (Kodaka, et al., 2022).

⁹³ (Statista, n.d.).

⁹⁴ 143,00 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁹⁵ 71,50 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁹⁶ (Yagasaki, 2021).

⁹⁷ 3,8 billion USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁹⁸ (Hamaguchi, 2020).

Unfortunately, in spite of the measures taken by the government, the economic losses related to the tourism sector were very high. As far as the prefecture of Oita is concerned, was registered a general loss of 1.3% of the total sales, striking harder sectors like manufacturing (製造業, *seizougyou*), accommodation and food and beverage (宿泊業, *shukuhakugyou*, 食サービス業 *inshoku saabisugyou*) and daily services and entertainment industry (生活関連サービス業, *seikatsu kanrei saabisu*, 娯楽業, *gorakugyou*), the yellow elements in Figure 19⁹⁹ that are strictly related to the tourism sector.

Industry categories in Oita	Sales			
	2015 (1 million ¥)	2020 (1 million ¥)	Change in numbers	Change in %
Manufacturing	241,610	215,745	▲ 25,865	▲ 10.7
Accommodation and food and beverage	1,788,230	1,685,076	▲ 103,154	▲ 5.8
Daily services and entertainment industry	213,626	160,050	▲ 53,576	▲ 25.1

Figure 19, Loss in Oita industries - Source: Oita Prefecture

This graph consists of 2 main sections, the first column on the left shows the categories of industries present in Oita prefecture¹⁰⁰, the second on the right the sales quantity of each category. This second column is divided into 4 vertical columns showing respectively the sales numbers during 2015 and the sales numbers during 2020. The third column shows the numerical difference between the first two columns and the last column shows the growth in percentages. The black triangle indicate a negative difference, a loss.

In detail, the town of Beppu in 2020 saw a loss of 46.9% in the number of tourists compared to the previous year. Of the tourists who visited the town, only 1.5% were non-Japanese. As for Japanese visitors, there were 47.9% less overnight stays and 44.5% less

⁹⁹ (大分県, 2021).

¹⁰⁰ The original graph has been cut to highlight the categories of interest to the study.

day trips. The value of expenditure on trips also fell, with a 16% drop in income for overnight stays¹⁰¹.

In the period between April and May there are of course the biggest drops, with -92% in April compared to the previous year and -98% in May. These data depend on the anti-Covid preventive measures taken by the government and the release of the state of emergency. An interesting factor is that the data shows a growth of 8.5% in the number of incoming tourists in the city in January, data that suggested a possible increase in the number of visitors for 2020 if the pandemic had not arrived¹⁰².

In 2021 Beppu tourists number decreased by 15.9% again, reaching only 3 million 700 thousand, of which only 2 and half million stayed overnight in local hotels. Even the daily expenditure of those who went to the site had a further decline, coming in at just 3764¥¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴.

From March to August 2021 there were slight improvements, but given the losses in the other months of the year, the balance sheet grew by only 3%.

In 2021 and 2022 it was registered a global recovery of the sector, that gained 1 trillion of USD in the global GDP and re-created 18.2 million jobs¹⁰⁵, but in order to have a full recovery, using the words of the president and CEO of World travel & tourism council, Julia Simpson, *“governments need to focus on co-existing with COVID-19 while enhancing preparedness for future crises, offering safe travel experiences and continuing to ease the conditions of entry to destinations”*¹⁰⁶.

From October 2022 the Japanese borders were re-opened and the number of international tourists is increasing again, but is still far away from the level of the pre-covid years (Figure 20).

¹⁰¹ (別府市観光・産業部, 2021).

¹⁰² (別府市観光・産業部, 2021).

¹⁰³ 27,96 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

¹⁰⁴ (別府市観光・産業部, 2022).

¹⁰⁵ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

¹⁰⁶ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

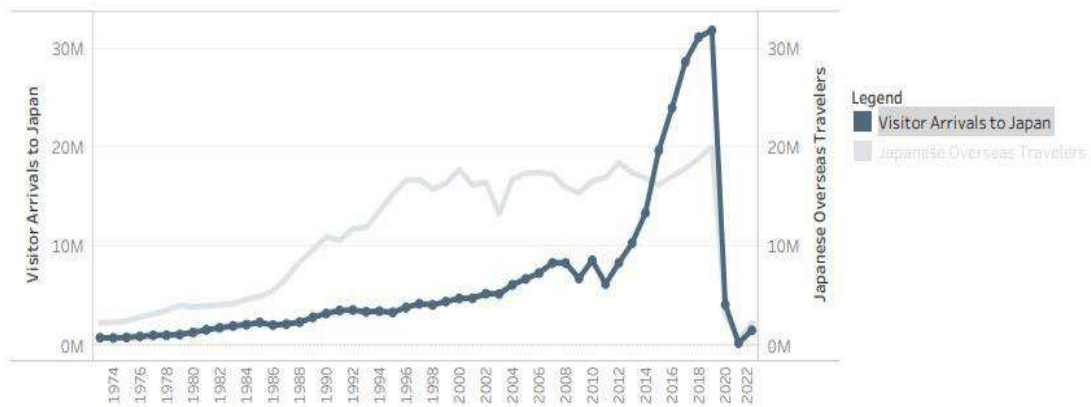


Figure 20, Visitor Arrivals to Japan and Japanese Overseas Travelers by Year - Source: Japan National Tourism Organization -

At the moment the Japanese government is grappling with the organization of the World Expo in Osaka 2025, on which hopes are poured that the Olympics have not been able to fulfill: the entrance of a large number of tourists and presenting the country as one of the modern forefronts¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ (EXPO 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan, n.d.).

CHAPTER 2: JAPAN'S TOURISM MARKET

2.1 Case study: Beppu city

The Beppu city official tourism site, in the section “the charm of Beppu”, states:

“別府は、日本有数の源泉数と湧出量を誇る温泉のまち。

その量、数は他の温泉地を圧倒しています”¹。

In Oita Prefecture, the total number of hot springs in 2023 is 5093. Of these, 2847 are located in Beppu². The uniqueness of this town lies not only in the large number of hot springs present, but also in the possibility of encountering different types of hot springs in the same area. To be exact, there are eight different types of onsen in Beppu: 1) *Hamawaki Onsen* (浜脇温泉), 2) *Beppu Onsen* (別府温泉), 3) *Kamegawa Onsen* (亀川温泉), 4) *Kannawa Onsen* (鉄輪温泉), 5) *Kankaiji Onsen* (観海寺温泉), 6) *Horita Onsen* (堀田温泉), 7) *Shibaseki Onsen* (柴石温泉) and 8) *Myoban Onsen* (明礬温泉)³.

Each of these areas has its own special feature. For example, in the Kamegawa Onsen area, can be experienced a natural sand bath and people can be “buried up to the neck in sand heated by the hot spring, while listening to the sound of the waves on the close beach”⁴. What characterizes Kannawa Onsen is the presence of public baths and footbaths, which anyone can access for free. Kankaiji Onsen is an area on one of the city’s hills, so its main distinguishing feature is the view one can enjoy while bathing⁵.

The Beppu City Official Tourism Site gathers the most useful information for visitors, including the types of onsen present, culinary information and some examples of pre-planned tours that can be followed independently. The site is available in five languages: Japanese, English, Korean, simplified Chinese and the Chinese variant spoken in Taiwan,

¹ *Beppuwa, Nihon yuusuuono gensensuto yuushutsu-ryouwo hokoru onsenno machi. Sono rou-suuwa hokano onsenchiwo attou shiteimasu*”, whit the meaning: “Beppu is number one in Japan in terms of both the amount of gushing water and the number of sources. The amount of water and number of springs are far superior to any other place in Japan”. (別府市観光課内, n.d.).

² (大分県, n.d.).

³ (Japan hot spring Beppu, 2019).

⁴ (Beppu City Official Tourism Site, n.d.).

⁵ (Beppu City Official Tourism Site, n.d.).

demonstrating the city's interest in trying to attract tourists from other geographical regions.

As far as the objective presentation of the onsen is concerned, the web site gives the same information on both the Japanese and foreign language pages. Beppu is described as the city with the largest number of hot springs in the archipelago and the characteristics of the 8 types are largely explained.

However, there are differences between the original and the translated websites. For example, in the "home" section of the non-Japanese web pages, the first thing which appears is the following (Figure 19):



Figure 19, Beppu city Official Tourism Site in English - Source: Beppu city official tourism site

Clicking on the image opens direct access to another page which describes in detail the origins and characteristics of *Jigokumushi*, the local food cooked in the steam produced by the natural geothermal sources of the city.

In the translated website, information about the local cuisine is reported a second time also at the end of the page, after the technical information on onsen. In the page in Japanese, however, the information about the kitchen appears only this second phase.

The form in which the section relating to the cuisine is presented is also different, as can be seen by comparing figure 20 and 21. In fact, the Japanese site gives the possibility to search for the restaurant (and its details) that cooks the specialty of your choice (*jigokumushi*, *ramen* or *toriten*) by clicking the black button “お店を探す”⁶ while in the non-Japanese site is not possible.



Figure 20, Japanese web site - Source: Beppu city official tourism site



Figure 21, English web site - Source: Beppu city official tourism site

This choice is due to the fact that one of the great strengths that Japan has in attracting tourists from all over the world, is its cuisine. In fact, according to the World Tourism

⁶ *omisewo sagasu*, “find a restaurant”.

Organization, in 2017 the main purpose of visiting Japan for international tourists was to eat Japanese food⁷. To underline its importance, the *Washoku* (和食), the “*knowledge, practice and traditions related to the production, processing, preparation and consumption of Japanese food*”⁸ was registered as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2013.

A second difference between the versions of the site is that in the English version there is a second link that can be accessed by clicking on the image “Enjoy onsen” (Figure 21), immediately below the first one shown in figure 19.



Traveling around Beppu

Beppu is a hot spring town no matter what anyone says. There are eight hot spring places within this small city, and steam can be seen rising from everywhere. Each hot spring has its own unique characteristics, with different smells and different atmospheres in the town. There are also tourist spots that are unique to the hot springs called “hell,” and hot springs are an indispensable part of the town.

Recently, the “healing” effects of each hot spring have been scientifically proven. When you enter the hot springs in Beppu, you will not just feel “somehow healed,” but you will actually become healthier.

Beppu, a hot spring wellness town, please enjoy your hot spring trip in Beppu.

Figure 21, *Enjoy Onsen link* - Source: *Beppu city official tourism site*

Interesting thing is that in the Chinese and Korean versions, this link is not present. This is due to the fact that the onsen culture is already better known to “neighbours” from China and Korea, while for tourists coming from other countries, is necessary a broader explanation of the history and Japanese spa traditions that are mostly unfamiliar to them. Along with the image that opens the “Enjoy Onsen” page, a small paragraph has been inserted that talks about the onsen and again describes its benefits. The latter is translated in the Chinese and Korean versions but not in the Japanese one.

The Enjoy Onsen page is a blog made in English which aim is to inform and attract new tourists as much as possible. The page mainly describes Beppu onsen and local food. All

⁷ (UNWTO, 2019).

⁸ (Unesco, 2012).

the articles are shared in Facebook, but not other social media are used. The section “about” of the website states: “*We, Beppu city, produce more hot spring water than any other places in Japan*”⁹. Once again, the uniqueness of Beppu and its importance on a national level is emphasized, but with a strong subjective connotation, underlined by the use of *we*, denoting the deep involvement of the local community in promoting the city.

This blog recurrently publishes information about life in Beppu, available tours, and “travel tips” which help tourists with the details of their trips. For example, one of the travel tips explains how to get from Fukuoka to Beppu, by what means, at what cost, etc., and highlights why Beppu is a must-see destination¹⁰. An interesting article from 2020 talks about how onsens can strengthen the immune system and thus help with Covid prevention, encouraging people to go to the centers thanks to an expert’s reassurance¹¹.

It is made clear by different actors that the main attractions of Beppu are the onsen. It is also underlined that here, and not somewhere else, there are special hot springs related activities that people can enjoy during their stay.

In fact, another peculiar activity largely suggested by the previous websites, is to visit the *Beppu Jigoku* (別府地獄, “the hells of Beppu”). These are seven bubbling onsen spots spread across the city with difference in shape and colors, where it is possible to see the boiling water and feel the strong smell of sulphur surrounded by unique settings, from zen to more wild-style gardens. The Onsen names are: 海地獄 (*Umi jigoku*), 血の池地獄 (*Chinoike jigoku*), 龍巻地獄 (*Tatsumaki jigoku*), 白池地獄 (*Shiroike jigoku*), 鬼石坊主地獄 (*Oniishibouzu jigoku*), 鬼山地獄 (*Oniyama jigoku*), かまど地獄 (*Kamado jigoku*).

⁹ (Enjoy Onsen, n.d.).

¹⁰ (Enjoy Onsen, 2021).

¹¹ (Enjoy Onsen, 2020).

They are called “hell” (地獄, *jigoku*) because in the past it was impossible for humans to go near these springs because of their very high temperatures¹². In fact, the water reaches up to 99 degrees Celsius, as indicated by the information signs near each spring, and the smoke around the pools creates columns tens of meters high. Today, however, it is possible to take the 別府地獄めぐり (*Beppu Jigoku Meguri*, “Beppu hells tour”), a sightseeing tour of all seven hot springs at a price of 2,000¹³ yen with a pass, or buy individual entry to each spring for 400 yen¹⁴. The tour needs from 2 to 3 hours and can be done entirely by foot or with the city buses. The map of the onsen presented by the city tourism office is as follows (Figure 22):



Figure 22, Beppu hells tour - Source: Beppu city official tourism site

Given the uniqueness of each onsen, it is recommended by the local tourism officials to take the whole tour, so it can be seen how unique Beppu is. The differences regard the color, that can be cobalt blue, white or bright red; the type of spring, that can be simple hot water, boiling mud tubs or geyzers that erupt up to 30 meters; and finally the onsen’s guest, that can be crocodiles or piranhas.

¹² (Beppu City Official Tourism Site, n.d.).

¹³ 14,91 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 134,17 yen, on 22/04/2023.

¹⁴ 2,98 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 134,17 yen, on 22/04/2023.

As already mentioned, the second main attraction of the city strongly recommended by the Beppu city official tourism web site is the local food, the *Jigokumushi* (地獄蒸し).

During the visit of these onsen, it is possible to eat the famous local eggs, rice or pudding cooked by using these natural steams or to live the experience of cooking by yourself your entire meal. In fact, for centuries in this area people used the natural steam to cook, and still nowadays there are some places in the city that keep using the vapors coming from the underground to create steam cookers. One of the most popular examples is the Kannawa's hell steam cooking center (地獄蒸し工房鉄輪, *Jigokumushi Koubou Kannawa*), near to Kannawa's onsen. Here it is possible for visitors to rent steam chambers, cook their own meal (Figure 23) and eat the so called "Hell Steam Cuisine", delicious local product like vegetables or meat cooked with the help of the "Hell's steam", while feeling the distinctive smell of this area.



Figure 23, Kannawa's hell steam cooking center - Source: Japan guide

Finally, spread in the city there are free entrance footbath where everyone can enjoy the hot water's feeling just immersing feet and legs, without the necessity of putting off the clothes like in onsen. This experience is good for blood circulation because the temperature of the water and the pebbles that are in the water canals stimulate it properly, making a trip to Beppu very helpful for people's health.



Figure 22, Beppu foothbath - Source: Asia travel guide

In addition to these hot springs' activities, in Beppu it is possible to live a big variety of experiences. In the city there are an amusement park, a ropeway, a museum, an aquarium and a monkey reserve, without mentioning that is a coastal city surrounded by mountains, making it a really suitable destination for different kind of travelers. Anyhow, all these activities are not mentioned in the official websites.

The reason lies probably in the fact that, to enjoy the hells tour, taste the recommended local food and spend time immersed in the pools of hotels or those scattered around the city, it takes about one or two days. From the statistics on tourists' stay in the city¹⁵ this is the average time that visitors used to spend in Beppu before the Covid-19, not leaving enough time for other attractions.

Given the focus on official sources of information for onsen and *Jigokumeguri*, the strategy of the local community is made clear: they want to make the most of onsen activities, focusing little attention on the diversity of activities available in the city. Therefore, it is evidenced that the “plan for the internationalization of the spa city of Beppu” of the 1949 discussed in Chapter 2.3 is still currently in place.

Other missing information are those regarding the possibility to reach important attractions within the Oita prefecture if staying overnight in the city.

¹⁵ (別府市観光戦略部観光課, 2020).

This prefecture covers an area of 6,341 km²¹⁶, and within it there are countless sites worth visiting that are easy to reach from Beppu station and that should be publicized to make people wanting to stay more than just one night.

Of these, have been chosen for this research the most convenient places to visit that do not involve excessively long journeys or multiple changes with the transportation, in order to test usability even for people who do not speak the local language¹⁷.

Depending on visitors personal interests, it was decided to divide the mentioned places into 3 categories: 1) places of naturalistic interest such as Kokonoe Yume Otsuribashi, Yujaku Park, Beppu Ropeway park, Harajiri Falls, Futamigaura and Gyouran Falls; 2) places of historical and cultural interest such as Usuki Stone Buddhas, Nioza Historical Road, Usa Jingu, Hiji castle, samurai residences street in Kitsuki and 3) more commercial places such as the town of Yufuin and Oita city.

As this on-site research took place during the autumn period, first-hand data was collected on the best spots to enjoy 紅葉 (*kouyou*), the Japanese practice of admiring autumn leaves turning red and yellow. This tradition within the country is as old and important as 花見 (*hanami*), the practice of enjoying cherry blossom, but still little known abroad. Of the aforementioned places of natural interest, the Kokonoe Yume Otsuribashi, Yujaku Park and Beppu Ropeway park, are perfect spots to enjoy the colors of Japanese autumn and to immerse oneself in nature.



Figure 24, Beppu ropeway park - Source: personal picture

¹⁶ (大分県, 2021).

¹⁷ All the places mentioned below have been personally visited on day trips and solo journeys, to demonstrate the safety of solo travel in the area.

Another important aspect of Kyushu's attractiveness from a natural point of view are the waterfalls. As can be seen from figure 25, there are more than a hundred waterfalls on the island. Among them, some are located at the end of more or less complete hiking trails, but these that are mentioned in this research are located really close to city or villages, making it possible for every kind of visitor to see these amazing places.

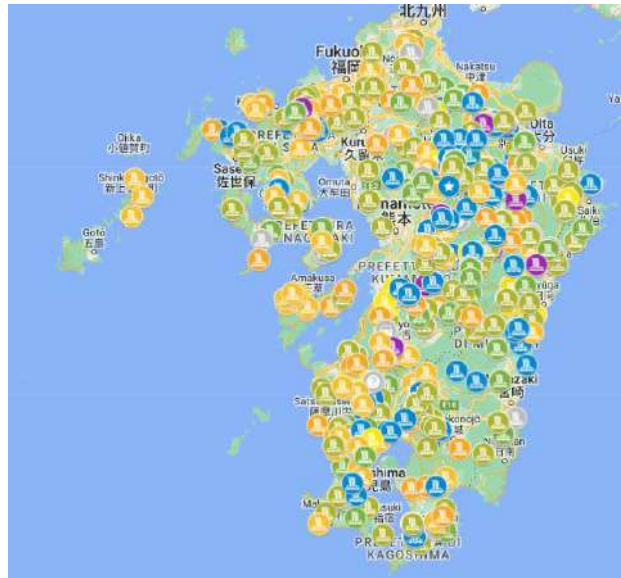


Figure 26, Waterfalls in Kyushu - Source: MUTYO

Within the prefecture it is also possible to relive the urban landscapes of the Samurai era in the towns of Usuki and Kitsuki, which can be reached and visited in one day, and to come into contact with a real Japanese old-style experience.



Figure 25, Usuki Nioza Historical Road - Source: personal picture

There are also two National Treasures, recognized by Japanese Government, which can be reached in one day from Beppu with direct bus lines. These places are the Usa Jingu Shrine and the Usuki Stones Buddhas. The Usa Jingu was built in 8th century and is the first shrine in Japan dedicated to Hachiman, the Japanese god of archery and war. The Usuki Stones Buddhas are more than 60 figures that have been carved from the Heian period (794–1185) to the Kamakura period (1185–1333), that still preserve their original colours. Both these sites are surrounded by beautiful woods, making it perfect also for nature-spot lovers.



Figure 27, Usuki stones Buddha - Source: personal picture

Finally, for people who love more commercial places, it is possible to go to Yufuin and Oita city, where it is possible to do shopping or eating a multitude of delicious local food. Oita is the biggest city of the prefecture, it is possible to live a day in a big Japanese city just in 20 minutes of train from Beppu, go to karaoke, to izakaya, do shopping or visiting museums. Yufuin is a small town in the mountain very popular among tourists because of the plenty presence of food and souvenirs.



Figure 28, Yufuin restaurant road - Source: personal picture

The above-mentioned places are not recommended in any of the official websites, but were discovered by using google maps, friend's or local people's recommendations or by seeing social media's pictures, mainly on Instagram.

Particularly talking about the pictures found out in the social media, that was possible because the algorithm uses to suggest picture of places near to people's position. People's recommendations are also possible mainly if you are already in the city. These two aspects make it more difficult to find these places before to come to the destination. If the local community want people to stay more in Beppu city and Oita prefecture, the information about all these spots should made available in advance by using websites, blog etcetera, so that people can found them during the "planning" phase of the travel and it's still possible to decide to do a long vacation.

In case of long vacation it is also possible to change prefecture and go from Beppu to all major cities in Kyushu by buses or trains, with routes ranging from 2 to 5 hours. By promoting other destinations, the tourism sector could rise in the entire island. In particular it worth to be mentioned the city of Kumamoto, home to one of the largest castles in the region, the city of Fukuoka, the current economic center of Kyushu, and

finally Nagasaki, where it is possible to visit the museum of the atomic bomb and live an experience of great emotional impact.



Figure 29, Nagasaki Peace Statue - Source: personal picture

2.2 How to get to the city

Beppu is well connected to the principal locations with buses, trains, ferries and airplanes, making it easy to travel from and to the city.

AIRPORT

The Oita Airport is located at 45 minutes by bus from the city center, and one way route is 1500 yen¹⁸, with discounts available for children and depending on the number of tickets purchased.

¹⁸ 11,17 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 134,30 yen, on 24/04/2023.

The domestic flights from Oita Airport go to Tokyo (Haneda and Narita, 90 minutes), Osaka (60 minutes) and Nagoya (75 minutes). The international routes are for Seoul, Busan and Muan (South Korea).

Another possibility is to go to Fukuoka airport, 2 hours away from Beppu city, connected by direct bus or train. From that airport there are domestic flights to the major city of Japan (more than 20 routes) and overseas flights to Taiwan, South Korea, Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia and Singapore. This airport is a major hub directly connected to other trading centers with Europe and America, making reaching Kyushu much easier than it looks. For example, you can take a direct flight from Milan to Seoul (12h 28m), make a change and arrive in Fukuoka in 1h 20m.

FERRY

Beppu city is connected directly by ferry to Osaka and Yawatahama (Shikoku Island).

TRAIN

It is possible to take the Shinkansen that connect the Japanese major cities to Fukuoka and then change there for Beppu. With train or bus it takes 2 hours to get to the city.

BUS

The bus lines in Beppu connect the city to the major destinations in the island of Kyushu and also Honshu, going from the closest to the further destinations such as Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo and so on. Travelling with bus need more time but it is usually the cheapest way.

2.3 Where to stay in Beppu city

In 2021, there were 330 accommodation facilities in Beppu, including 232 hotels and *ryokan*, 97 guest houses and capsule hotels and 1 boarding house¹⁹. Very different in form, offer and price, they make the city accessible to all kinds of needs.

In this research were studied a guest house (“In Bloom Beppu”), two modern-style hotels (“Midobaru Gallery” and “Terrace Midobaru”) and a *ryokan* (“Bettei Haruki”).

¹⁹ (別府市観光・産業部, 2022).

Thanks to the two interviews with representatives of these accommodations, it was possible to better understand the peculiarities of the facilities and the location.

2.3.1 “In Bloom Beppu”



Figure 30, In Bloom Beppu picture from outside - Source: In Bloom Beppu website

In Bloom Beppu is an old Japanese villa that was built in 1941 that is now used as guesthouse. This structure was one of those guest houses that began to be built in Beppu in the 1940s by wealthy entrepreneurs returning from Korea discussed in section 1.3 of this research. Since the Pacific War began immediately after its construction, however, it failed to fulfil its function until after the war, when it began to host American soldiers. After the soldiers left, it became a private home and then remained empty for some time, until Mr. Hanada decided to buy it in 2018 and make it what it is today.

To describe the structure Mr. Hanada said: “建物の中に全部和室なので、外国人が入った瞬間喜びますよね。これで日本っていう感じの建物なので [...]”²⁰.

Over the years, the house has maintained its traditional structure and today allows its guests to experience a stay in a traditional Japanese house and traditional Japanese room 和室 (*washitsu*) complete with 畳 (*tatami*, “wooden floors”), 障 (*shoji*, “sliding doors”)

²⁰ *Tatemonono nakani zenbu washitsu nanode, gaikokujinga haitta shunkan yorokobimasuyone. Korede Nihontte iu kanjino tatemononanode*, “as in the structure all the rooms are Japanese style-room, when foreigners come inside they’re happy. Because the building is really *Japanese*”.

and 布団 (*futon*, “Japanese bedding”), all emphasized by typical classical-style decoration (Figure 31 and 32).



Figure 32, In Bloom Beppu inside -
Source: In Bloom Beppu website



Figure 31, In Bloom Beppu outside -
Source: In Bloom Beppu website

Talking about services of the guesthouse Mr. Hanada stated as follow:

“うちが温泉ありませんし、シャワールームしかないし、お食事もしません。なぜかという、別府って温泉やレストランがたくさんあるとご存じの通りなんです、例えばホテルとかにとまったら、そこに温泉をついてたらそこだけしか入らないんじゃないんですか。だけど[別府で]一か所だけだったらめちやくちやもったいないだろう”²¹.

During the interview Mr. Hanada highlighted his willingness to ensure that those who stay at his accommodation spend as much time as possible turning around the city, enjoying of all its special features like onsen, food and the atmosphere. For this reason, in this structure services like food or beverage are not provided, there are no onsen but only shared showers. He said that if people come to an accommodation and spend all the time inside, without visiting the entire city, it’s a big waste.

In “in Bloom Beppu” it is also possible to dispose of sharing kitchen and free spaces where eat your own food together with other guests. This enables customers to pay a

²¹ *Uchiga onsenmo arimasenshi, shawaaruumu shika naishi, oshokujimo dashimasen. Nazeka toiuto, Bepputte onsenya resutoranga takusan aruto gozonjino tourinandesune, tatoeba hoterutokani tomattara, sokoni onsenwo tsuitemata sokodake shika hairanainjanaindesuka. Dakedo ikkashodake dattara mechakucha mottainaidarou*, “We don’t have hot springs, we have nothing else than a shower room and we don’t serve meals. If you stay at a hotel, for example, and it has a hot spring, you will only go to that one place. But if you go only to one hot spring [in Beppu], it would be an incredible waste”.

lower price, making it very suitable for target as young people, and to reflect the purpose of the owner, written on the website:

“We want many people to know and feel about the history and culture created in this town by offering services in the shape of a small inn, and deliver the voices of pleasure back to the local residents.

There is nothing makes us so happy than many people being a fan of Beppu and sharing there memories”²².

The words of the owner of the guesthouse in the official website perfectly describe the atmosphere and the strategy adopted by the host Jyunya Hanada in welcoming his customers.

Mr. Hanada hometown is not Beppu. Anyhow, the fascinating thing that came out during the interview was his strong connection with this city. He defined *a big waste* to not see and visit Beppu properly, because he wants people to feel Beppu’s uniqueness as he did and do.

“海外人が別府で有名な料理を食べたいって、教えてあげる。ご案内してあげるのをすごく大事な仕事なんですよ、ホテルの人って”²³.

Mr. Hanada said that his main task is to advise his guests according to their wishes. For example, if guests want to eat famous local food, he recommends the best restaurants, creating an interdependence between him and the local shopkeepers and allowing the city to bloom.

Mr. Hanada’s goal is to create a place where people can sleep, relax and know new people while exploring Beppu and creating great memories connected to the city.

²² (In Bloom Beppu, n.d.).

²³ *Kaigaijina Beppude yuumeina ryouriwo tabetaitte, oshieteageru. Goan'nai shiteagerunowo sugoku daijina shigotonandesuyo, hoteruno hitotte*, “If foreigners say that they want to eat famous Beppu food, I suggest it to them. For a person who work in an hotel, to inform is the most important task”.

Another important aspect in his vision is to create a place where the clients can meet and interact to each other (for example cooking together in the shared kitchen), and also with him. Mr. Hanada is a real host for his customers, he like to advise his guests on where to go to eat, to visit and about traditions in Japan. He said that in his experience as host, he has often been invited by guests themselves to spend time with them during these various activities, creating strong links with them and collecting a multitude of pictures together (Figure 33).



Figure 33, Mr. Hanada and his guests - Source: Mr. Hanada

At the question “What is guesthouse In Bloom Beppu?” in the session of Frequent Asked Questions of the website, the answer is as follow:

“We do not have such an incredible servicer as a ryokan or a hotel, but please enjoy the exchange with the traveler’s and the spot in walking distance staying in an old villa architecture. We will help you make the best memories in Beppu”.

Saying it the owner strongly clarify his desires and the content of the offer he provides: a place where to experience traditions, to live the city and to meet people.

“どこのホテルやっぱり自分の中で全部ありますよ。そこの満足のはあげるだけど、じゃなくて、街全体が自分のホテルっていう意識でいると、お客様も町の皆さんも本当に幸せになると思います”²⁴.

Mr. Hanada wish is for people to experience the city and not to stay inside an hotel and to see only one place. His idea is to create an active network with the city in order to make tourists and citizens happy at the same time.

Once the talk about the hotel, its services and history were over, we moved on to questions about the guests: where do they came from, how do they book the hotel, how do they communicate with the structure etc.

The results are that the Japanese people use to sleep in the guest house usually for one night (一泊, *ippaku*), while European and American use to sleep there for 2 or 3 nights (二三泊, *nisanpaku*).

Talking about the languages that the guest can speak, he said “たまに[日本語]喋る人いたけど、もうほとんど英語ですね”²⁵. Most of the foreign guests can't speak Japanese and they talk English with the host who self-studied it during his staying abroad. Most of the people find him on Booking, Expedia or Airbnb. Doing that, they can send each other messages and use the automatic translator of the phone, making the conversation easier for everyone.

The international travel type are mostly couples, Japanese travelers are mostly couples or family. The age of the guests is usually between 20 and 26 years old.

2.3.2 “Sekiya Resort”

The Sekiya Resort is a family enterprise comprising three facilities in Beppu: Bettei Haruki, Terrace Midobaru and Galleria Midobaru, where the interview was made.

²⁴ *Dokono hoteru yappari jibunno nakade zenbu arimasuyo. Sokono manzokunowa agerudakedo, janakute, machi zentaiga jibunno hoterutteiu ishikide iruto, okyakusamamo machino minasanmo hontouni shiawaseni naruto omoimasu*, “Every hotel has everything in itself. Of course is a complete service, but if people think of the whole town as their hotel, I think both, tourist and citizens, will be really happy”.

²⁵ *Tamani shaberu hito itakedo, mou hotondo eigodesune*, “sometimes there were people who spoke [Japanese], but it's mostly English nowadays”.

The first one is a *ryokan*-style hotel with private onsen for most of the rooms, described as a place “*where hot spring water flows into a luxurious private bath*” or “*your own personal sanctuary where the noise of the city is long forgotten*”²⁶ (Figure 34).



Figure 34, Bettei Haruki private onsen - Source: Bettei Haruki web site

The website emphasizes the elegance of the place in its description, uses formal and sophisticated language and makes it clear what the target audience of this ryokan is: wealthy people seeking a place of peace isolated from people and their surroundings. In this ryokan it is possible to eat fresh food cooked by the *cuisine* privately inside the room, without the necessity to meet other guests.

It should also be noted that of these three hotels, Bettei Haruki is “adult only hotels” as specified by the home page, factor that amply demonstrates how the hosts’ objective is to create a quiet and relaxing atmosphere.

In fact, the peculiarity of these hotels, is to let the guests experience peace by using private onsen or enjoying the sound of the nature and the view on the bay, with almost no contact with other guests.

The second location, the Terrace Midobaru is “*designed with the best of the Japanese style and the modern elegance*”, and it’s a “*modern haven nestled in serene green hills*”²⁷. Every room has a semi-open-air bath in the private terrace with the view of Beppu bay (Figure 35).

²⁶ (Bettei Haruki, n.d.).

²⁷ (Terrace Midobaru, n.d.).



Figure 35, Terrace Midobaru room - Source: Terrace Midobaru web site

Here too, the target is clearly focused on elegance and luxury. On the website it is mentioned that the entrance of the hotel was nominated for the 2016 Kyushu Architecture Award in the session “modern design”, making clear the importance given at the design inside and outside the structure. The main features of the place are the refined *cuisine* to be enjoyed in a luxurious setting with a view of Beppu Bay and the relaxation of a semi-open, private onsen, with the sea view.

In this hotel there are restaurant and public onsen, so it becomes a personal choice for the guest to decide whether to share mealtimes and bathing with other guests or to stay within more private surroundings.

Finally, there is Galleria Midobaru, that is the newest between the tree mentioned that was opened in 2020, just before the spread of Covid-19. As before, the rooms have semi-open-air bath, but the difference in this structure is inside his concept: “*a place where Beppu comes to life through art*”, “*a space expressing the new Beppu*”²⁸.

Since the interview took place in this facility, it was chosen to focus on its features and offers.

²⁸ (Galleria Midobaru, n.d.).



Figure 34, Galleria Midobaru - Source: personal picture

The first question regarded the services that are present in the Galleria. The answer of Mr. Hayashi was as follow:

“この建物で一番の特徴はまずデザインですよ。写真を見たら、この建物を
見たことがある人は分かるだと思います。だから記憶に残る建物すごく意識し
てて、そのデザインが ABB・リーフ賞²⁹、建築のショーに top 1 0 0 に選ばれた。
[...]このような建物は大分県の初めてなのです”³⁰。

The most important component of this Galleria, as the name suggest, is design. This hotel is unique and special, so much so that if someone sees it once, they will remember and recognize it in the future. It is a place whose memory lingers on. Moreover, it is the first

²⁹ (ABB LEAF Awards, n.d.).

³⁰ *Kono tatemonode ichibanno tokuchouwa mazu dezaindesuyo. Shashinwo mitara, kokono tatemonowa mita kotoga aru hitowa wakarudato omoimasu. Dakara kiokuni nokoru tatemono sugoku ishiki shitete, sono dezainga, ABB riifu shou, kenchikuno shouni top 100 ni erabareta.[...] Kono youna tatemonowa Oiita kenno hajimetena nodesu, “the most striking feature of this building is the design. If you have seen this building before and than you see the photos, you know [that is this place]. So we are very conscious of the building being memorable, and the design was chosen by the ABB leaf awards, a famous design price, as one of the top best 100 buildings in the world. [...] This is the first building like this in Oita Prefecture”.*

of its kind in Oita prefecture, and is in the top 100 ranking of the ABB LEAF Awards of 2020/2021³¹ in the category “Best Hospitality Building Project³²”.

“あとはこの中で構成されているストーリーです。ここにある物はほとんどここにしかないになってます。ほとんど手作り”³³.

The second important aspect of the building is the story it tells. Every object present in the structure is unique, handmade appositely for this place.

He was asked in detail what kind of story the Galleria tells, and he answered was as follow:

“まずですね、この建物って茶色見えると思うんですよ。あれは、最初に地層調査をする時に、地に穴をあけて地層調べるですよ。で、その地層を見て、そのままデザインにした。人間がこの下の地層を見たらこんなですよ。ここにしか出せない。[...]なんでそのイメージで作ってかという私達はすごく土地に対してリスペクトをするんですよ”³⁴.

The first detail regards the color of the structure, like brown. Mr. Hayashi said that this color is special, because it is taken from the underlying stratus. This color of the rocks is typical of Beppu and can't be find anywhere else. The reason why they choose this strategy for the design of the hotel is because of the great respect that he and his family have for their city.

³¹ ABB celebrates the best in international architecture. The ABB LEAF Awards is an annual international architectural prize. It recognizes innovative architectural design that sets the benchmark for the international architectural community of the next generation. Entry is open to all architects worldwide and buildings located anywhere in the world.

³² The ABB LEAF Hospitality Building Award celebrates the interior design and structural design of any hospitality building project. Whether it is a hotel, a restaurant, or a bar, it will be assessed on the merits of all design aspects within that project.

³³ *Atowa kono nakade kousei sareteiru sutourii desu. Kokoni aru monowa hotondo kokoni shikanaini nattemasu. Hotondo tedzukuri*, “than, [other important point is] the story that is narrated. Almost every object [present in the hotel] can be found only here. [They are] mostly handmade”.

³⁴ *Mazudesune, kono tatemonotte chairo mieruto omoundesuyo. Arewa, saishoni chisou chousawo suru tokini, tochini anawo atte chisou shiraberudesuyo. De, sono chisouwo mite, sonomama dezainni shita. Ningenga kono shitano chisouwo mitara kon'na youdesuyo. Kokoni shika dasenai.[...]Nande sono imeejide tsukuteka toiuto watashitachiwa sugoku tochini taishite risupekutowo surundesuyo*, "first of all, this building looks brown. When we did the strata survey at the beginning, we made a hole in the ground to look at the strata. Then we took the [color of the] strata and made the design as it is. If a human being could look at the strata underneath, it would look like this. [The color of the soil] it is like that only here. The reason why we did this is that we have deep respect for the land".

“テラス御堂原の御堂原はこの辺りは昔御堂の原と言われていた。御堂ってお寺という意味があった。またその土地をリスペクトをするっていうのがすごく大切にしている”³⁵.

The names of the Terrace and the Galleria were also given as a sign of respect and connection to the place on which they were built. Since it is full of temples, the terms *mido* (御堂, “temple”) and *hara* (原, “place”) were chosen, creating Midobaru.

“あとはアート・ピスですね。アートは 12 人のアーティストの方をお願いしたんだけど、皆さん大分で作品を展示したことがある。大分生まれの人。タイトルだけ決めました「別府・大分のことを題材にしてください」。で展示する場所はここになりました”³⁶.

The last topic is art. He said that every painting present in the hotel is made by artists who were born in Beppu or Oita and have some kind of relationship with the city. The themes were free to choose by the artist, they just put as instruction that is have to be something related to Oita or Beppu. Here, modern elements emphasize the historical and traditional aspects of Beppu.

The attitude of the executive director is perfectly reflected in the design of the building and in the ideal it pursues: an elegant, quiet place that expresses itself through accurate details.

Once the talk about the hotel, its services and history were over, we moved on to questions about the guests: where do they come from, how do they book the hotel, how do they communicate with the structure etc.

³⁵ *Terasu midoubaru no midoubaruwa kono atariwa mukashi midouno harato iwareteita. Midoutte oterato iu imiga atta. Mata sono tochiwo risupekutwo surutte iunoga sugoku taisetsuni shiteiru*, “the world midoubaru of the Midoubaru Terrace [and Galleria] means place of temples. [It was given this name because] in ancient times this place was full of temples. Again, the respect for the land is very important [for us]”.

³⁶ *Atowa aatopisu desune. Aatowa 12ninno aatisutono katani onegai shitandakedo, minasan Ooitade sakuhinwo tenji shita kotoga aru. Ooitaumareno hito. Taitoru dake kimemashita “Beppu Ooitano kotowo daizaini shite kudasai”*. *De tenji suru bashowa kokoni narimashita*, “then there is Art. We asked 12 artists, who had already exhibited their work in Oita. [They were] people who were born in Oita. We only decided the theme: “use Beppu/Oita as the subject matter”. And here is where the works are exhibit”.

At the moment, the Galleria host mainly people from Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand, but also European and Americans.

To the question “how do they know the structure?” Mr. Hayashi answered:

“多分、まだ知られていなんです。やっぱりそのオープンした時に、2020年10月に、コロナになったので、海外の人ってあまり来なかったんですよ。来た人はインスタグラム[で見つけた]って”³⁷.

The Galleria opened just before the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, so it has not been able to accommodate many foreign guests until now³⁸. The foreigners who had the chance to arrive here have got to know the facility through photos on social media, especially Instagram.

“そして海外の人達は OTA³⁹でプロモーションを[見て、予約した]”⁴⁰.

Foreigner guests do their reservation via online platforms (Booking, Expedia, etc.) because they can find discounts there.

In the hotel almost every one of the staff members is learning foreign languages (English, Korean and Chinese), thing that makes it easier to interact with customers that can't speak Japanese.

To the question “do you ask for English as a requirement to work with you during the interview?”, Mr. Hayashi said:

³⁷ *Tabun, mada shirareteinandesu. Yappari sono oopunshita tokini, 2020nen 10 gatsuni, koronani nattanode, kaigaino hitotte amari konakattandesuyo. Kita hitowa insutaguramu [de mitsuketa] tte*, “it's probably not well known yet. After all, after it opened in October 2020, Corona came, so not many people from abroad could come. Those who did come [said they found it on] Instagram”.

³⁸ “Now” refers to the time when the interview was made, 14 December 2022, only two months after the reopening of borders for international tourists.

³⁹ “OTA” means Online Travel Agency. are the online platforms through which one can book accommodation or other arrangements for one's travels. The most common examples are Booking, Expedia, Airbnb, etc.

⁴⁰ *Soshite kaigaino hitotachiwa OTAde puromōshonwo [mite, yoyakushita]*, “than, foreigners [saw the] promotion on OTAs [and booked it].

“いいえ。勉強している。そこに来てモチベーションをあげている人もいるし、色々あります”⁴¹.

The motivation to learn English and other languages came after the start to work in the hotel. As they have international guests and they hope to have more and more now that the borders are opened again, they want to become to be able to communicate with the clients.

But there are also cases when the guests can't speak either Japanese or English. In that cases, instant translator application are used.

To the question “what kind of clients do you have?”, Mr. Hayashi answered:

“日本人で8割が2人の旅行なんですけど、一番多いのは女性だけのグループは多いです。お母さんと来たり、友達と来たり。男性実はすごい少ない。20代が30%で、30代が50%で、40代が20%で、後はファミリーが20%。一般的に一泊二日します。”⁴².

The Japanese clients are 80% couples, mostly couples of girls. They travel together with their mothers or friends. There are very few men who came to this hotel. The 50% of the costumers are around 30 years old, the 30% are 20s, the 40s are 20% together with families. They generally stay for one or two nights.

2.4 Coronavirus crisis

Given that the pandemic was a very significant crisis for the sector being considered, during the interviews there was a section made to understand the problems that the entrepreneurs lived during the pandemic. In this section it will report their experiences and the strategies they adopt to survive to the stop of the international tourist inbound.

⁴¹ *Iie. Benkyoushiteiru. Sokoni kite mochibeeshonwo ageteiru hitomo irushi, iroiro arimasu*, “no [it's not a requirement]. [They] are studying. There are various examples, some when they come here become motivated [to learn].

⁴² *Nihonjinde Swariga futarino ryokou nandesukedo, ichiban oinowa josei dakeno guruupuwa ooidesu. Okaasanto kitari, tomodachito kitari. Dansei jitsuwa sugoi sukunai. 20daiga 30paasentode, 30daiga 50paasentode, 40daiga 20paasentode, atowa famiriiga 20paasento. Ippantekini, ichinippakushimasu*, “80% of Japanese people travelling are two people [groups], but the most common group is women-only. They come with their mothers or with friends. Men actually are very few. Generally, 30% are in their 20s, 50% are in their 30s, 20% are in their 40s, and the rest are families. They generally stay one or two nights”.

2.4.1 “In Bloom Beppu”

“[...]で、コロナになりました。これは大分に一番売れている新聞でうちがでた。これが2020年4月で、これから海外からお客さん来なくなりますというアナウンスがあって、すぐキャンセルがドドドドドン出てきまして。。。だいたい約70%であった[予約]もう完全に0になったという経験をしました。だから2020年の5月は一か月間お休みを取りました”⁴³。

Mr. Hanada told that during the month of April 2020, after the announcement of the closure of the borders and the state of emergency the reservations he had were all canceled. Usually the guest house has a 70% of reservation every month, but that month they dropped to 0 and he had to close until May. His story was also told in the city newspaper edited on April 2nd 2020 (Figure 35⁴⁴).



Figure 35, City newspaper - Source: Mr. Hanada

⁴³ [...]de, koronani narimashita. Korewa Ooitani ichiban ureteiru shinbunde uchiga deta. Korega 2020nen shigatsude, korekara kaigaikara okyakusan konakunarimasu toiu anaunsuga atte, sugu kyanseruga dododododon dete kimashite... Daitai yaku 70-paasentodeatta [yoyaku] mou kanzenni 0 ni natta toiu keikenwo shimashita. Dakara 2020nenno gogatsuwa ikkagetsukan oyasumiwo torimashita, “and then the Corona arrived. We were in the best-selling newspaper in Oita. It was April 2020, and after the announcement that there would be no more visitors from abroad, cancellations started coming in very quickly. It became a situation where the [reservation] rate, which was about 70%, completely dropped to zero. In April we had to close for one month”.

⁴⁴ The title of the news is *mijikana ouenga chikarani*, “powered by familiar support”. The grey title on the right says *Shukuhakukyaku gekigen shita bebbushi*, meaning: “Beppu city, where the number of overnight guests has dropped dramatically”.

“お客さんが全然いなくてこれが無理とってた。続けられない。[...]もう楽しいことをやったでしょう。もういいでしょう、熊本に帰ってかなあ、どうしようって”⁴⁵.

Mr. Hanada described his difficult moments, his doubts about how to deal with that difficult and sudden situation. He was aware that he had experienced two fun-filled years and revealed that he thought perhaps it might be time to return to his family in Kumamoto.

“悩んでた時にちょうど僕の友達から電話があって、やったのはこれを使った：オンライン宿泊。何かやったかという、ゲストハウスの中で今までやったものをオンラインでやってた。[...]僕が喋って、チェックインしてもらって色々なものを話して、皆さんとカンパイしながら、お酒を飲みながらこりゅうをするってなりました”⁴⁶.

Again, making clear his passion for the city and his desire to make people know Beppu, Mr. Hanada’s solution to this moment of crisis has been to create online tours of his guesthouse and of the city. With the help of his friend he made virtual tours of his guest house, doing online check-in, telling anecdotes on various topics and drinking together online with his guests. The tours continued also outside, between the streets and the most beautiful spot of the city.

⁴⁵ *Okyakusanga zenzen inakute korega murito omotteta. Tsutsukerarenai. Mou tanoshii kotowo yattadeshou. Mou iideshou, Kumamotoni kaette kanaa, dou shiyoutte*, “The customers stop coming, and I thought that was impossible [the situation]. I couldn’t continue. [I thought that] I already had fun. [I thought] it could be enough, I wondered if I should go back to Kumamoto, I wondered what I should do”.

⁴⁶ *Nayandeta tokini choudo bokuno tomodachikara denwaga atte, yattanowa korewo yatta: Onrain shukuhaku. Nanika yattaka toiuto, gesutohausuno nakade imamade yatta monowo onrainde yatteta.[...] Bokuga shabette, chekkuin shitemoratte iroirona monowo hanashite, minasanto kanpai shinagara, osakewo nominagara koriyyuwo suruttenarimashita*, “Just when I was struggling I got a call from a friend of mine and we did this: online accommodation. What I did was doing online what I’ve done so far in the guesthouse. [...] I did the check.in, I talked about various things, we drunk together [with the guests] and then I cheers with them”.



Figure 36, Mr. Hanada's online tours - Source: Mr. Handa

“本当別府って観光の街なのでやっぱり皆さんダメージを受けて、ホテルとか旅館の人たちはお仕事辞めてってという状況があるの中で僕頑張ってるねお褒め頂きまして[テレビプログラムによると]”⁴⁷.

As Beppu is a touristic city, the city economy and the people suffered dramatically during Corona crisis. A lot of people employed in hotel or ryokan lost their jobs. Mr. Hanada keep working hard in this difficult moment and for this reason, he received a lot of compliments by local and national tv programs. Given the success of these online tours, many Japanese television networks interview him and follow him during his tours.

The program of his online tour was as follow:

“画面ごしいらっしゃるお客様に先にお土産を送って、例えば別府の食べ物だったりとか大分の麦焼酎を送ったりとかあと別府の温泉に行かないので入浴剤とか、色んな観光のパンフレットだったりとか...全パックにして先に送ってたんです。で[オンライン宿泊]ちょうどお昼からスタートだったので皆さんお腹そくくじゃないですか。[...]でその中に大分の団子汁の材料をお客さんに送っ

⁴⁷ *Hontou Bepputte kankouno machinanode yappari minasan dameejiwo ukete, hoterutoka ryokan 'no hitotachiwa oshigoto yametette toiu joukyouga aruno nakade boku ganbatterune o home itadakimashite [terebi puroguramu niyoruto*, “Beppu is a tourist town, so people have been suffering and hotels and ryokans employee have had to quit their jobs. I received greetings [from tv programs] because I didn't give up”.

てオンラインクッキングを始めたんです。皆作って、カンパイして、食べながら、飲みながら、オンラインチェックインを見て頂くという形になった”⁴⁸.

In order to make the tour experience more realistic and concrete, online tour participants were sent packages in advance containing various items: local food, pamphlets on Beppu tourist spots, typical Oita sake, bath salts to imitate the feeling of entering onsen etc. Since the tour started around lunchtime, Mr. Hanada would send the ingredients to cook the typical Oita dumpling soup, with fresh local ingredients, and show the participants live how to cook it, so that they could then eat it together with sake.

“[...] でその時お酒屋さんもいらっしゃって、大分のお酒の魅力にはまっていただいて、オンラインショッピングまでやったとか”⁴⁹.

As a result, people not only could experience a virtual tour of the city and try the local food, but started to buy online local products, food and souvenirs, improving Beppu export.

[...] 別府お客様に身近な感じて頂きてという、これはすごく大きな自信に繋がってのはありました⁵⁰.

As a personal reflection, Mr. Hanada said that acting that way, he felt possible again to make people feel close to Beppu, even if they were far away.

With this point, Mr Hanada ends his testimony of the problems he experienced during the Corona virus. Given the premises, he was asked for his personal opinion on the

⁴⁸ *Gamen goshi irassharu okyakusamani sakini omiyagewo okutte, tatoeba Beppuno tabemonodattari toka Ōitano mugijōchūwo okuttari toka, ato Beppuno onsenni ikanainode nyoyokuzai toka, iron'na kankouno panfurettodattari toka... zen pakkuni shite sakini okuttetandesune. De [onrain shakuhaku] choudo ohirukara sutaatodattanode minasan onaka sokunjanaidesuka.[...] De sono nakani Ooitano dangojiruno zairyūwo okyakusanni okutte onrain kukkinguwo hajimetandesu. Mina tsukutte, kanpai shite, tabenagara, nominagara, onrain chekkuinwo miteitadaku toiu katachini natta,* “For example, we sent souvenirs in advance to the guests coming through the screen, such as food from Beppu, or as they couldn’t go to the hot springs [we sent] bath salts, barley shochu from Oita and various tourist pamphlets... We sent all the packet in advance. And since we were starting at noon, everyone was probably hungry. So I sent the ingredients for the Oita dumpling soup to the guests and we started cooking online. Everyone cooked, cheered, ate, drank and watched the online check-in”.

⁴⁹ *[...] De sonotoki osakayasanmo irasshate, Ooitano osakeno miryokuni hamatteitadate, onrain shoppingu made yatta toka,* “one day there was a liquor shopper, and people were so fascinated by the charm of Oita’s sake that they even did online shopping”.

⁵⁰ *Beppu okyakusamani mijikanani kanjiteitadakite toiu, korewa sugoku ookina jishin 'ni tsunagattenowa arimashita,* “this gave me a lot of confidence that I could make customers feel close to Beppu”.

government's decision to stop the entry of foreign tourists, and his response was as follows:

“最初はよかったと思うんですけど、10月から要約外国人が入られるんですね。これはもっと早くやるべきだったんですね。日本政府はすごく遅かったと思うんですけど”⁵¹.

Mr. Hanada said that at the beginning he agreed with the government decision because it was necessary to stop the spread of the virus, but he thinks that the government should have reopen the borders faster.

He received a pdf file from Oita prefecture with the information on how to clean and how to put into practice the guideline to stop the spread of the coronavirus in his facility, but these indications were very rigorous, and the control that was made very strict: “絶対やらなきゃならなかった、ちゃんとやってるかテストがあって、けっこうね、このかく厳しかったですよね、最初。だんだん面倒くさくなって、もうしませんが思ってた[...]”⁵².

With regard to the economic aspect, at the beginning he received money from the government because he had to close the guest house, then he started to do online classes and started earning money from that activity.

2.4.2 “Sekiya Resort”

The three locations of the Sekiya Resort have different establishments and have therefore experienced the crisis caused by the lack of tourist demand differently. Of course there was the total absence of international tourists, but as far as the Japanese guests is concerned, Mr. Hayashi said:

⁵¹ *Saishowa yokattato omoundesukedo, 10 gatsukara youyaku gaikokujinga hairarerundesune. Korewa motto hayaku yarubekidattandesune. Nipponseifuwa sugoku osokattato omoundakedo*, “I think it was good at first. But foreigners could come back to Japan only in October, and I think this should have been done earlier. I think the Japanese government was very slow”.

⁵² *Zettai yaranakyanaranakatta, chanto yatteruka tesutoga atte, kekkone kono kaku kibishikattadesuyone, saisho. Dandan mendoukusaku natte, mou shimasento omottete*, “there was a test that you had to do to make sure you were doing it right, and it was really tough at first. It became more and more tedious and I also thought I wouldn't do it anymore”.

“Bettei Haruki という場所は、実はずっとお客様は多いんですよ。コロナの時でも 8 割の稼働ができました。今 99%なんですよ。で、Terrace Midobaru は今 80%なので、コロナの時は 40%ぐらい。で Galleria Midobaru というのは今 70%ぐらいで、コロナの時に 25%でした”⁵³。

During Covid, the Galleria Midobaru came to have only 25 % of its rooms occupied, the Terrace Midobaru 40 %, while Bettei Haruki maintained a capacity of 80 %. Now they are at 70, 80 and 99% respectively⁵⁴”.

“Why Bettei Haruki maintained such high percentages?”

“Bettei Haruki は特徴すごくあってお部屋で食事、朝も、ご飯も、夕ご飯を食べて、お部屋にお風呂があって、人と合わないコンセプトなんですよ。どちらかというと Terrace Midobaru とかここの Galleria もだけど、オープンスペースがあるので、そこでの滞在人とやっぱり一生の時は多い”⁵⁵。

The reason why Bettei Haruki maintains a very high attendance of guests lies in its concept: to provide spaces for relaxation without contact with other people. By having rooms where one can eat and having private baths, it is very easy not to meet with other guests, and contact with the staff also becomes very limited. On the contrary, the Terrace and the Galleria have open spaces where it is possible to meet other guests and spend time together.

This aspect is also highlighted in the web site as follow “we hope you stay with us at Sekiya Resort, a modern oasis in beautiful Beppu with full protection against the

⁵³ *Bettei Harukito iu bashowa, jitsuwa zutto okyakusamawa ooi ndesu yo. Koronano tokidemo swarino kadouga dekimashita. Ima 99 paasento nandesukedo. De, Terrace Midobaruwa ima 80 paasentonanode, koronano tokiwa 40 paasento gurai. De Galleria Midobaru to iunowa ima 70 paasento guraide, koronano tokini 25 paasentodeshita,* “the Bettei Haruki location has actually always had a lot of customers. Even when we were in Corona period, we were able to operate at 80%. Now it's at 99%. Terrace Midobaru is at 80% now, and at the time of Corona it was about 40%. And Galleria Midobaru is at 70% now, and it was at 25% at the time of Corona”.

⁵⁴ These data are the result of an annual average given by Mr. Hayashi, (一年のトタル平均, *ichinemo totaru heikin*).

⁵⁵ *Bettei Harukiwa tokuchou sugokuatte oheyade shokuji, asamo, gohanmo, yuu gohanwo taberete, oheyani ofuroga atte, hitoto awanai konseputo nandesuyo. Dochiraka toiu to Terrace Midobarutoka kokono Galleriamo dakedo, oopunsupeesuga arunode, sokodeno taizai hitoto yappari isshouno tokiwa ooi,* “Bettei Haruki is very unique, you can have breakfast, dinner and supper in your room, there is a private bath in every room, and the concept here is to not meet with other people. In Terrace Midobaru and the Galleria there are open spaces, so there are many occasions to meet other people”.

Coronavirus. Enjoy a relaxing vacation with us and forget these troubling times”, and *“enjoy a relaxing stay at Sekiya resort while avoiding the 3C”*⁵⁶⁵⁷.

“お部屋で朝も夜も食べたい、お部屋でお風呂に入りたい、他の人と会いたくない、それを調べたら、九州に三軒しかなかったんです。なんでって、人が少なくなったから、リスクがあって、ほとんど食事と部屋食を辞めました”⁵⁸.

During the Corona crisis, in Kyushu it was possible to have these services and to avoid the contact with people only in three structures. All the others decided to stop the food services because of the low presence of tourists compared to the high costs of keeping the service active and the high risks for the staff to get the virus. However, the decision of the other structure to limit this service, was a gain for the Bettei Haruki, that improved the number of its guests.

“気を付けたから私達この中で、部屋食しているスタッフの中で今年に入るまで誰もコロナならなかったんですよ”⁵⁹.

Mr. Hayashi highlighted that, thanks to the precautions, no one of the people of the staff get the virus until then.

To the question “what do you think about the long stop of the incoming of foreigners tourists?”, he answered:

“非常に残念ですが。海外の人は私達日本人に対してもそうだしコロナは感染経路は止めれば感染リスクがすごく下げれると思ってたので[...]だから全然私たちはもっと来てほしかった”⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ The “3C” means “crowded, closed spaces and close-contact”. The Japanese government resume with this term the actions to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

⁵⁷ (Sekiya Resort, n.d.).

⁵⁸ *Oheyade asamo yorumo tabetai, oheyade ofuroni hairitai, hokano hitoto aitakunai, sorewo shirabetara, Kyūshuuni sanken shika nakattandesu. Nandette, hitoga sukunakunattakara, risukuga atte, hotondo shokujito heyashokuwo yamemashita*, “[people] wanted to eat breakfast and dinner inside the room, take a private bath and didn't want to meet other people. [If looking for a place like that] there were only three hotels [that stayed opened] in Kyushu. The reason is because there were fewer people and it was risky, so everyone else almost quit dining and room service”.

⁵⁹ *Kiwo tsuketakara watashitachi kono nakade, heyashoku shiteiru sutaffuno nakade kotoshini hairumade daremo korona naranakattandesuyo*, “as we were careful, none here among the staff who bring the food in the room, had a corona until the beginning of this year”.

⁶⁰ *Hijouni zan'nendesuga. Kaigaino hitowa watashitachi nihonjin 'ni taishitemo soudashi koronawa kansen keirowa yamereba kansen risukuga sugoku sagereruto omottetanode [...] dakara zenzen watashitachiha motto kitehoshikatta*,

The stop of incoming tourists was really an unfortunate situation. He was optimistic about the possibility to stop the infection also with the incoming of foreigners, so he and his team would have wanted tourists to come.

“Do you think the action of the government were too strict?”

“いいえ、政府のアクションは逆に甘かっただと思います。理由は雇用調整助成金はちょっとやりすぎかなっていうか。[...] うちもらってないので。休まなかったの”⁶¹.

Mr. Hayashi comment on the political decision is that the government was too kind with the other structures in general from an economic point of view. In fact, the government gave a monetary support to all that accommodation facilities that decided (or were forced) to close. In contrast to “In bloom Beppu”, none of the three facilities decided to close during the crisis period, and thus received no monetary compensation from the government.

“理由はトレーニングができないんですよ。例えば英語の練習もできないし”⁶².

He emphasized the fact that his staff didn't stop during the crisis. They keep working, learning and practicing, so that they would be ready when the travel demand would come back to normal standards. If they had closed, they could not, for example, have done English exercise.

“[...]で、私達教育、カウンセリング授業を始めで、お金を入れてくる。他の企業に教えてあげる”⁶³.

During this time they earn money because they teach “business strategies” to other hotel owners, which pay them. Thanks to their social help to the city of Beppu, the local

“it's very unfortunate. I thought that the risk of infection could be reduced if the Corona infection route was stopped [...] that's why we wanted more people to come”.

⁶¹ *Iie, seifuno akushonwa gyakuni amakattadato omoimasu. Riyuuwa koyouchousei joseikinwa chotto yarisugikanatteiuka*, “No, I think the government's action was too generous in the opposite direction. The reason is that the employment adjustment subsidy was a bit too much”.

⁶² *Riyuuwa toreeninguga dekinaindesuyo. Tatoeba eigono renshuumo dekinaiishi*, “the reason is that [if the hotel is closed] it is not possible to do training. [The staff] can't practice English, for example”.

⁶³ *[...] De, watashitachi kyouiku, kaunseringu jugyouwo hajimede, okanewo haittekuru. Hokano kigyouni oshieteageta*, “[...] so, we start our education and counseling classes, and we could earn money. We teach other entrepreneurs”.

government permit them to do not pay taxes for almost 7 years. They help Beppu and local entrepreneurs to grow and their importance in the sector is recognized in this way.

Thanks to the tax exemption they could stay open and Hayashi's brother (the Director) ensured stable employment for employees despite the crisis for those who wanted to continue working, and even hired new staff.

Anyhow, not all the structures in Beppu (or in the entire Japan) could benefit from the tax exemption while staying open, so this remains an isolated case.

2.5 Strategies and problems in Beppu

The last part of the interviews concerned the problems and the strategies Mr. Hanada and Mr. Hayashi are using to grow their business and Beppu's name. Even if there are differences in the strategies they are follow, the two hotel representatives showed to share the same love for this city and the same aim: to make Beppu a place where to create beautiful memories.

2.5.1 "In Bloom Beppu"

The first question was to give a personal opinion about the most important problem that Beppu have, concerning tourist sector. Mr. Hanada answered as follow:

“例えば、別府といえは何かみたいな。。。日本と言えは京都をみたい。外国人は京都へ行くんじゃないんですか。観光客はゆっくり見れない。大きい所だけじゃなくて、日本に行って文化の中に入り込んで、色んな経験をしてのは、やっぱこのようなことを景況してくれるような人だったりとかをもっと存在いなきやいかないと思います”⁶⁴.

Mr. Hanada thinks that the place has great potential, but is not yet fully exploited. His opinion about foreign tourists is that when they come to Japan they usually tend to visit the most famous and biggest places like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto just because they are

⁶⁴ *Tatoeba, Bepputo ieba nantoka mitaina... Nihonto ieba Kyoutowo mitai. Gaikokujinwa Kyoutohe ikunjanaindesuka. Kankoukyakuwa yukkuri mirenai. Ookii tokoro dake janakute, Nihonni itte bunkano nakani hairikonde, iron'na keikenwo shitenowa, yappa kono youna kotowo keikyou shitekureruyouna hito dattari tokawo motto sonzaiinakayaikanaito omoimasu,* “for example, if you say Beppu, what can [people] may [want to] see? Speaking of Japan, [people] want to see Kyoto. Don't foreigners go to Kyoto? Tourists can't [reflect] slowly. I think there must be more people who want to live [real] experiences and getting into the Japanese culture”.

more known. In his opinion, however, what Beppu can offer is a more real, living and immersive experience in Japanese culture and tradition. And he thinks that should exist more people who want to experience this kind of travel.

To the question “do you think Oita airport should be made an international airport?” Mr. Hanada answered:

“まあ、今福岡で国際空港があるからアジアの人たちは直行便できるので、[大分空港]あのぐらいの大きさがいいんじゃない僕思ってます。。。ロングバケーションでいらっしゃる方が多くて、例えばその JR Pass が使えるだからもう移動が簡単できるし[...]これは十分だと思っています”⁶⁵.

Mr. Hanada thinks that it is not necessary to make Oita airport bigger or more international. In his opinion it is better to concentrate on making Beppu more famous and to make people wanted to visit it. In fact, people could also go to Tokyo, spend some day there and then use the JR Pass to go from Tokyo to Beppu, if they know that there are great things to see there. As Mr. Hanada said, it is already easy to get to Beppu even if Oita airport is not an international route. In fact, as it was mentioned in the paragraph 2.1, the city can be reached by buses, trains, boat and national or international flight to Fukuoka.

Talking about the strategies and his hopes for the future, Mr. Hanada said:

“外国の方は「別府がこんな素晴らしい街のは思ってなかった」って言葉をいただけるのは一番うれしい。「日本色んな所へ行ったけど別府が一番良かった」って聞きたい。そのために諦めんとダメなんです”⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ *Maa, ima Fukuokade kokusai kuukouga arukara Ajiano hitotachiwa chokkoubin dekirunode, [Ōita kuukou] ano guraino ookisade iinjanai boku omottemashite... Rongubakeeshonde irassharu kataga ookute, tatoeba sono JR pasuga tsukaerudakara mou idouga kantan dekirushi [...] korewa juobunda to omotteimasu*, “Well, at the moment there is the international airport in Fukuoka, people from Asia have direct flights, so I think it's fine that [Oita Airport] is big as it is. Many people come here for long holidays, so for example, they can use the JR Pass, which makes it easy to get around [...] I think this is sufficient”.

⁶⁶ *Gaikokuno katawa “Beppuga kon'na subarashii machinowa omottenakatta” tte kotobawo itadakerunowa ichiban ureshii. “Nihon iron'na tokorohe ittakedo Beppuwa ichiban yokatta” tte kikitai. Sonotameni akiramento damenandesu*, “the thing that makes me happiest is to hear foreigners saying “I never thought Beppu would be such a wonderful city”, or “I've been to many places in Japan, but Beppu was the best”. For this reason I can't give up [in my job]”.

Mr. Hanada loves his job, love hosting people and spending time with them. But the thing that moves him in his job is his passion for Beppu, that he try to transfer to his costumers. His aim is to make people say “I visited a lot of cities in Japan but Beppu is the best one”.

After this statement from him, the interview with Mr. Hanada has concluded.

2.5.2 “Sekiya Resort”

To Mr Hayashi was asked the same question about his personal opinion regarding the problems related to the tourism sector in Beppu. He answered as follow:

“飛行機の便数とバスの本数です。特に福岡、北九州へのバス”⁶⁷.

He thinks that the main problem for Beppu is the limited presence of transportation to and from the mail Kyushu’s airports, like Fukuoka airport and Kitakyushu airport.

As to whether Oita airport should be expanded and made international, his answer was:

“大分空港は海外受け入れる空港にもっとなってほしいで、両々安くしたらいいかな。でもそれは難しいかなって思ってた”⁶⁸.

It would be nice that Oita airport became bigger and that could embrace more international routes, but at the same time, it should become cheaper. Anyhow, he thinks that (at the moment), this is probably difficult to obtain.

“There is anything you think hotel owners can do to change this situation and obtain an international airport?”

“難しいですね。個人個人のホテルでは難しいですよ。一つはまずどんどん別府とか大分の魅力が増えたり、お客様が増えていかないと、「飛行機の便」増やそうってならない。[...]私達できるならもっとアピールをする場所”⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ *Hikoukino binsuuto basuno honsuu desu. Tokuni Fukuoka, Kitakyuushuheno basu*, “the number of flights and buses. Mainly the buses from Fukuoka [airport] and Kitakyushu [airport]”.

⁶⁸ *Oiita kuukouwa kaigai ukeireru kuukouni motto nattehoshiide, ryouryou yasuku shitara iikana. Demo sorewa muzukashiika natteomottete*, “I would like to see Oita Airport become more of an airport that accepts international flights, and I think it would be a good idea to make both airports cheaper. But I think this is difficult”.

⁶⁹ *Muzukashii desune. Kojin kojinnu hoterudewa muzukashii desuyo. Hitotsuwa mazu dondon Beppu toka Oiitano miryokuga fuetari, okyakusamaga futeikanaito, [hikōki no ben] fuyasoutte naranai. Watashitachi dekirunara motto apiiruwo suru basho*, “it's difficult. It is difficult for individual hotels. First of all, if the attraction of Beppu and Oita

Mr. Hayashi said that in his opinion, the only way to have a bigger number of flights it is to increase the attractive of Beppu and Oita. If the people want to visit these cities and start to go there, it will be necessary to increase the number of flights also in Oita airport. He thinks that it is the duty of the hoteliers and Beppu residents to increase the city's appeal, so as to attract more and more people and make it profitable for the transport companies to increase the transportation.

Regarding strategies to attract more tourists, it was asked whether or not coupons existed for international visitors.

“ありますよ。あるんですけど、外国人向けのクーポンは海外で予約しないととれない。20%の割引です。[政府じゃなくて]ホテルだけの知ってもらうためにプロモーションです。ホテルの料金のクーポンです”⁷⁰.

The Galleria have coupons available for foreigners. It is 20% discount for each room, decided and financed by the hotel itself. These are not a government decision, contrary to Go To Travel campaign. The discount is available only if people made the reservation from abroad, it can't be done if they go physically to the structure and reserve the room on the spot.

“Do you think this strategy helps?”

“役に立つと思ってます。そのクーポンをすると、いいことは掲載がラク上がるので[OTA の]ページへの上に名前が出るですよ。それうえでディスカウントっていうのはすごく強調してくれる”⁷¹.

Mr. Hayashi believe that this strategy does help. The reason lies in the fact that if a structure makes a discount, his name goes in the top of the OFA's page, making it easier

does not increase or the number of customers does not increase, will not increase [the number of the flights]. The thing that we can do is to make [Beppu's] appeal grow”.

⁷⁰ Arimasuyo. Arundesukedo, gaikokujinmukeno kuponwa kaigaide yoyakushinaito torenai. 20-Paasentono waribikidesu. [Seifu janakute] hoteru dakeno shitteromau tameni puromoushondesu. Hoteruno ryoukinno koupondesu, “yes, there is. There is, but you have to book [the room] abroad to get the coupon. [It is] 20% discount. It's a promotion to let people know [the hotel], [it's made not by the government], just [by] the hotel. It's a coupon for the hotel fee”.

⁷¹ Yakunitatsuto omottemasu. Sono kuponwo suruto, ii kotowa keisaiga raku agarunode [OTAno] peejiheno ueni namaega derudesuyo. Sore uede disukauntotte iunowa sugoku kyouchoushitekureru, “I think it is useful. The good thing about doing the coupon is that it raises the listing, so your name appears on the [OTA's] page top. And then the discount really emphasized the structure”.

for people to see it. Furthermore, when an establishment gives discounts, this emphasizes its image in the eyes of the seekers.

“Do you have special coupons also for Japanese people?”

“日本人に出してない、Go Toがあるからなにもしてないんです”⁷².

There are no discounts for Japanese because thanks to the Go To Travel campaign, they don't need additional discounts. Then Mr. Hayashi continued his speech saying that:

“日本人に向けるコマーシャル、外国人に向けるコマーシャルは全然違う。やっぱり海外の方はいかにお得、日本人はイメージのをもっと強調するんですよ。海外の人はクリックする理由はこれは20%offだからクリックするって。日本人は綺麗な写真を載ってたからクリックする”⁷³.

There are important differences to keep in mind for creating strategies to attract Japanese people and foreigners. The main difference is the reason why they do choose the structure. Foreigners usually have more interested in the economic aspects, so they choose the place that have the lower price. The Japanese instead, choose thanks to the pictures they see, they are more concerned about the image of the place.

Therefore, the strategies Mr. Hayashi is using to implement his costumers in his facilities are mainly two. The first concerns the Japanese's guests and is to use the social networks to promote the hotel by using pictures. Thanks to their attention to design and sophisticated ambience, the Sekiya Resort hotels appear very “photogenic”, as described by the Executive Director, and therefore lend themselves positively to advertising on social media. Lately, there is a particular trend to post pictures in elegant and luxurious places, which is why the Midobaru Gallery attracts groups of young girls as its main target audience, who aspire to post pictures in such places.

⁷² *Nihonjin'niwa dashitenai, Go Toga arukara nanimo shitenaindesu*, “we don't have any [discount] for Japanese. As there is the Go To campaign, we don't give them anything.

⁷³ *Nihonjinmi mukeru komaasharu, gaikokujinni mukeru komaasharuwa zenzen chigau. Yappari kaigaino katawa ikani otoku, nihonjinwa imeeji nowo motto kyouchou surundesuyo. Kaigaino hitowa kurikkusuru riyuuwa korewa 20-paasento off dakara kurikkusurutte. Nihonjinwa kireina shashinwo nottetakara kurikkusuru*, “commercials aimed at the Japanese and those aimed at foreigners are completely different. Foreigners are more interested in the savings, while Japanese are more interested in the images. Foreigners click because they get a 20% discount. Japanese people click because it has beautiful pictures”.

The second method concerns foreign customers. Through their studies of the results obtained on the online booking platforms, they realized that what mainly attracts foreign customers is the price. For this reason, they implemented a strategy of a 20 % discount to people who do the reservation in these platforms. Since these sites put the cheapest options on the top of the page, it results the Gallery being among the first options on digital platforms.

An additional strategy presented by Mr. Hayashi concerns their willingness to open up a new facility:

“次の建物を2025年に建てるですよ。そこはコンドミニアムやろうとして、コンドミニアムなら何かというと、まあホテルタイプなんだけど、ホテルの部屋をオーナーがいるんですよ、そのホテル「の部屋を」買った人がいる。で、その人は一年間に、二週間だけそこで滞在することができる。それ以外はホテルとして[...]。で、収益をなんパーセントをオーナーがもらう”⁷⁴。

This new hotel will open in 2025, and it will be an hotel and a condominium. Every room will have a private owner, obviously a very rich person, who can spend only two weeks for year in that room, and for the rest of the time he/she will receive a percentage of the money for the rent of the room to the hotel’s guests.

“なんでこれをしてるかということ、オーナーになるということは、その人は別府で家があるということになるなんじゃないんですか。やっぱ家があるってけっこう特別ですよ。そしてもちろんメンションは安いものじゃない、ターゲットは世界にベストをってる人をターゲットにしてるんです。だから影響力が強い人。「あの人たちは」コミュニティも感染してる人が多いので、そのコミュニティをここに引きつきたいです。富裕層が欲しいと思う商品をここ作って

⁷⁴ *Tsugino tatemonowo 2025-nen'ni taterudesuyo. Sokowa kondominiamu yarouto shitete, kondominiamunara nanika toiuto, maa hoteru taipu nandakedo, hoteruno heyawo ounaaga irundesuyo, sono hoteru [no heyawo] katta hitoga iru. De, sono hitowa ichinenkanni, nishuukan dake sokode taizai suru kotoga dekiru. Sore igaiwa hoteru toshite [...]. De, shuuekiwo nan paasentowo ounaaga morau, “the next building will be constructed in 2025 and it will be condominium style, well, hotel-type condominiums, but there will be owners of hotel rooms, people who buy hotel rooms. That person can only stay there for two weeks a year, other than that, it's a hotel [...], and the owner gets a percentage of the revenue”.*

購入してもらって、友達を読んで、使ってよと言って。その人達は止まるとお金が入る”⁷⁵.

Mr. Hayashi well explained his goal: he wants to attract wealthy people to the city, so that they'll bring their community and their money to the local community. To catch this result, he wants those people to have an house in Beppu, so that the city become more attractive for other wealthy people.

To get to this level, although there have been few guests in recent years, the staff has continued to work and try to improve itself. They used the working time during the pandemic to practice in “welcoming strategies”. When asking to clarify the meaning of “welcoming strategies” he stated:

“目の前のお客様を喜ばせよ。[...]コミュニケーション、そのアクション日本人はにがてなんです。[...]そこが私たちすごく大切だと思ってるですよ。なんですかというと、旅行で一番覚えているのって誰に会ったかという[...]ホテルのスタッフが何をしてくれたとか、例えばレストランの人は面白かったとかそういうことを覚えてる、記憶を残っていくと思っています。で、「その人をまた会いたいな」と考えてもう一度あそこに戻ることにします”⁷⁶.

Mr. Hayashi reflected about the fact that what make people want to come back again in a place, is not the place itself, but the people. The main point in his strategy when hosting his guests, is to make them think “I want to come back here again”, not for the place or

⁷⁵ *Nande korewo shiteruka toiuto, ounaani narutoiu kotowa, sono hitowa Beppude iega aru toiu kotoni narunjanaindesuka. Yappa iega arutte kekko tokubetsudesuyo. Soshite mochiron manshonwa yasui mono janai, taagettowa sekaini besutowo motteru hitowo taagettoni shiterundesu. Takara eikyouryokuga tsuyoi hito. [Ano hitotachiwa] komyunitimo kansen shiteru kotoga ooinode, sono komyunitiwo kokoni hikitsukitaidesu. Toyuusouga hoshiito omou shouhinwo koko tsukutte kounyuushitemoratte, tomodachiwo yonde, tsukatteyoto itte. Sono hitotachiwa tomaruto okanega hairu,* “The reason why we are doing this is because when a person becomes an owner, it means that he/she has a house in Beppu, doesn't it? Having a house [here] is very peculiar. And of course, mansions are not cheap. The target are those people who have the best in the world, and therefore have a lot of influence. Then, their community is often influenced as well, so we want to attract that community here. We want to create products here that the wealthy people want, get them to buy them, and that they call their friends to use these facilities as well. Those people will bring money [to the city] when they stop”.

⁷⁶ *Meno maeno okyakusamawo yorokobaseyo. Komyunikeeshon, sono akushon nihonjinwa nigate nandesuyo. Sokoga watashitachi sugoku taisetsudato omou. Hoteruno sutaffuga naniwo shitekureta toka, resutoranno hitowa omoshirokatta toka so iu kotowo oboeteru, kiokuwo nokotteikuto omotteimasu. De,* “sono hitoni mata aitaina” *to kangaete mouichido asokoni modorukotoni shimasu,* “delight the customer in front of you. In these kind of actions like communication, Japanese are not good at. we think that this is really important. What the hotel staff made for me, that funny waiter, these are the thing [people] remember, it will remain in the memory. They'll think, “I'd like to see that person again” and they come here once again”.

the services or the view, but for the (amazing) staff that hosted me, that make my stay here unforgivable. In fact, even if guests can spend their staying without meeting other clients, it is necessary that they meet the staff, and they want to have a warm and welcoming staff that remain in their memories.

Finally, during the interview, Mr. Hayashi opened an important parenthesis on sustainability. He stated that he is a great believer in creating sustainable facilities, as although the initial costs may seem high, they will reduce heating or water costs in the long run, bringing environmental benefits in the present and economic benefits in the future.

“What are the elements that make Galleria Midobaru sustainable?”

“例えばですね、シャワーのが全部ガスじゃないんです、全部地熱です。温泉の蒸気が鉄を厚くして[...]”⁷⁷.

The first example on how the hotel reduce its CO2 impact, regards the way they make the shower hot. In fact, they don't use gas, but the heat of the onsen, whose steam make the tubes that carry water to the showers hot, along with the water inside them.

“後は使っている塗料とかを、廃材と貝。本当は捨てるやつだったものを、けっこう安くできたんですよ。部屋は普通に暖かくでそれで電気も安くなったんですよ”⁷⁸.

Among the examples of the Midobaru Gallery's efforts to reduce environmental impact, he said that the walls of the facility have been painted with a special dye produced from shells and wood that retains heat, which allow the indoor temperature to be kept stable, regardless of the outside temperature. In this way, electricity costs for heating (or cooling) have also been reduced.

⁷⁷ *Tatoebadesune, shawaanoga zenbu gasu janaindesu, zenbu chinetsu desu. Onsen'no joukiga tetsuwo atsukushite [...]*, “for example, the showers are not gas-powered, they are all geothermal-powered. The steam from the hot springs thickens the iron [...].”

⁷⁸ *Atowa tsukatteiru toryou tokawo, haizaito kai. Hontouwa suteru yatsu datta monowo, kekko yasuku dekitandesuyo. Heyawa futsuuni atatakakude sorede denkimo yasukunattandesuyo*, “then, the paint is made by scrap wood and shells. sSince they were waste materials, we were able to do it economically. The rooms are normally warm, and the electricity cevame cheaper, too”.

“サステナブルなんて自然にもいいんだけど、それをするので実は[高い]コストがかかっているけど設備として、[年々]安くなる。稼働率は 30%もパーセント。そこから利益になれるっていう。だからサステナブルすごく重要だって”⁷⁹。

Mr. Hayashi knows that sustainability is important for nature and the environment of course, but he sees it as an economic resource. Thanks to the arrangements that were made in the Gallery to make the facility sustainable, they were able to have a 30% decrease in costs, from saving gas and electricity. In any case, as Mr. Hayashi pointed out, initially the costs turn out to be quite high, which is why to date few facilities resort to these means. However, these are actually investments whose initial cost will later become a great savings in terms of consumption over time.

After this brief discussion regarding sustainability, the interview with Mr. Hayashi was over.

2.6 Interview summary

From the conducted interviews, data were collected on: 1) Beppu city's supply; 2) the type of visitors already coming to the city and their habits; 3) reports on dealing with the crisis caused by the covid and the lack of foreign tourists and 4) hoteliers' opinions on problems and strategies to be used to grow Beppu's economy.

- 1) The city offers a wide range of accommodation types that make it suitable for every type of traveler. There are accommodations that provide for higher or lower budgets, classic or modern facilities, which allow or disallow contact with other guests and the hotelier himself. Every traveler can surely find a facility that meets all his or her needs.
- 2) Tourists to date spend few nights in Beppu. For foreign tourists it is usually 2-3 nights, while for Japanese, who accounted for 90% of total tourists in 2019, it stops at just one night.

⁷⁹ Sasutenaburu nante shizen'nimo iindakedo, sorewo suru kode jitsuwa [takai] kosutoga kakatterukedo setsubito shite,[nen'nen] yasukunaru. Kadouritsuwa 30-paasentomo paasento. Soko kara riekini narerutteiu. Dakara sasutenaburu sugoku juuyoudatte, “Sustainability is of course good for nature. It's actually [expensive] to do it, but as a facility, it [become] cheaper [year after year]. The utilization rate can decrease by 30%, and then you can make a profit from it. That's why sustainability is so important”.

Then, guests rarely speak Japanese, and at the same time, hoteliers and their staff also present difficulties in using foreign languages. Thanks to digital booking platforms or those for instant translation, the long-distance communication problem is bypassed, but still there remain problems with rapid communication once the tourist arrives in town.

3) Regarding the crisis period, we are faced with two examples of resilience that led to overcoming the absence of tourists caused by Covid with great results. In the case of the Sekiya Resort, given the economic lows the resort managed to invest in training its staff and continue to keep the facilities open, more or less attended. In bloom Beppu, on the other hand, managed to create an original way for its facility to survive, even gaining publicity on national channels and increasing city exports.

4) As problems in the city, was presented by Mr. Hayashi the one related to Oita Airport, which currently has no international flights, and the few connections to Fukuoka International Airport. Mr. Hanada, on the other hand, is convinced that these airports are quite functional and that the main problem is that Beppu is not well known by international tourists. Both agree on the necessity of promote Beppu internationally, so that once the tourist's number will rise, also the flights offer will rise with them.

Mr. Hayashi strategy to improve city's wellness is to attract to Beppu wealthy people, who bring their community with them.

What does impress is the hoteliers strong desire to make the city more known. They share the desire to create a deep connection with the city: in bloom Beppu doesn't have services like onsens or meal because the owner believe that people who come to Beppu need to live the city and not to spend time just inside the facility, he wants to create a net of interactions between his structure and the city. Then, Galleria Midobaru tells with every single detail the story and the peculiarity of Beppu, from the color of the wall, its name and every object it contains.

Finally, both want people to create a connection not only with the city but also with the staff itself. Mr. Hayashi highlighted how the relationship the travelers have with the people is the most important thing that make them want to come back again.

CHAPTER 3: ITALIAN OUTBOUND TOURISTS AND JAPAN

3.1 Italian tourists in Japan

Italians' interest in travel to Japan reports constant growth over the years since 1995, as it can be seen from Figure 37. The only negative brackets occurred in the years 2011-2012, when happened the triple disaster of Fukushima.

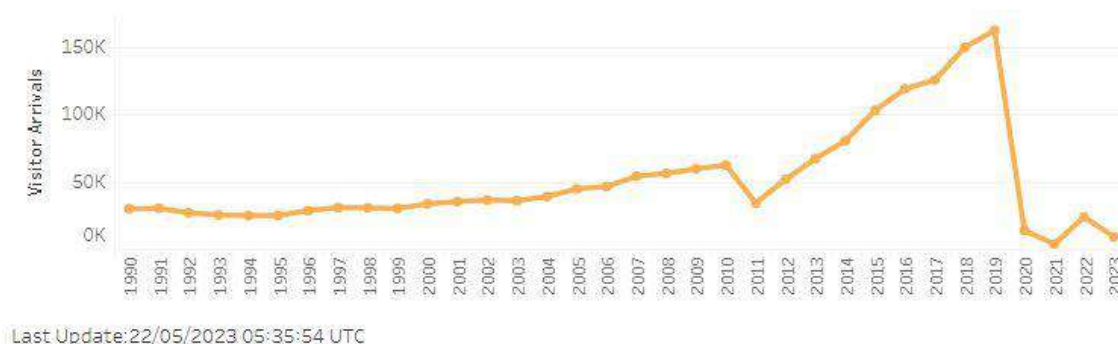


Figure 37, Trends in annual Italian visitor arrivals to Japan - Source: Japan tourism statistics

In the years following the downturn, from 2011 to 2019, before the spread of Covid-19, the growth rate was 6,7% for year, which translates into 14,418 new travelers coming to the country each year. The arrival of Covid-19 led to a very serious halt in admissions of Italians and all other visitors to Japan, but given the steady growth of interest in this country and the trend of tourism sector, numbers should return to pre-pandemic growth levels within the next few years¹.

Moreover, analyzing the data on the number of tourists in January-February (the only ones currently² available for 2023), it denotes how the numbers have already almost returned to the pre-pandemic level, despite the fact that the borders have only reopened a few months ago (Figure 38).

¹ (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

² Page visited in 23/05/2023.

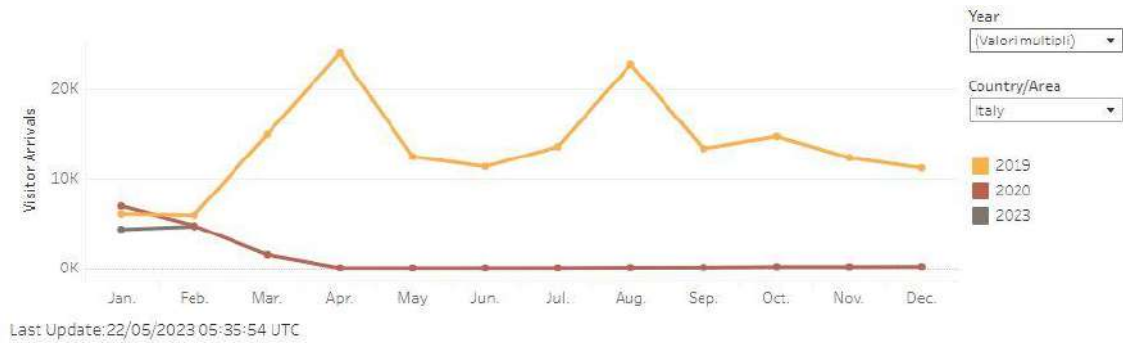


Figure 38, Trends in Italian visitor arrivals to Japan by month - Source: Japan tourism statistics

Looking at the graph for 2020 data, it can be seen that in the month before the virus spread, the number of Italian tourists visiting Japan was on the rise compared to the previous year, which reported the highest values to date.

This shows how the Italian market, although currently still not bringing results comparable to those of China or Korea, is to be considered important for Japanese tourism because it is constantly growing.

An additional factor to take into consideration, concerns the length of stay of Italian tourists in Japan. Looking at data on days spent by Chinese and Koreans, the largest visitors to Japan at present, it denotes that the average stay for Korean tourists is about 4-6 days for 60% of cases (Figure 39).

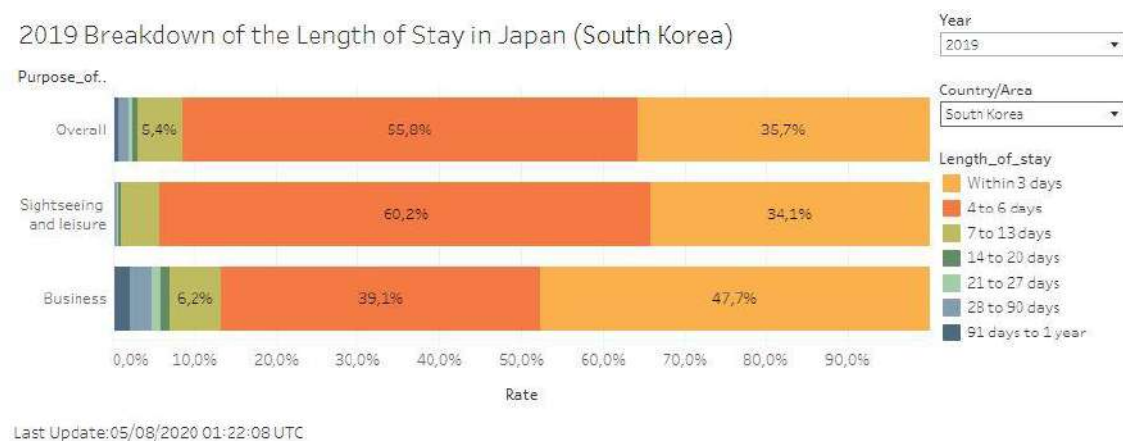


Figure 39, Korean stay in Japan - Source: Japan tourism statistics

Similarly, 56.6% of Chinese go to Japan for tourism for 4-6, with 39.2% staying one to two weeks (Figure 40).

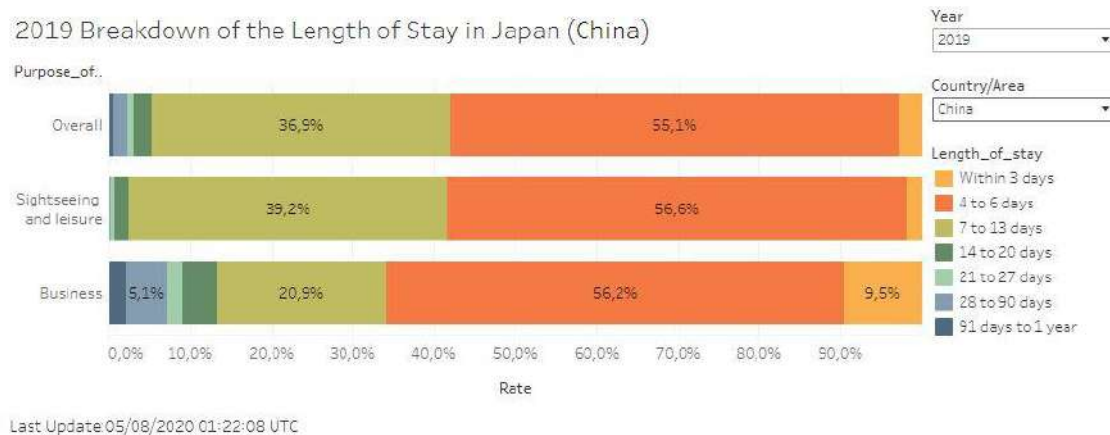


Figure 40, Chinese stay in Japan - Source: Japan tourism statistics

Italians, on the other hand, stay 47% of the time for one to two weeks, and 32.8% of the time up to 20 days. There is also a small but nevertheless important percentage of 6.4% of people stopping for up to 27 days, which is present in previous cases with values of less than 1% (Figure 41).

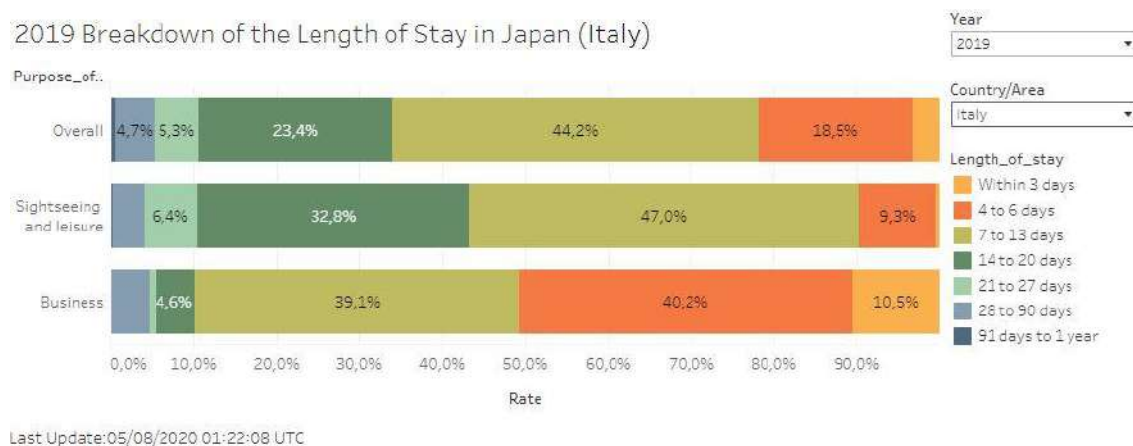


Figure 41, Italian stay - Source: Japan tourism statistics

The length of stay is important because it influences the spending that tourists are inclined to do locally. The longer people stay, the more they will spend, be it on accommodations, food or purchasing various products. Italians' personal expenditures (199,450 ¥³) are in fact, above the overall average (158,531 ¥⁴), very close to the average expenditures of the

³ 1426,05 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁴ 1133,48 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

Chinese (212,810¥⁵), but more than double those of the Koreans (76,138¥⁶), as can be seen in Figure 43⁷.

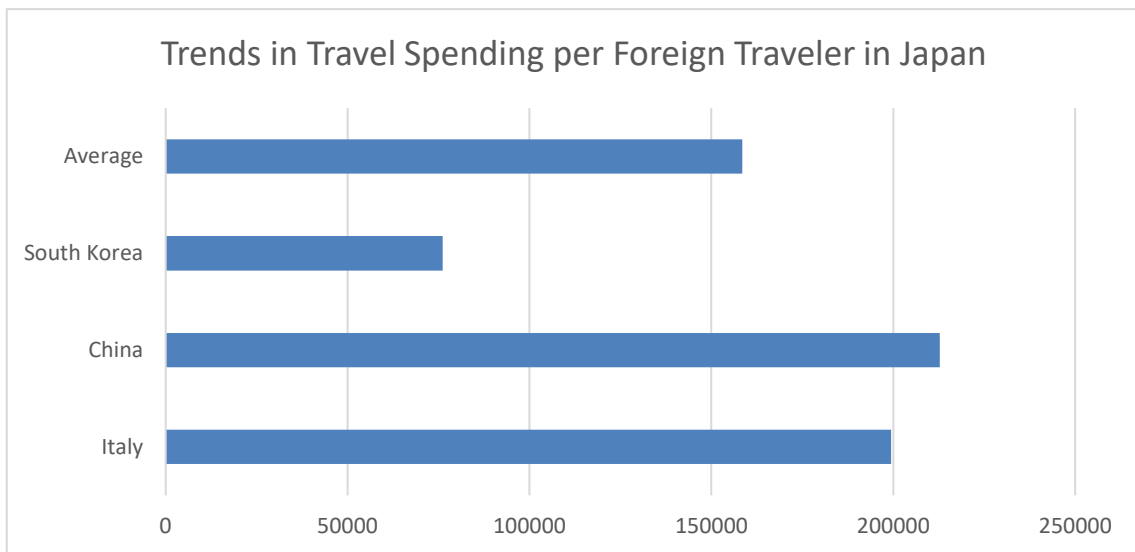


Figure 43, Trends in travel sending per foreign traveler in Japan - Source: Japan tourism statistics

Since Italians spend a greater number of nights in Japan, the largest expenditures that are reported are obviously on accommodation, where they spend almost twice as much as the Chinese and three times as much as the Koreans, data that are in line with the previous about the length of stay in Japan.

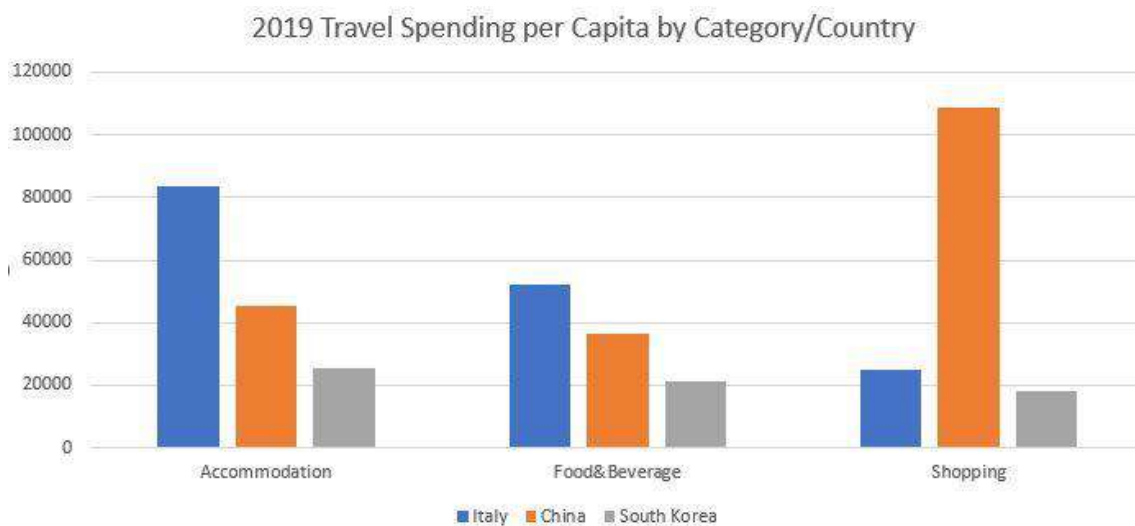


Figure 42, Travel spending per capita by Category/Country - Source: Japan tourism statistics

⁵ 1521,57 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁶ 544,38 USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁷ The values reported use yen ¥ as the unit of measure.

In second place in terms of Italians' consumption are expenditures on Food&Beverage, where the difference between the three countries is not sharp, but still important.

Finally, it was considered the Shopping sector because it results to be the key factor that makes Chinese people as the biggest consumer in Japan. In fact, they spend here four times more than the Italians, who still spent more than Koreans.

Although Italian tourists are thus found to be present in Japan in a much smaller percentage than Korean and Chinese tourists (Figure 44), their contribution to the country's economy appears to be significant, especially in the accommodation and food&beverage sectors.

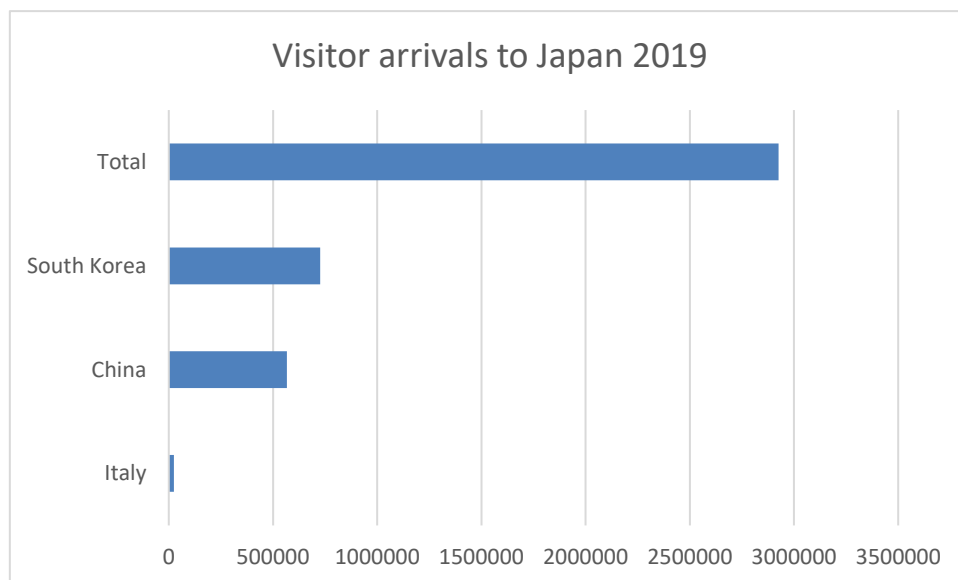


Figure 44, Visitor arrivals to Japan 2019 - Source: Japan tourism statistics

In total, it turns out an expenditure of 5 billion yen⁸ in 2019 by the 24,062 Italian tourists, compared to the 40 billion⁹ spent by the 566,624 Korean tourists¹⁰. Of these, 41% are for overnight expenses, while 26% are for food&beverage, making Italians very important to the Japanese tourism sector, which is closely linked to the previous mentioned accommodations and food consumption

⁸ 35 million USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

⁹ 285 million USD - Calculation based on today's exchange rate of 1 USD = 139,86 yen, on 30/05/2023

¹⁰ Data obtained by multiplying the average expenditure and the number of tourists for both nationalities (Japan tourism statistics, s.d.).

Regarding the choice of destinations once Italian people arrive in Japan, the preferences seem to be the big cities (Figure 45), with Tokyo being chosen 86% of the time as the major preference, followed by Chiba, Kyoto and Osaka, which are found to be the best known and most publicized of Japan.

2019 Visit Rate Ranking by Prefecture (Italy • Overall)

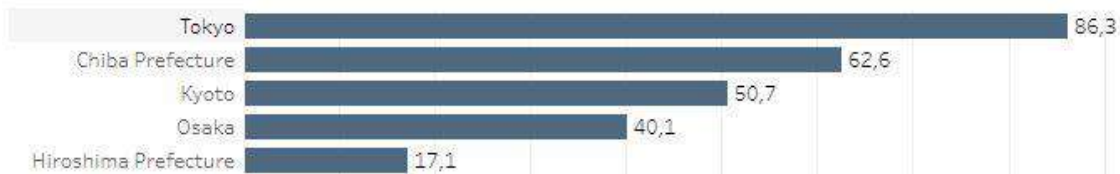


Figure 45, Visit rate ranking by prefecture 2019 - Source: Japan tourism statistics

Among this, it should point out that the top 4 are located near international airports that also included direct flights from Italy in 2019.

Regarding Italians traveling to Kyushu, it is found that 2% go to Fukuoka prefecture, followed by 0.5% to Oita, Nagasaki with 0.4%, and Kumamoto with 0.2%¹¹.

There are not specific data about Italian tourist’s movement inside Oita prefecture, but in general, their interest in Kyushu is increasing, with almost the double of incoming Italian tourists in 3 years, from 2015 to 2018 (Figure 46).

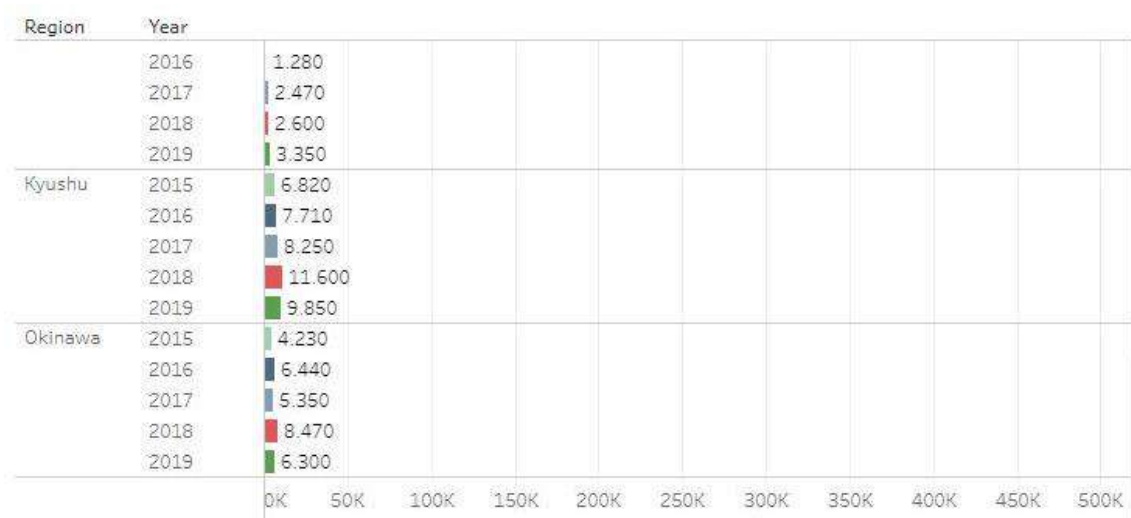


Figure 46, Trend of Italian tourists in Kyushu from 2015 to 2019 - Source: Japan National Travel Organization

¹¹ (Japan tourism statistics, 2022).

Italians who travel to this region at the moment are a rather low number. As seen from the previous image, in 2018, the record year for Italian arrivals in Kyushu, just 11,500 people arrived, out of a total of over 150,000 who arrived in the country.

To try to understand the reasons why Beppu is not attractive to these individuals, and to see if anything could be done to solve any present problem, was done an online questionnaire on a sample of 400 participants that aimed to understand the desires and needs that Italians have when choosing their destinations. The results of the research will be presented in the next section.

3.2 Research of interest of Italian tourists: questionnaire

The number of questions in the questionnaire changes for each participant depending on the answer given. It can range from a minimum of 9 questions to a maximum of 27.

The average time taken to respond is 9 minutes and 20 seconds.

The platform used for the realization is Microsoft Forms, while social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn were used for diffusion.

400 people participated in a time period from May 6 to May 11, 2023.

The questionnaire was done in Italian and then translated into English at the time of data analysis¹².

It is divided into three parts: 1) a generic part to understand the general habits of Italians planning their trips, 2) a more specific part about Japan, and 3) a final part on Beppu. The following will list the questions divided into the three sections and some example of the possible answers:

- 1) The generic questions are 7 and they are all mandatory:
 - How old are you?
 - In general in your travels, what do you look for? (Culture, seaside locations, parties and entertainment...);
 - In general in your travels, what do you prefer? (“Seeing”, “doing” or “being”);

¹² The original version of the questionnaire has been included in the appendix of this paper.

- In general in your travels, do you prefer to stay in the same place all the time or tour multiple places? (Staying in the same place, traveling up to a maximum of 2h by bus/train, exceeding 2h by bus/train, or taking an in-country flight);
- Regarding contact with staff and other guests, in which kind of facility do you generally prefer to stay overnight? (One that enables lot of contact with other guests and hotelier, one that enables some contact but with some moment of privacy, one where I can have no contact with clients or staff...);
- Not knowing the local language how much does it limit your travels? (It is not a limit, it is a limit...);
- How do you decide where to travel? (Photos on social media, influencers, recommendations from friends/relatives, personal attitudes...).

These questions are used to understand whether the needs and habits of Italians in choosing a destination may be consistent with Beppu's offerings.

2) The Japan-related questions can range from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 13:

- Have you ever been to Japan? (Once, more than once, not yet, not interested...);
- Why don't you care/why you didn't like it? (It's expensive, it's too far away...);
- Why would you like to go to Japan? What do you like about Japan? (Food, nature, culture...);
- When are you planning to go? (Before one year, between 1 and 5 years, not yet decided...);
- If you have already been to Japan or plan to go in the future, what was/is the purpose of your trip? (Tourism, business...);
- Would you like to take an organized trip to Japan followed by a local expert guide? (Yes because it is help with the understanding of the language, no because I like to plan my trip by myself...);
- How long do you think you would spend in Japan? If you have been to Japan before, how long did you stay? (1-3 days, a week, two weeks...);

- In what kind of accommodations would you prefer to stay in Japan? If you have been to Japan before, in which facility did you most enjoy staying? (Ryokan, guesthouse, capsule hotel...);
- Which are the most important elements in the facility where you would like to stay/have stayed in Japan? (Price, the staff knowledge of English...);
- Would you like to try Japanese hot springs? (Yes the common one, yes but just the private one, I don't have interest in onsen...);
- If you were to go to Japan, what kind of destination would you prefer? If you have been to Japan before, what kind of destination did you like best? (City, suburbs, both);
- If you like Japanese cities, which of the following statements do you most agree with? (They're easy to reach, cheaper...);
- If you like Japanese suburbs, which of the following statements do you most agree with? (I can have a more truthful cultural experience there, they're cheaper...).

These questions were asked to research what elements attract or drive Italians away from Japan, and to see if the aspects that result to be attractive match Beppu's offerings.

In order not to make the questionnaire too long and receive untruthful answers dictated by haste, before introducing the third section of questions, the research participants are given the opportunity to decide whether to continue with the third part, which has a maximum time limit of 2 minutes, or finish their response to the second part.

3) Beppu-related questions result to be minimum 4 and maximum 6:

- Do you know the city of Beppu? (Yes I've been there, no never heard of it...);
- Did you like it? (Yes, no...);
- Why didn't you like it?;
- How did you find out about Beppu? (Friends/relatives, influencer...);
- Would you like to visit Beppu? (Yes I will visit it for sure, no I don't have any interest on it...).

The question "why didn't you like Beppu?" is asked only of people who answered the question "have you ever been to Beppu?" with the option "yes, I have been there" and the

following question “did you like it?” with the options “yes but I wouldn't go back there” or “no, I didn't like it”, and is the only open-ended question in the questionnaire.

These questions are used to understand in detail whether the city is known to Italians and whether its offerings interest them.

Since it was assumed that Italians were not familiar with Beppu and to enable everyone to respond, a very brief introduction of the city was made before the last question through the inclusion of 12 photos depicting some of the most representative places visited firsthand during the exchange period.

The next section will analyze the responses to the questionnaire.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 General questions

The results of the 7 mandatory questions in the general section of the questionnaire will be reported below.

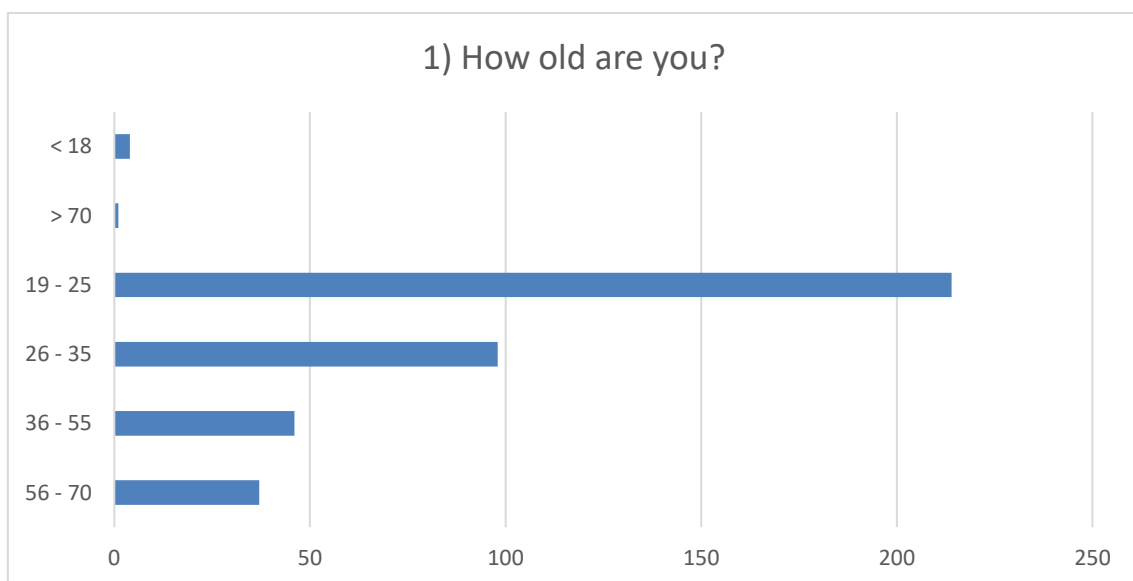


Figure 47, Question 1

Question 1 is about age. It will be used to find out whether among the needs and desires of the Italians who will be targeted in this study, there are differences related to different age groups.

Since the means used to disseminate the questionnaire were mainly social media, more responses were recorded in the 19-25 age group, the most easily reached through this tool. To be precise, the 19-25 age group recorded 214 responses out of 400, more than 50% of the total, the 26-35 age group reached 98 responses, the 36-55 age group 46, and the 56-70 age group 37. In the over-70s bracket there was only one response, and in the underage bracket 4.

The second question seeks to identify what activities Italians look for while traveling.

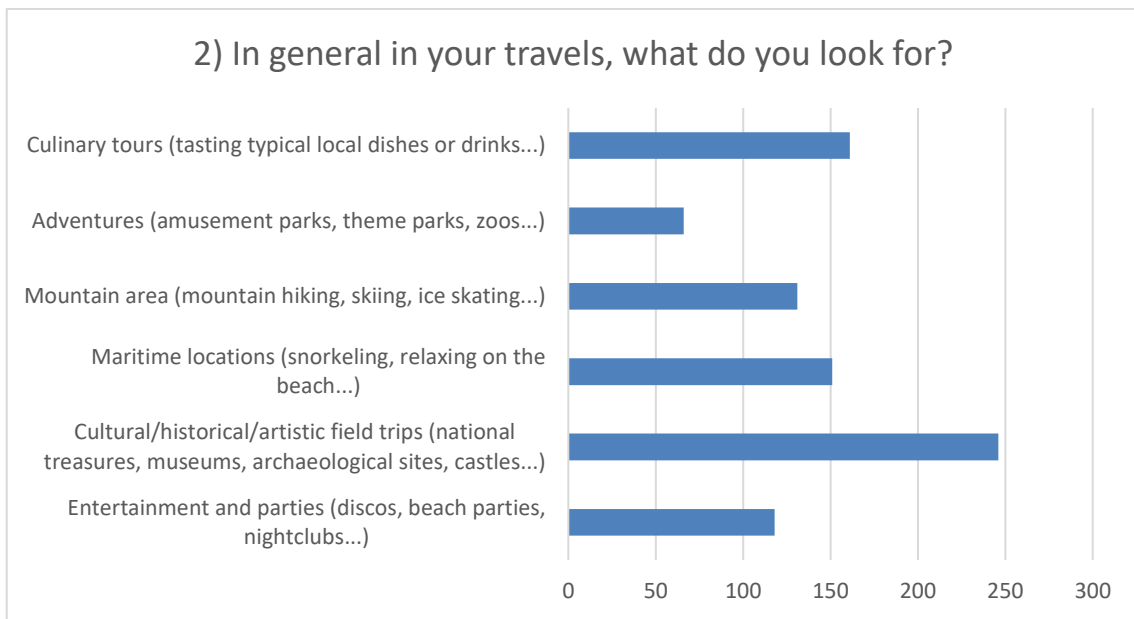


Figure 48, Question 2

As shown in Figure 48, most travelers move to locations where can be experienced local culture, history and art, and thus present National Treasures, museums, archaeological sites and so on. This option received 246 preferences, while in second place appear culinary tours with 161, followed by seaside locations with 151, mountains with 131, entertainment with 118, and adventures with 66.

It should be noted that since this is a multiple-choice question, the total reference value is not 400 (number of participants) but 873 (total number of preferences expressed).

These results are important for the research as they confirm a possible compatibility between what Italians are looking for and what Beppu offers. As seen in Chapter 2.1, the city has as many as two national treasures in its surrounding area, historic streets

overlooked by ancient buildings and important shrines, there are castles, museums, archaeological sites and much more, all easily accessible by direct public transportation¹³.

As for the second preference, that of culinary tours, Japan itself already has a wide range of traditional foods that can fulfill this requirement, but Beppu in particular has its benchmark *Jigokumushi*, the food cooked through the steam of the onsen, which give a unique taste to the local cuisine that can be found exclusively in this city and that can therefore attract people there.

In addition, Beppu is a coastal city surrounded by mountains, so it also satisfies the third and fourth preferences due to the presence of beaches both in the city and in the immediate surroundings, as well as the presence of the mountains and their respective ski facilities, ice-skating rinks and so on.

Question number 3 refers to the study done by the Japanese government and described in the “*smart resort handbook*” (スマートリゾートハンドブック)¹⁴ of the 2020, explained in chapter 1.2. Here the Japanese government states that in the current period Japanese people are dealing with “being” tourism phase, with the concept of “その地でしか味わえないリアルで本物な体験ニーズ”¹⁵, where the experience, the discovery and learning of something unique linked to the place becomes fundamental. It was made to test or disprove whether it had also become a necessity for Italians to carry out concrete experiences closely related to the place they visit or not (Figure 49).

¹³ This information was gathered in the area during visits made personally.

¹⁴ (日本交通公社, 2020).

¹⁵ Sono chide shika ajiwaenai riaru de honmonona taiken niizu, “the need of experience something real that I can’t experience anywhere else”.

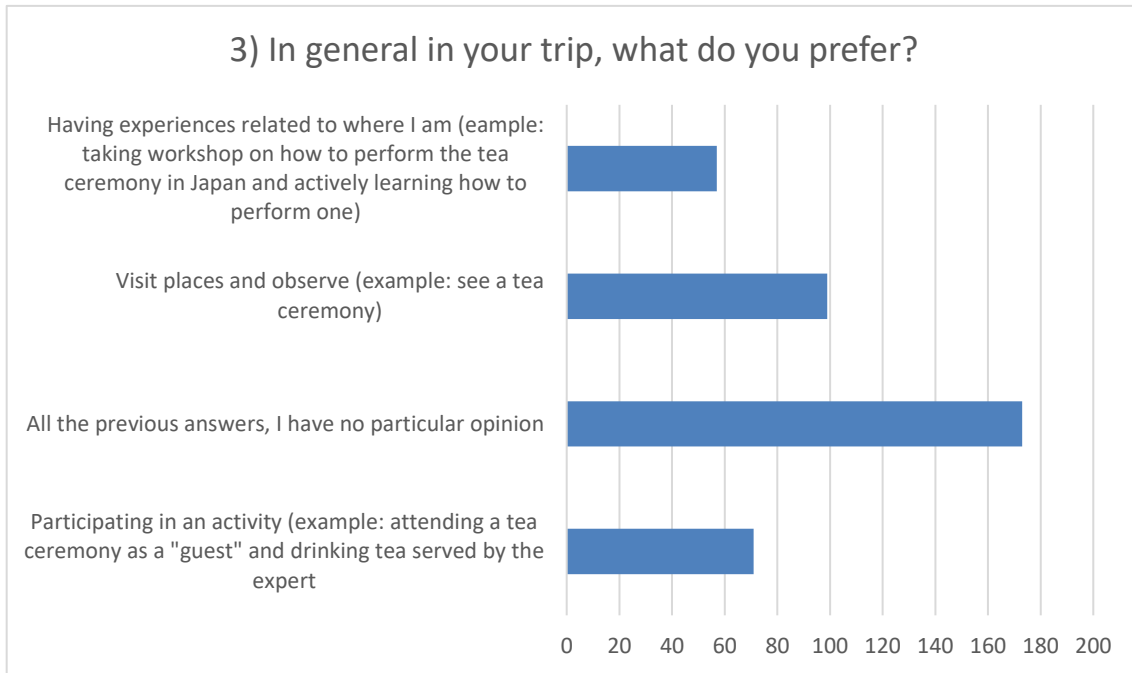


Figure 49, Question 3

Results show that most Italians, 173, do not actually have a particular opinion about this issue. Among the 227 who express a preference, however, 43.6% turn out to adopt a more passive method and thus simply observe the places to which they go, in contrast to the trends of Japanese.

This result can be interpreted as positive because in order to attract Italians it is not necessary to create special activities related to cultural aspects of the locality, as they simply observe and admire the places of interest. However, according to the study produced by the Japanese government, these kinds of activities should still be increased in order to attract Japanese tourists. Thus, if these guidelines were followed, the needs of those who expressed the other two preferences could also be met.

Question 4 is intended to test the willingness or inability of Italians to move around during their vacations (Figure 50).

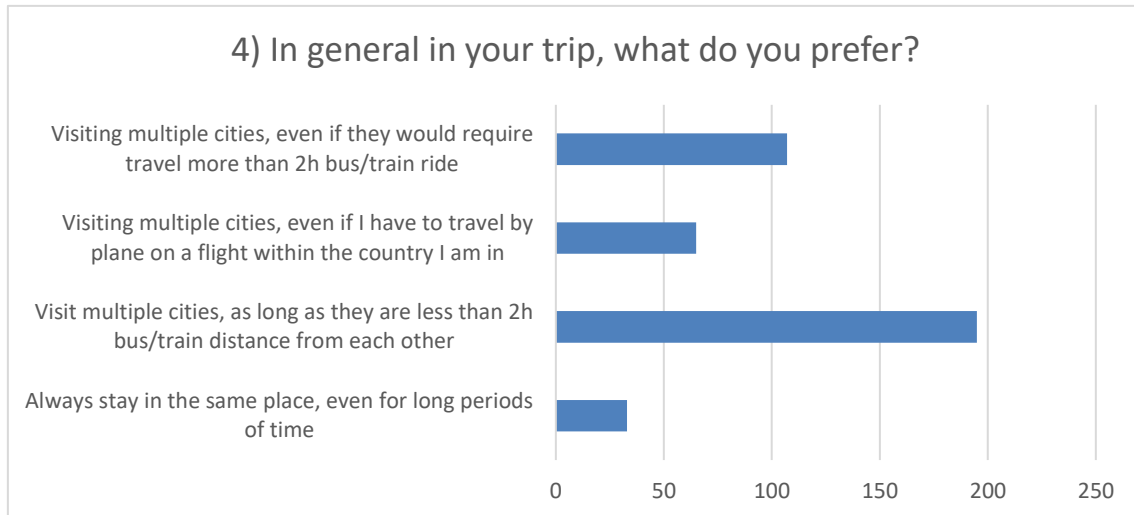


Figure 50, Question 4

As can be seen from the graph, the largest part of Italians is willing to move even long distances during their travels. Only 8.25% want to stay in the same place, 195 people are willing to move but with distances less than or equal to 2h using trains or buses, 107 people are willing to move for more than 2h, and 65 even take a plane to move within the same host country.

This data turns out to be crucial in verifying whether Italians are willing to travel to Beppu. In fact, despite the great presence of cultural and natural attractions, they are located outside the city, and it is therefore necessary to move with means of transportation.

Moreover, coming from Italy, one of the options for getting to Beppu is to land at Fukuoka International Airport and take the bus, which takes 2h. Without the willingness of Italians to travel, Beppu could not be considered as a possible destination.

Question number 5 concerns the type of accommodations that Italians prefer, focusing on the point of view of more or less contact between hosts and guests and/or staff. This question seeks to ascertain which of the facilities analyzed in Chapter 2 has the offerings that most closely match the needs of Italians.



Figure 51, Question 5

The graph shows that for more than 50% of respondents it is not a problem to have contact with staff and other guests, as long as they are given the opportunity to have moments of privacy. The second greatest preference appears to be no contact, which was chosen by 70 people, followed by 42 who would appreciate close contact with the hotelier and only 30 people would like to use travel as an excuse to meet new people.

Given the results to this question, the Sekiya resort probably turns out to be the choice most in line with Italians' preferences, given the possibility to choose whether or not to establish contact with staff and guests. On the other hand, in Bloom Beppu, given the amount of shared spaces such as bathrooms and kitchen, it may not be in line with the preferences expressed.

To better analyze this pattern, it was decided to combine data on contact preferences during the stay with data on the ages of survey participants.

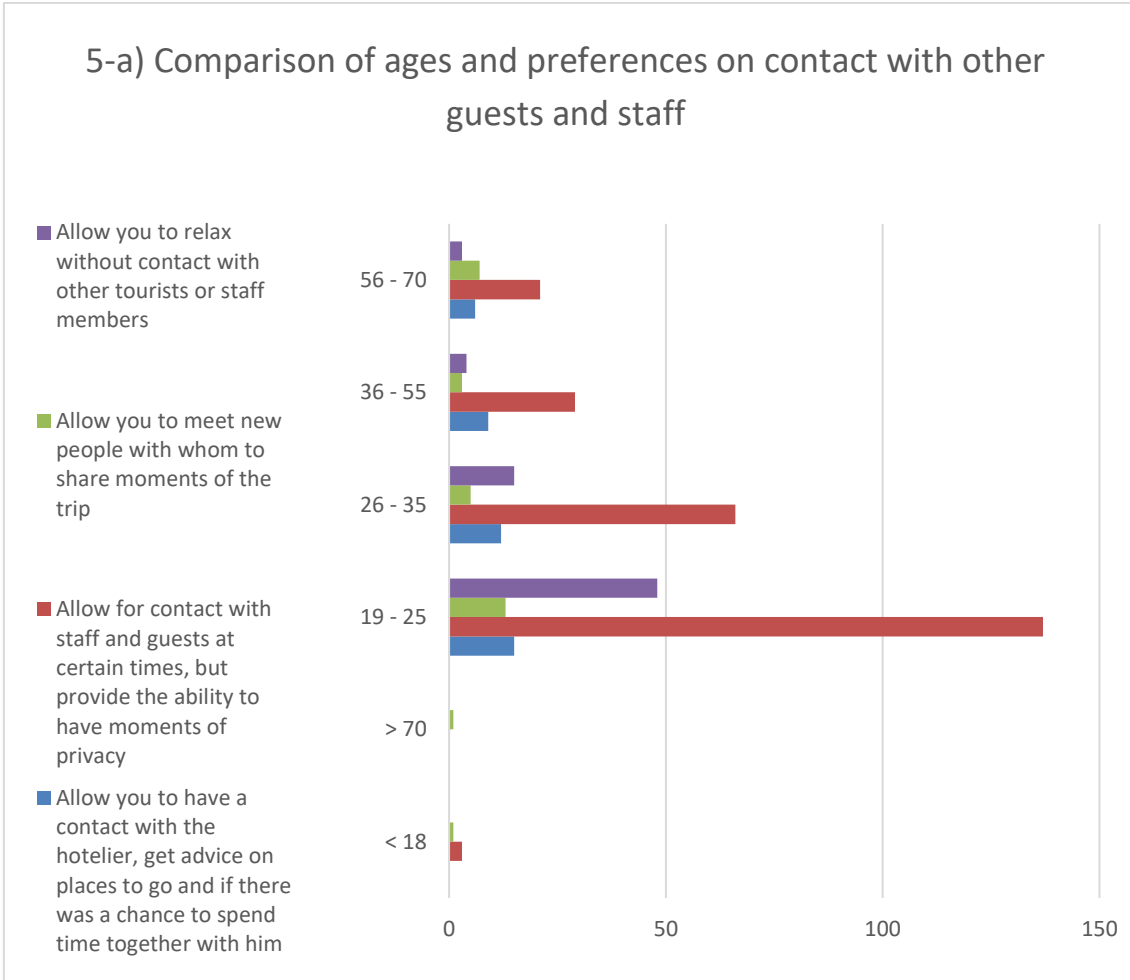


Figure 52, Comparison of ages and preferences on contact with other guests and staff

Looking at the graph, it can be seen that the sequence of preferences is the same for almost all groups except 56-70 and over 70.

In fact, the 56-70 age group, despite maintaining the preference for contact but with privacy, chose as second option not the “no contact with other guests” but, on the contrary, the one that states “allow you to meet new people with whom to share moments of the trip”, followed by the one that sees a closeness to the hotelier. Only as a last we find the option that sees no contact with other guests.

Unfortunately, due to the difficulty in reaching people in the over-70s bracket, the data cannot be too precise on these types of individuals, but, as can be seen from the graph, the only preference expressed is one that sees travel as an opportunity to create new friendships.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the in Bloom Beppu structure may actually be a viable option for people older than 56 years of age.

Question 6 is about language. Here it is tested the extent to which not knowing the local language of a generic country can be a deterrent for Italian travelers.

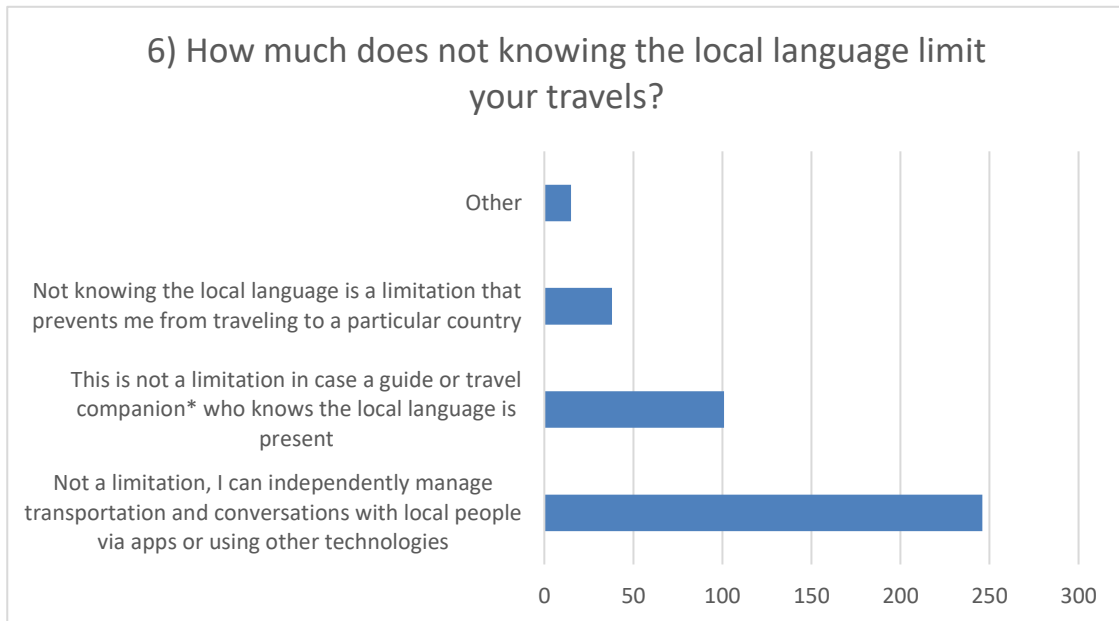


Figure 53, Question 6

More than 50% of respondents say that not knowing the language is not a limitation for traveling to a particular country. This is followed by 101 people choosing the option which states that this is not a limitation if a friend or guide who knows the language and can act as an interpreter is present. Only for 9.5% of people language represent an insurmountable barrier. Those who chose “other” indicated as a clarification that it would not be a problem in case English or other common foreign languages are spoken there.

Given that one of Beppu’s major problems in the tourism sector is the lack of widespread knowledge of foreign languages (such as English for example), understanding whether or not the absence of such a means of communication might be a problem for Italians is crucial to determining their possible interest in that city. However, given the results, language does not turn out to be a hindrance to those who would travel to Japan.

Further analysis was done on the comparison between the answers given on any language difficulties and the stated age.

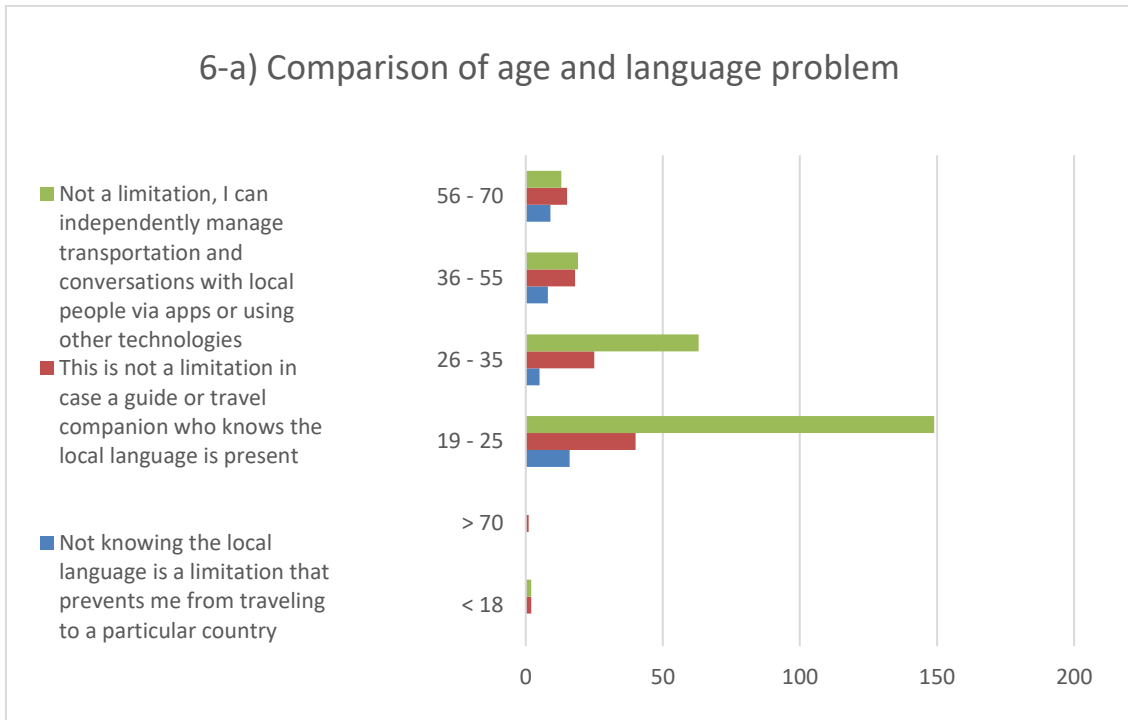


Figure 54, Comparison of age and language problem

As a result, it can be seen that the underage age group does not have a clear preference in this regard, while the 18-35 age group does not recognize language as a problem even when traveling independently. From the age of 36, the difference between those who do not recognize it as a problem and those who would like the support of a friend or guide fades, until the result is reversed in the 56-70 bracket. This trend is also confirmed by the single preference of the over 70 bracket who do not consider language a problem in case there is an intermediary.

The last question among the general ones asks Italians how they choose destinations in which to take their trips.

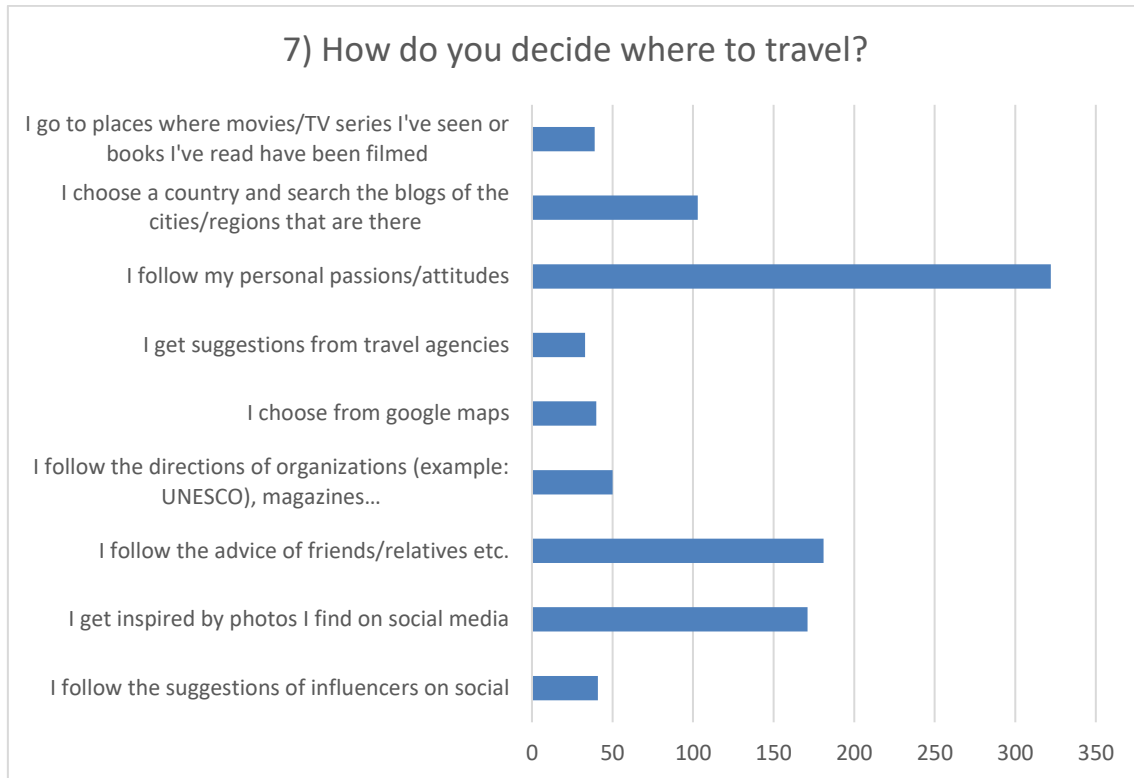


Figure 55, Question 7

The 32,8% of the responses indicate their passions and aptitudes as the main meter by which to choose where to travel. Also important parameters turn out to be the advice of friends and relatives with 181 votes, photos on social media with 171 and city blogs with 103¹⁶.

This question is used to figure out which media to focus on in case it will be decided to carry out an advertising campaign to increase the international awareness of Beppu.

Although personal attitudes cannot be influenced, it is possible to create web marketing strategies (on social media, blog, etc.) to try to attract to Beppu those who use these methods to choose their destination.

With this question ends the general questions and proceeds to questions about Japan.

¹⁶ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of people who answered the questionnaire but to the total number of preferences expressed.

3.3.2 Japan-related questions

The first of the questions related to Japan is intended to investigate the general experience of Italians toward travel to Japan.

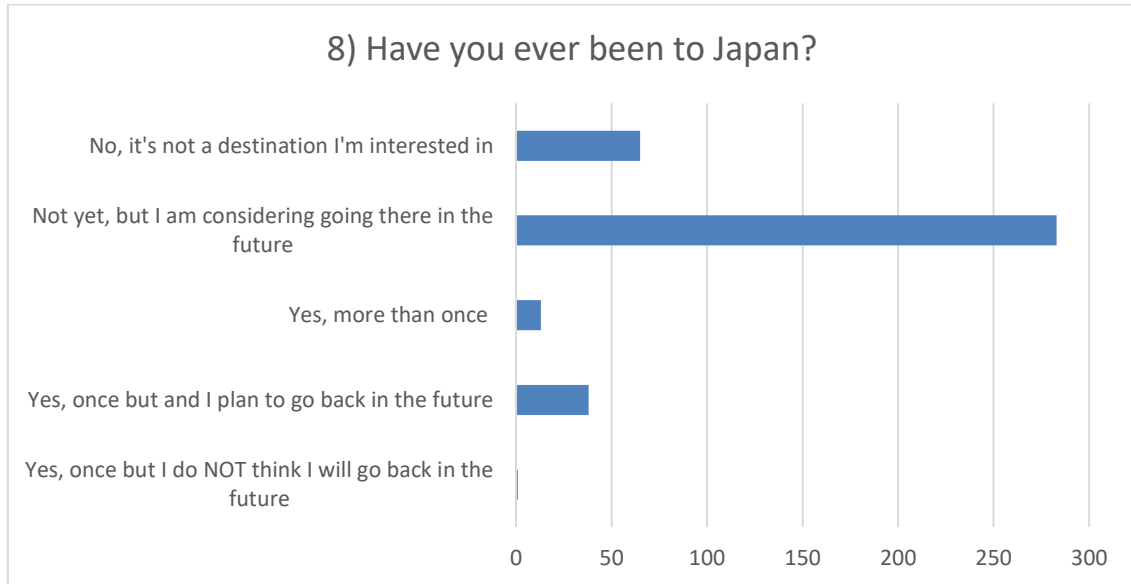


Figure 56, Question 8

Of the 400 respondents to the survey, 283 said they had never been to Japan but would like to go there. In addition, 51 people have already been and report a positive experience so they would return or have already gone back. Only 65 people, the 16.25%, are found to be not interested in traveling to Japan, while only 1 person reports having already been to Japan but not wanting to return.

This shows that although the personal attitudes referred to in question 7 cannot be controlled or changed from the outside, Japan already turns out to be part of the Italians' sphere of passions, making it easier for Italians to get closer to the town of Beppu.

Depending on people answer to question 8, there may be different paths.

If this question was answered "no, it's not a destination I'm interested in" or "yes, once but I don't think I will go back in the future", the next question results to be question number 9.

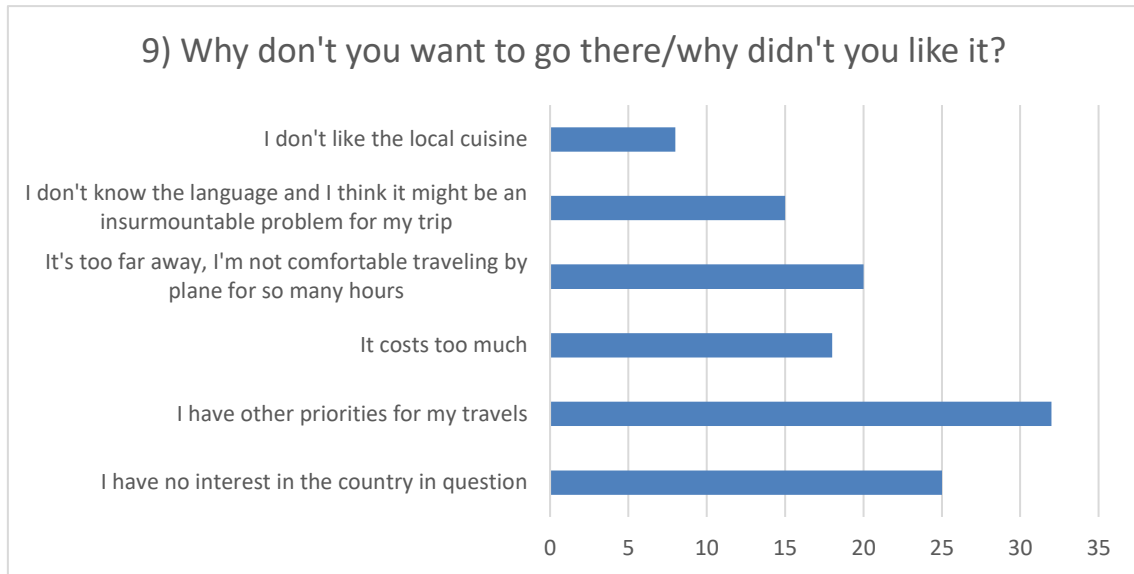


Figure 57, Question 9

This question is to see what negative sides Italians see in Japan.

In the reasons for not choosing Japan we find in first place with 32 votes “I have other priorities for my travels”, followed by “I have no interest in the country in question” with 25 votes. 20 people see it as a too far away destination, 18 as too expensive, 15 show difficulty because of the language, and 8 people do not like the cuisine¹⁷.

Results show that the main reason people do not choose Japan is because they have other priorities. A statement that does not, however, rule out that in the future, people will still decide to travel to this country.

The figure on lack of interest in Japan, on the other hand, turns out to be in line with personal attitudes as the first method of choice shown in question 7, and is an attitude that can hardly be influenced from the outside. However, the people who expressed this opinion are only 6% of the total. Even reasons such as “it's too far away” or “I don't like the cuisine” can hardly be influenced.

With this question, for people who are not interested in going to Japan, the questionnaire is over.

¹⁷ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of 66 people who said they did not want to go to Japan but to the total number of preferences expressed.

If the question 8 was answered “not yet but I am considering going there in the future” or “yes, once and I am planning to go back there”, the next question results in question number 10 which seeks to understand what aspects attract Italians to Japan.

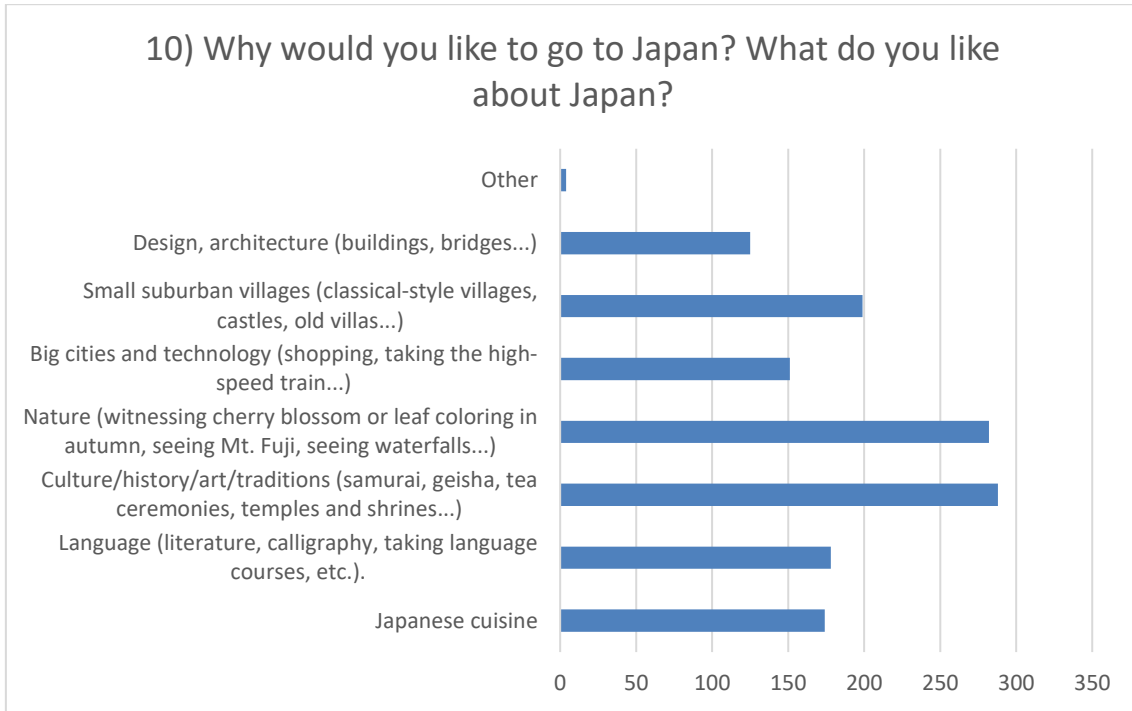


Figure 58, Question 10

The answers obtained can be used to promote travel to this country by following the major interests of travelers.

The reasons for liking Japan appear to be mainly because of culture and nature, with 288 and 282 preferences each. Next, Italians seem to have a desire to visit small suburban towns, appreciate Japanese language, literature, and cuisine. As the last two results, big cities, their technology and design are reported¹⁸.

Although Japan is known for its technologies and Tokyo emerges as the absolute favorite destination for Italians traveling there, what is denoted by this graph is that actually what tourists want to see during their trip to this country are elements more related to culture, nature or tradition (architectural and beyond). This figure therefore leads to the assumption that Beppu could concretely fulfill tourists’ desires, given its being a small

¹⁸ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of 335 people who said they want to go to Japan, but to the total number of preferences expressed.

suburban village, being surrounded by the flourishing nature of Kyushu and being in close proximity to historical towns such as Usuki and Kitsuki.

Next question is number 11, with aim to understand how likely Italians are to return/travel to Japan and whether this will affect Japanese economy in the short or long term.

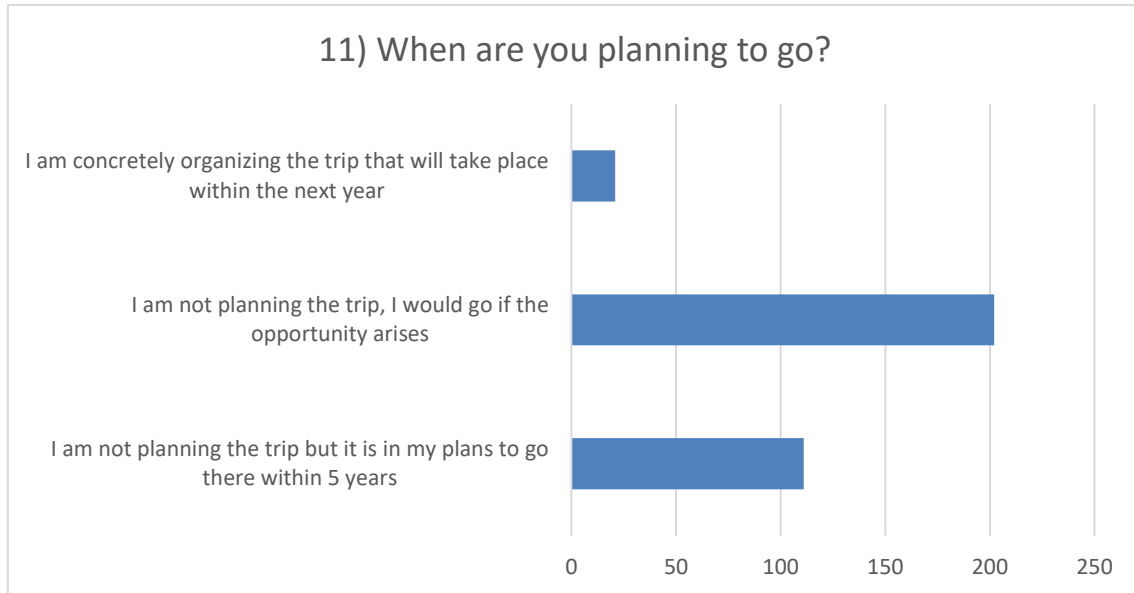


Figure 59, Question 11

The graph shows that 60,2% of people are not concretely planning to travel but would go if the opportunity presented itself. 33.4% of people plan to go within the next 5 years and 6.4% will definitely go to Japan within the next year.

The results that, if the right marketing strategies were to be followed, it is possible that the opportunities that 60% of people need in order to book the travel will arise.

Question 12 seeks to identify the purpose with which people travels to Japan.

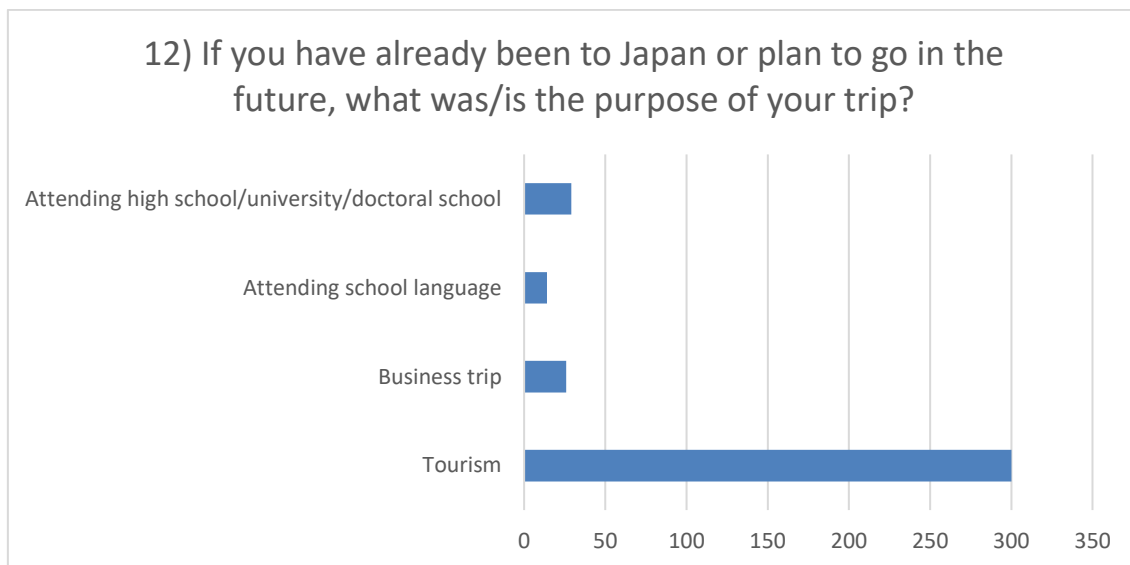


Figure 60, Question 12

The result is that 75% of Italians travel there for tourism-related reasons, while travel to attend schools or universities comes out as the second reason, at 7.25%, to which can be added the data for 3.5% of language school attendance followed by 6.5% of business trip.

At present, therefore, interest in Japanese language related to attending universities or schools there, brings a value of 11% of visitors to Japan, a relevant figure since it assumes long stays at the host country.

Question number 13 is about organized trips and guided tours. The purpose of this question is to understand whether this type of travel is in line with the needs of Italian tourists.

Since the ultimate purpose of this study is to bring tourists to Beppu, a town in which a problem has been found with the lack of foreign language, was pursued an alternative to solo travel that would allow a better interaction between locals and tourists. Given the difficulty that might arise in moving around, or in fully understanding the beauty and history of the places to which people go, it was thought to propose the method of organized travel to tourists as a solution. It in fact, given the presence of a guide who knows both the local area and customs, and the needs of Italians, could prove to be a good solution to the problems mentioned above.

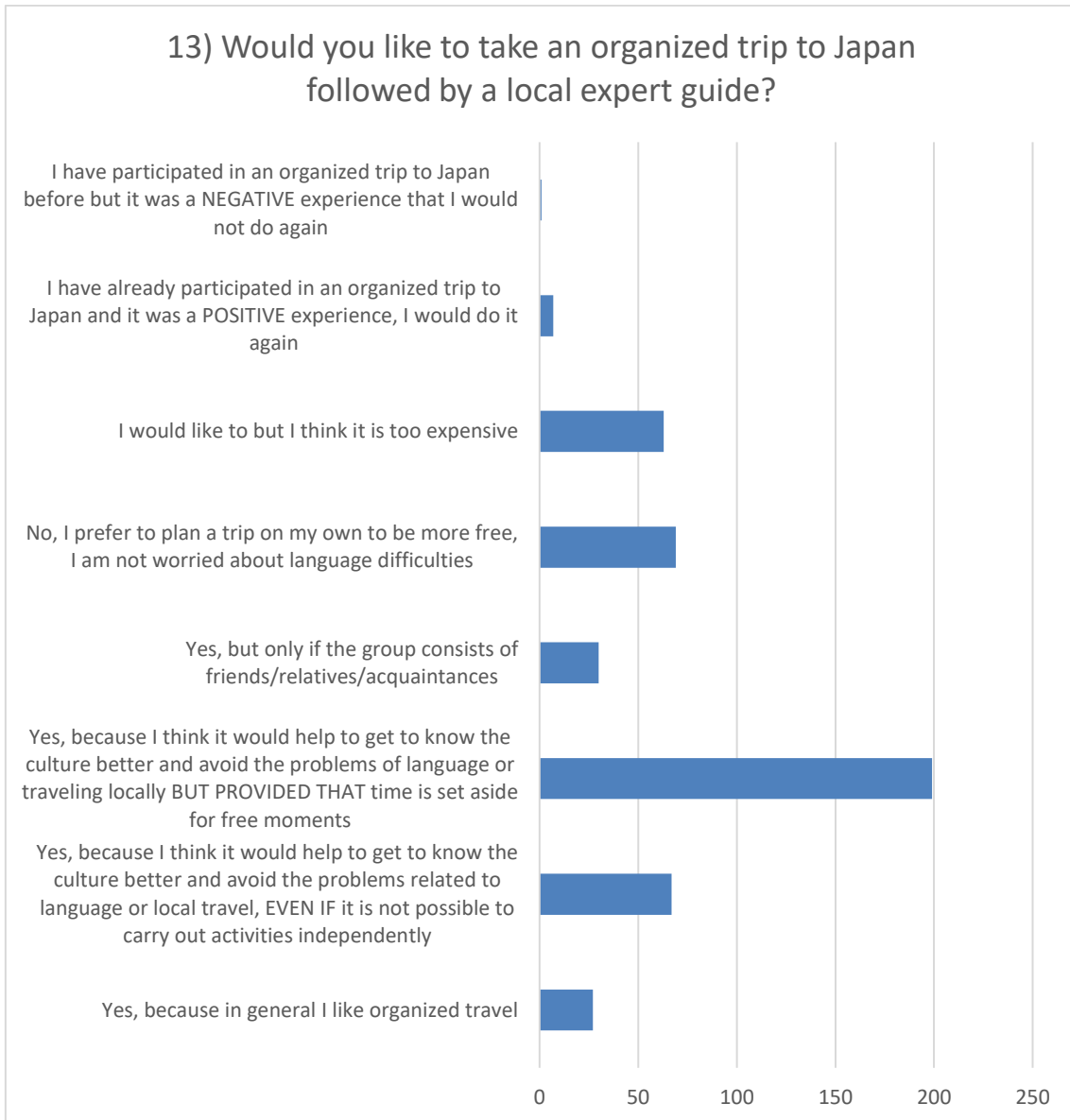


Figure 61, Question 13

As can be seen from the graph, most of the responses are positive about this type of travel. 199 people said they would participate in the trips in case free time was provided, 67 even without free time, 30 only if with friends or acquaintances, 27 say in general they like this method, and 7 have already had such an experience in Japan and that it was positive. In total, positive responses were 71.3%. Among the negative responses, on the other hand, the most common response was that people prefer to travel alone to have more independence, followed by the fear that this type of travel will be too expensive. Finally,

only one among those who had already had such an experience had a negative experience and would not do it again¹⁹.

Thus denotes a positive view of organized travel, which could prove to be a good solution to create in the short term while waiting for more widespread use of foreign languages on the Japanese side.

Question number 14 is about the stay, planned or experienced, in Japan.

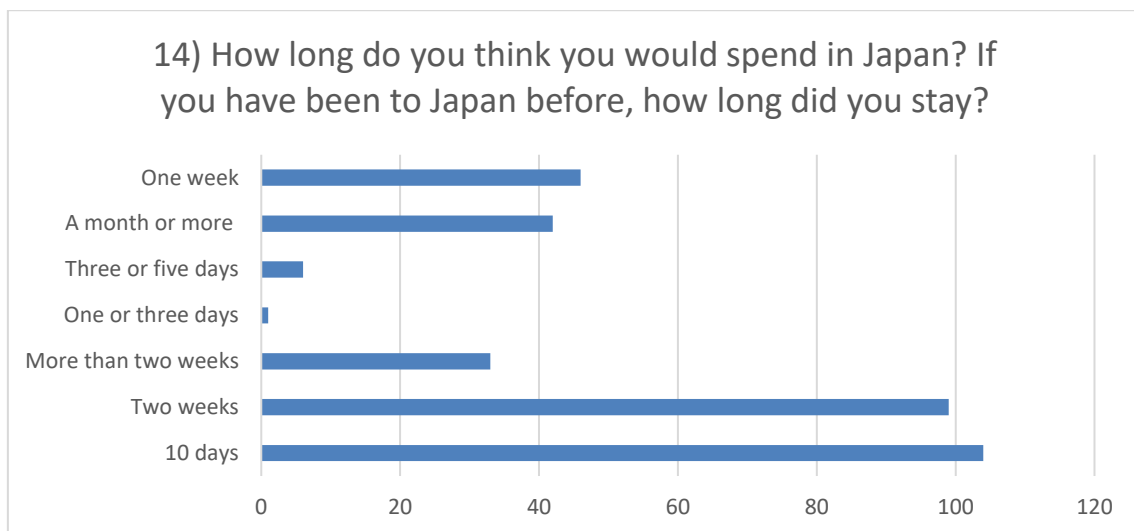


Figure 62, Question 14

This question seeks to investigate the average stay of Italians in Japan to see whether or not they can solve one of the problems encountered in Beppu, namely the too-short stay of visitors in the city that does not allow the city's economy to grow as it could.

The results show a tendency to stay in Japan for periods between 10 days and 2 weeks 61% of the time. This is followed by 13% of travelers staying a week, while 12.6% stay a month or more. About 10% of Italians say they have already been or plan to travel for more than 2 weeks, while only 2% stay between 1 and 5 days.

To better understand what the actual stays of Italian tourists in Japan are, a comparison of these two data was made.

¹⁹ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of 335 people who said they want to go to Japan, but to the total number of preferences expressed.

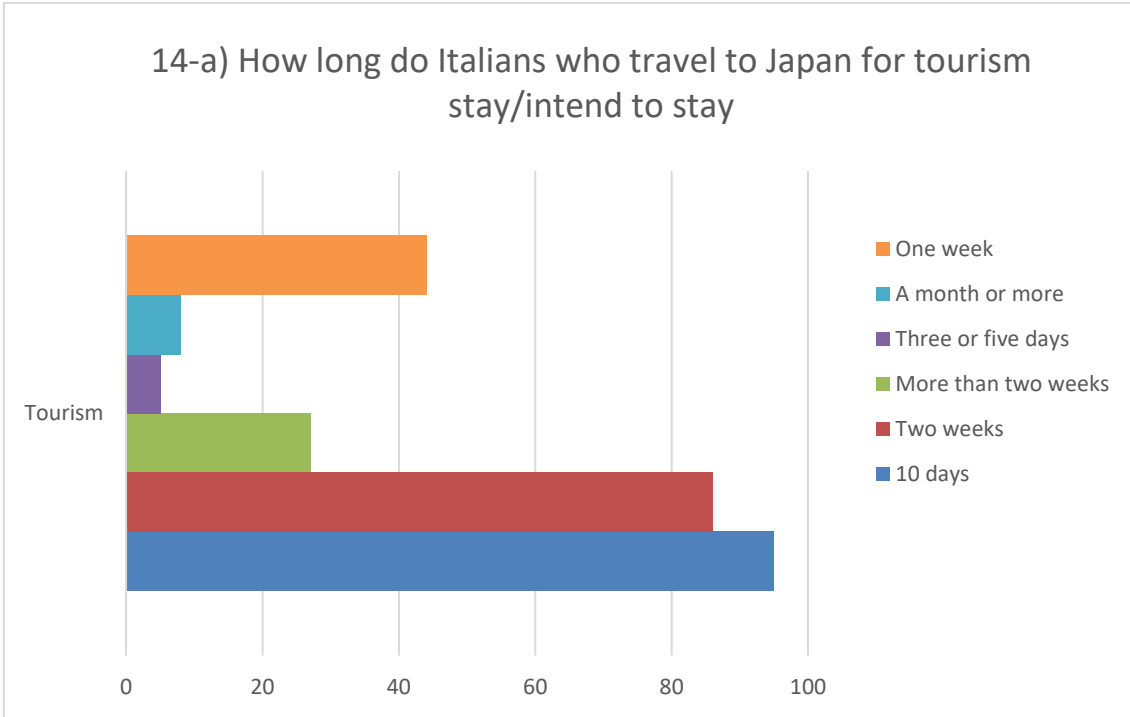


Figure 63, How long do Italians who travel to Japan for tourism stay/intend to stay

The data are in line with those reported in question 12, with the 10-day and two-week periods being the first choice, with 35.7% and 32%. This is followed by one week with 16.6% preference and more than two weeks with 10.2%. The lowest values are for 3-5 days with 2% of the votes, while one month or more reports 3.1% of the votes.

In order to figure out which time period these data affect, it were cross-referenced the data on the period people want to spend in Japan with the data on when they want to go there.

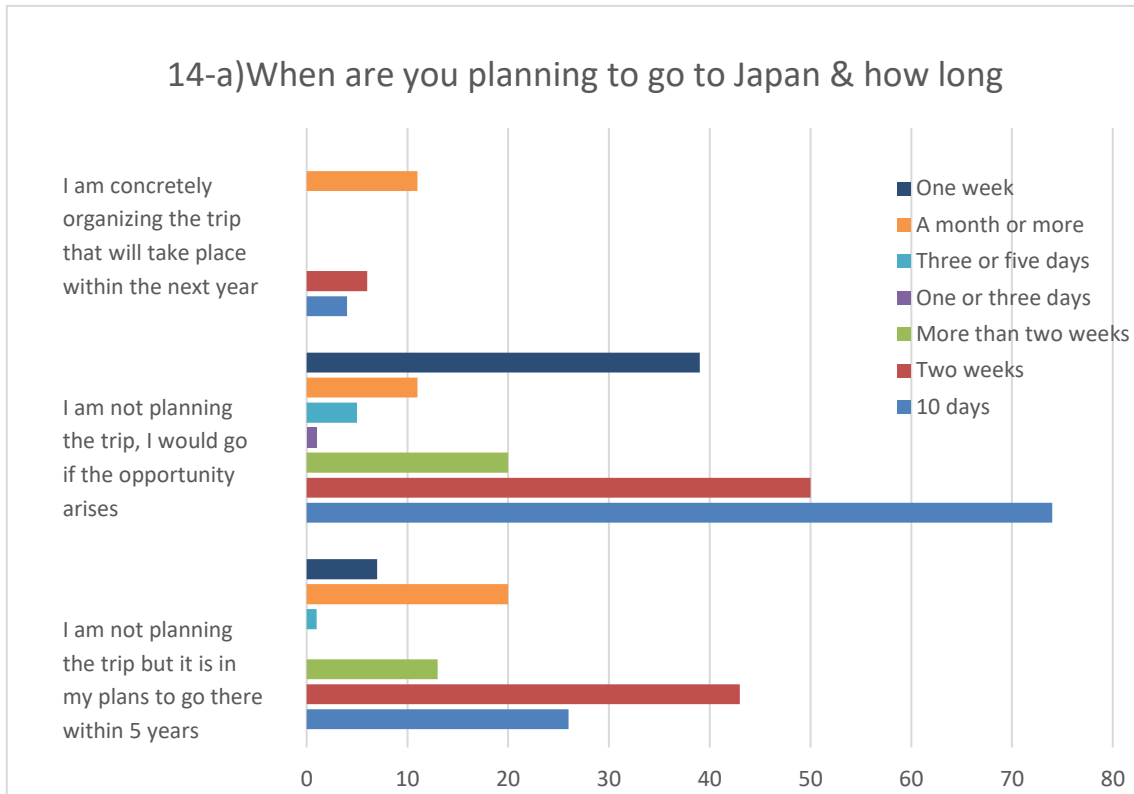


Figure 64, When are you planning to go to Japan & how long are you planning to stay there?

If look at the intentions of Italians in the short term, for those who are planning to travel for the coming year, it can be seen that the period of stay will mostly be a month or more, followed by the main categories such as 10 days and two weeks.

For people who are planning to travel in the short-medium term (within 5 years), appears to be a greater preference for a two-week stay, followed by ten days and a month or more.

The intentions of those who are not planning to travel in the close future remain on a general idea of traveling to Japan for 10 days, two weeks or one.

These data confirm the general trends of Italian travelers that were shown in figure 40 in section 3.1, which show that they travel for long periods, ranging from 10 days to two weeks (or more).

Furthermore, since the respondents have not yet been to Japan, it is inferred that the trends shown will remain stable in the short, medium and long term. Thus, it is confirmed that Italians are an important market for Japanese tourism because they tend to stay more nights than the larger Korean and Chinese visitors.

Question number 15 is about the type of facility where tourists would like to stay going to Japan. This question too, is used to figure out which of the analyzed structures might appeal to Italians.

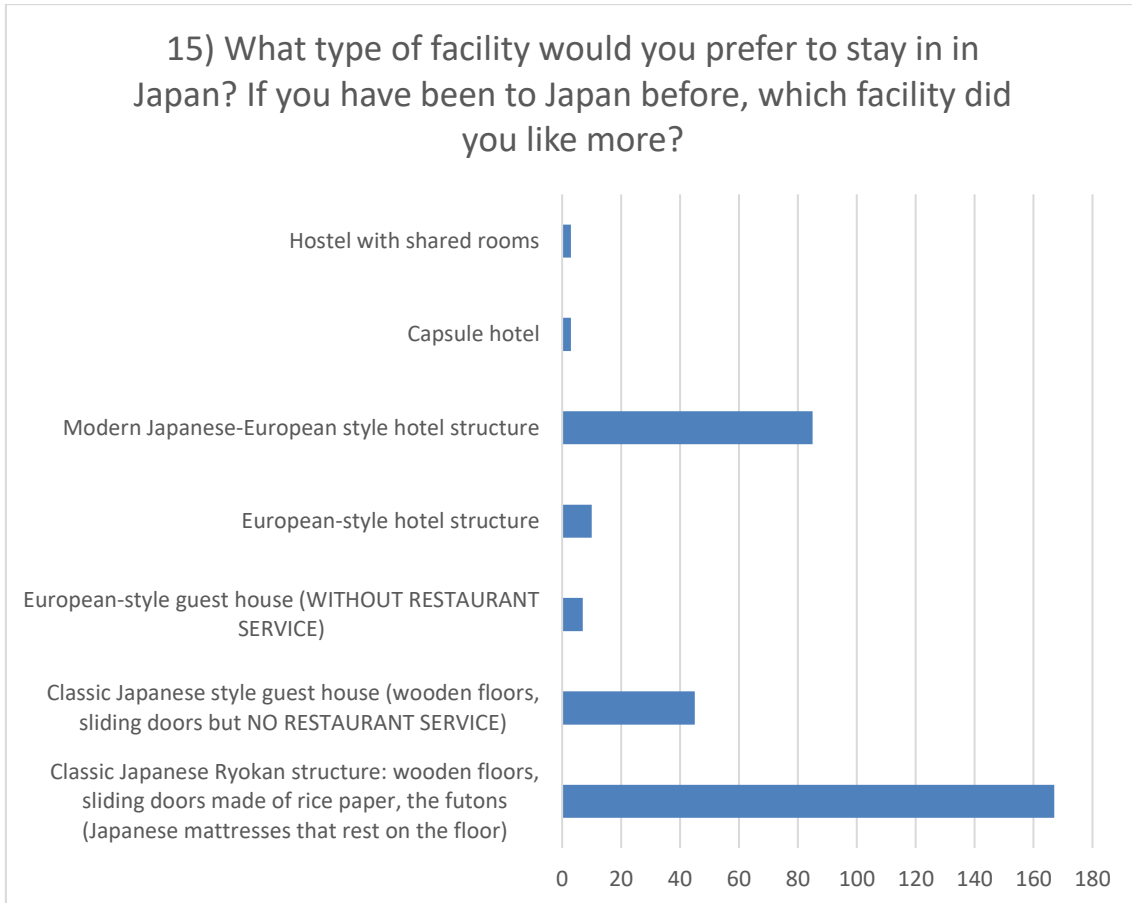


Figure 65, Question 15

The graph shows that the Italians' favorite type is *ryokan* with 167 preferences, followed by modern Japanese-European style hotel structure with 85 votes. Japanese guest houses have 45 preferences while European guest houses only 7. European style hotels 10 votes and both shared hostels and capsule hotels 3.

It can be deduced from the responses that Italians in Japan prefer to stay in facilities that allow them to experience characteristic local aspects. Among them, more than twice as many people look for a classic style (212 people, 66% when considering together the people who selected *ryokan* and Japanese-style guest house), while the others look for a modern style, but that includes local attributes.

To find out whether even after having been there the preferences remain the same, it was decided to observe the responses of those who have already been to Japan.

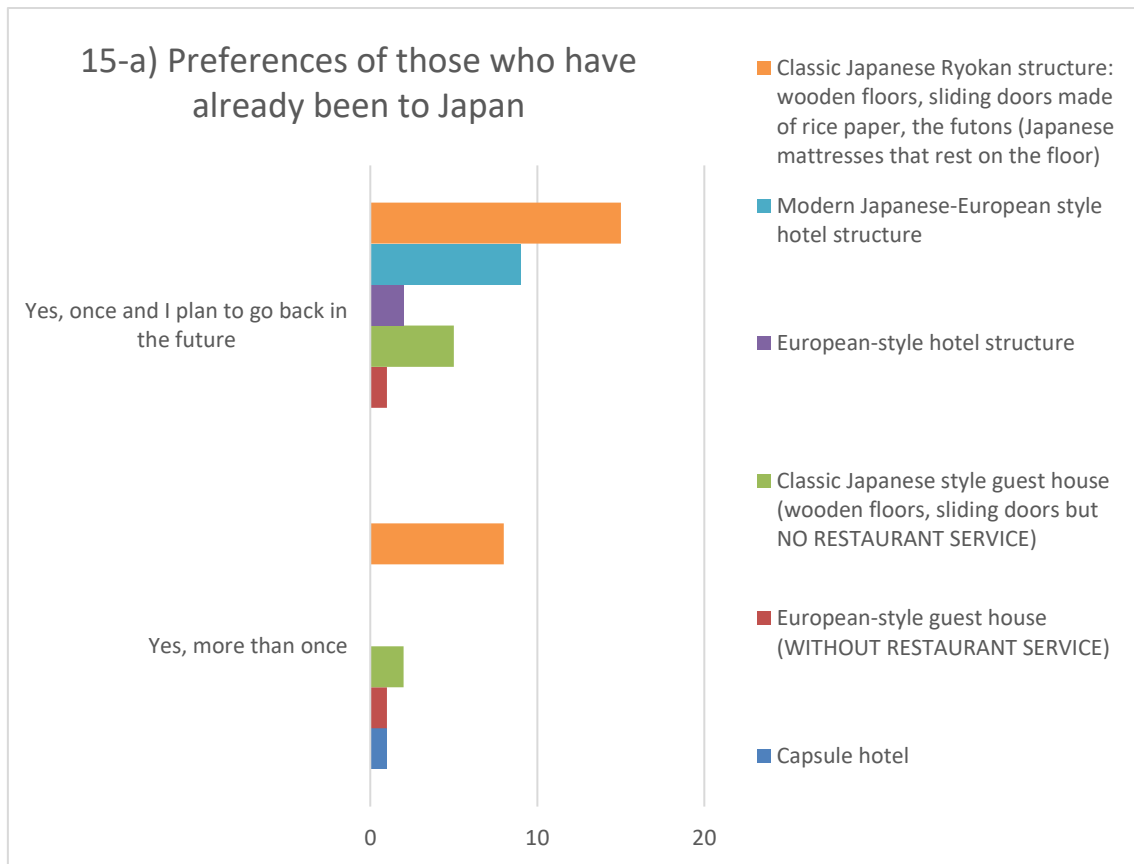


Figure 66, Preferences of those who have already been to Japan

As seen in the graph, facility type preferences are also confirmed by those who have already been there.

It was then sought to ascertain whether or not age-related differences were present with regard to the preferred facility of Italian tourists.

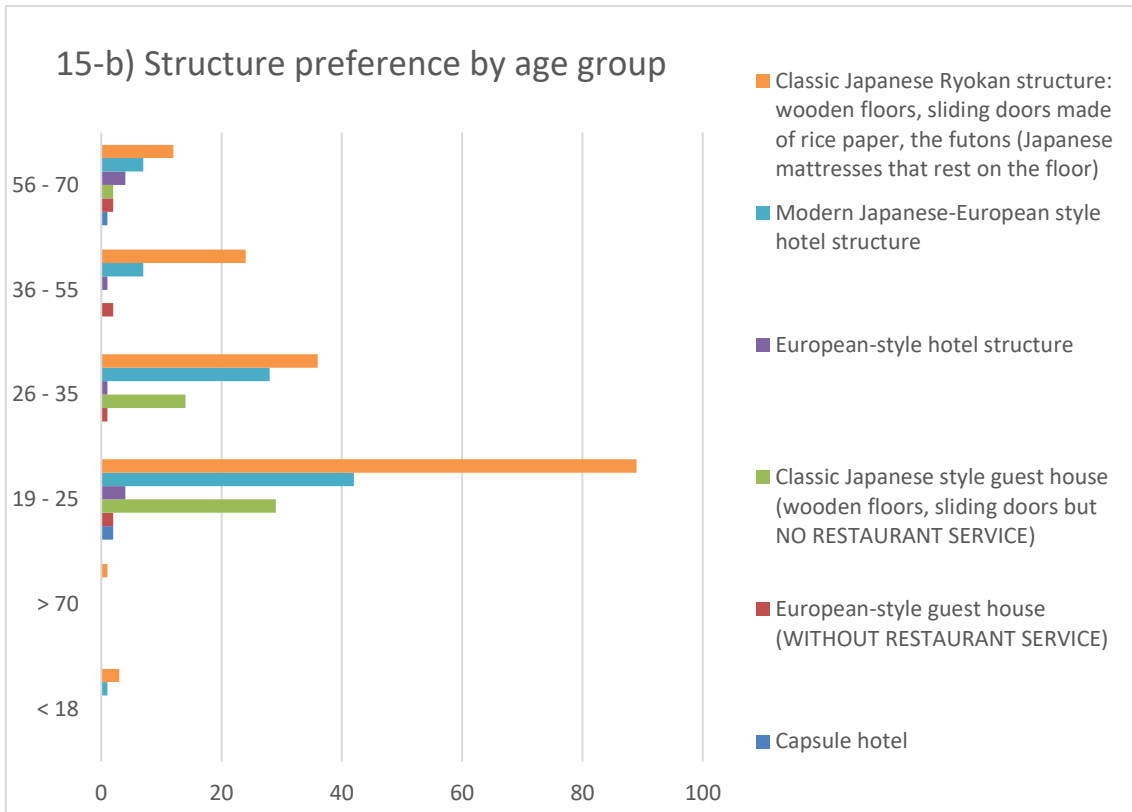


Figure 67, Structure preference by age group

As can be seen from figure 67, there are no differences in the sequence of preferences expressed among different age groups. Therefore, it can be said that the preference for ryokan is widely spread among all the Italians surveyed.

Question 16 is also about hotel facilities, but this time are investigate the elements that attract Italians to choose one hotel over another.

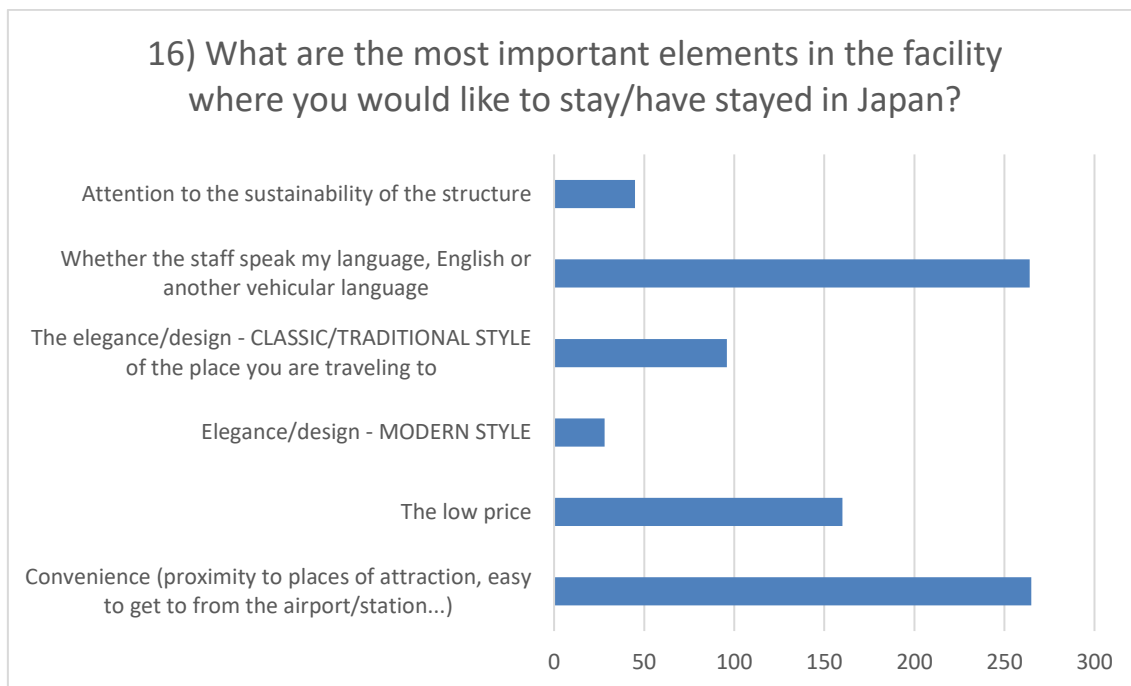


Figure 68, Question 16

As denoted by the graph, the most important factors appear to be the convenience of the facility with 265 marks and the presence of staff who speak English or a vehicular language with which they can communicate with 264 marks. The third factor chosen by 160 people is price, followed by classic-style elegance with 96 votes and modern-style elegance with 28. last, with 45 votes, is attention to sustainability²⁰.

The convenience factor is quite prevalent in Japan given the high presence of very effective public transportation, and Beppu is no exception. It is therefore claimed that this preference can be easily satisfied. Regarding the second factor, however, the lack of English or other foreign languages returns as a problem. For 30.7% of respondents, being able to communicate with the facility is essential, but currently it result to be very difficult except with the help of instant translation apps. Incentives from local authorities and commitment from the community are needed to solve this problem, but in the immediate term, one solution might be to arrange guided tours. Thus there could be a qualified person who knows Japanese that can act as an intermediary.

The following question is about onsen.

²⁰ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of people who answered the questionnaire but to the total number of preferences expressed.

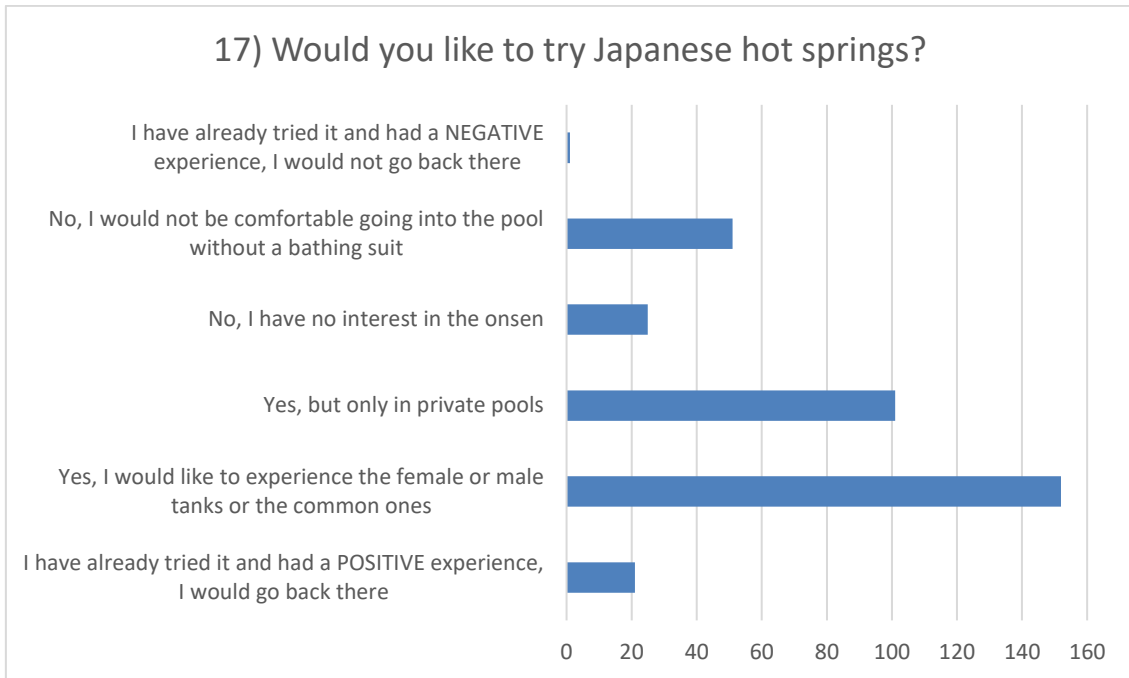


Figure 69, Question 17

The purpose of the question is to investigate whether or not this activity, Beppu’s major attraction, interests Italians.

The graph shows that 63.8% of Italians have already tried with positive experience or would like to try onsen, but among them, 27.8% would only try the experience in private pools. 25 people report that they have no interest in spas in general and 51 would not be comfortable entering a pool without a bathing suit.

These responses thus show a 60% greater tendency to appreciate the spa experience that Beppu offers.

To see if there were any differences between the various age groups, it was decided to perform a comparison between the level of interest in spas and the reported ages.

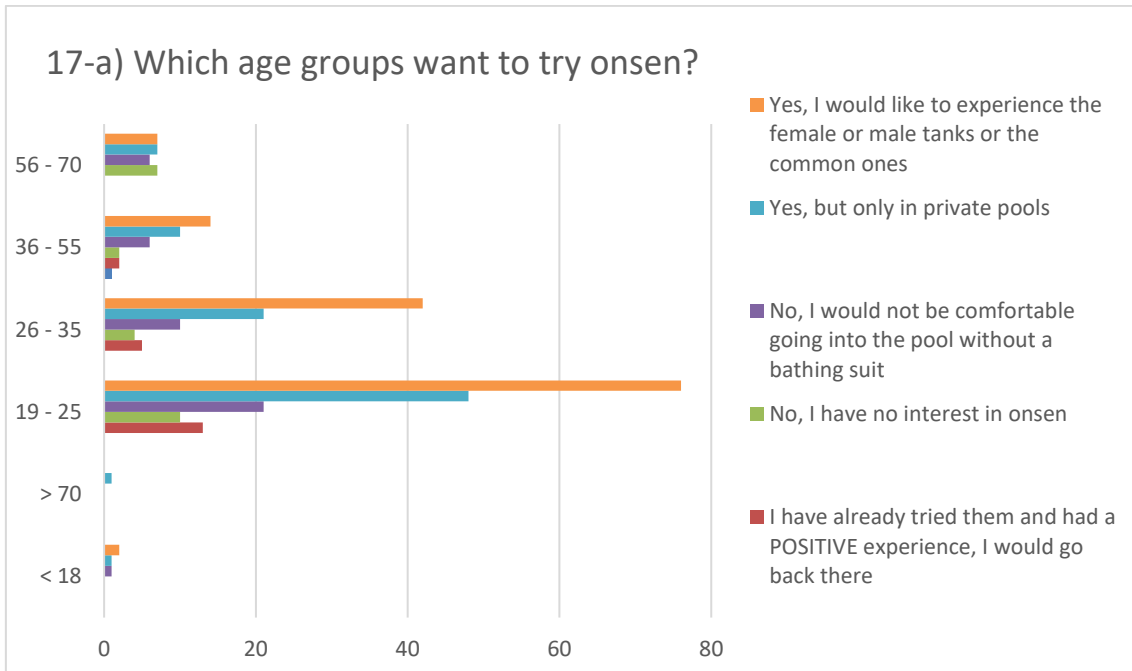


Figure 70, Which age groups want to try onsen?

The graph shows that in general, the sequence of preferences remains the same, with wanting to try onsen in first place, wanting to try private pools in second place, and having no interest in onsen in third place. The only difference occurs in the 56-70 range, where the first three categories received the same number of votes.

Question 18 is about investigating the type of place people would prefer to visit by going to Japan.

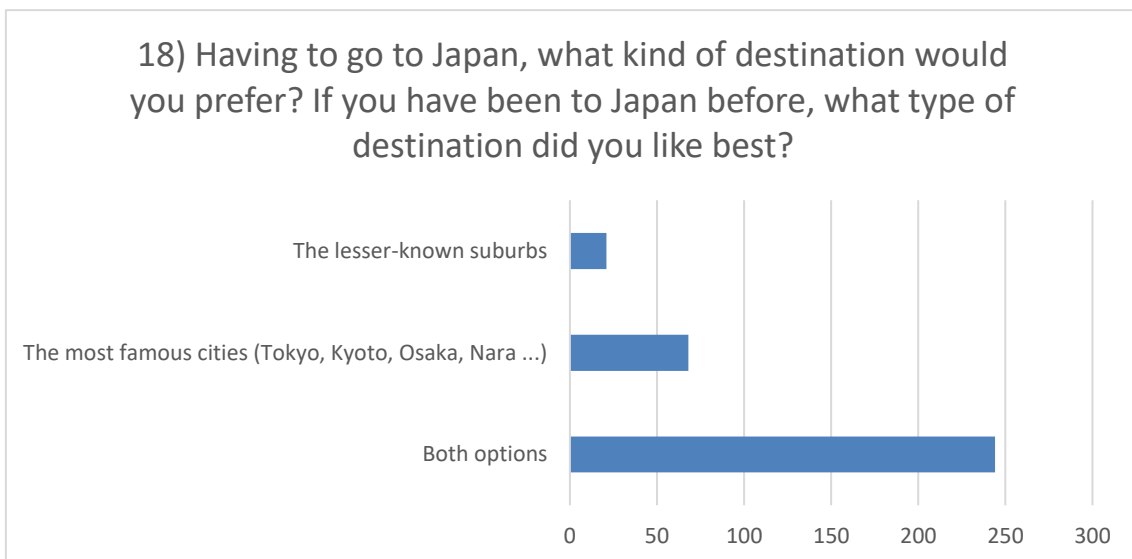


Figure 71, Question 18

The question details the preference between wanting to visit big famous cities or preferring suburban villages, and his goal is again to see if Beppu could be an attractive destination in the eyes of Italians.

The results show a general tendency for 73.2% to want to see both sides of Japan, and the reasons for these choices will be analyzed below.

In fact, those who had selected either the “both option” or the “most famous cities” option would come up with question number 19 as the next question, which seeks to understand what motivates Italians to head for big cities rather than the suburbs.

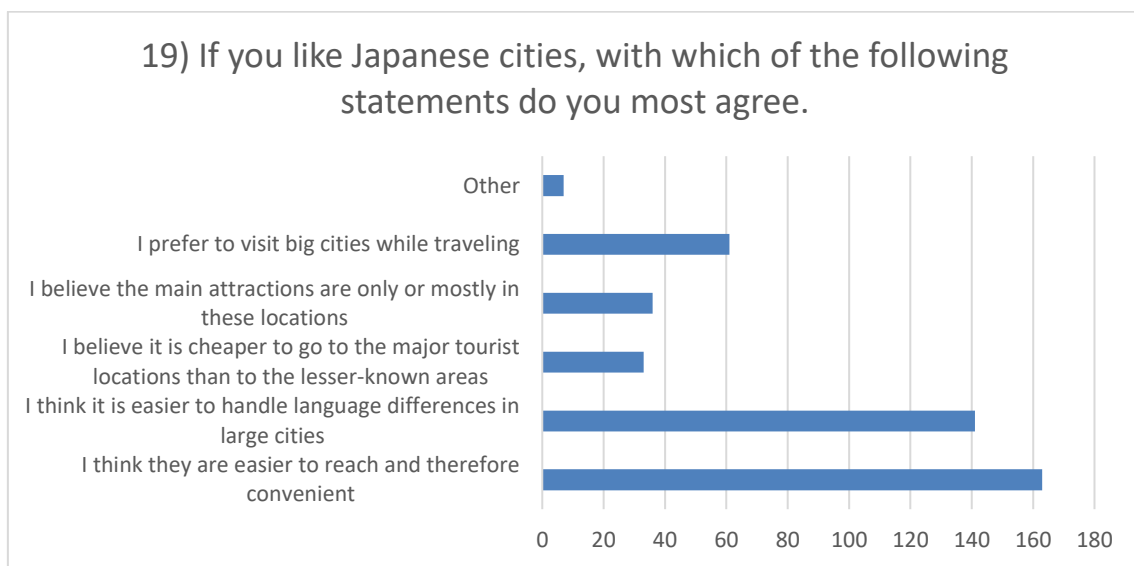


Figure 72, Question 19

The 36.9% of respondents say they want to visit popular cities because they are easier to reach and therefore more convenient, while 32.5% believe it is easier to handle language difficulties in large cities. Only as a third choice, with 14% of the vote is the answer “I prefer to visit big cities when I travel”²¹.

These responses therefore show how the motivations for Italians to head to popular destinations are not about real interest in the destinations in question, but are due to factors such as convenience and language difficulties. These two issues turn out to be a common thread that travelers always keep in mind in any decision regarding travel, from choosing

²¹ This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of people who answered the questionnaire but to the total number of preferences expressed.

a destination to lodging and so on. Therefore, these two elements must become determinants when deciding on a strategy to lead Italians to Beppu.

In the same way as above, those who answered “both option” or “the lesser-known suburbs” in Question 18 were asked to provide further details about what pushed them toward that preference in Question 20.

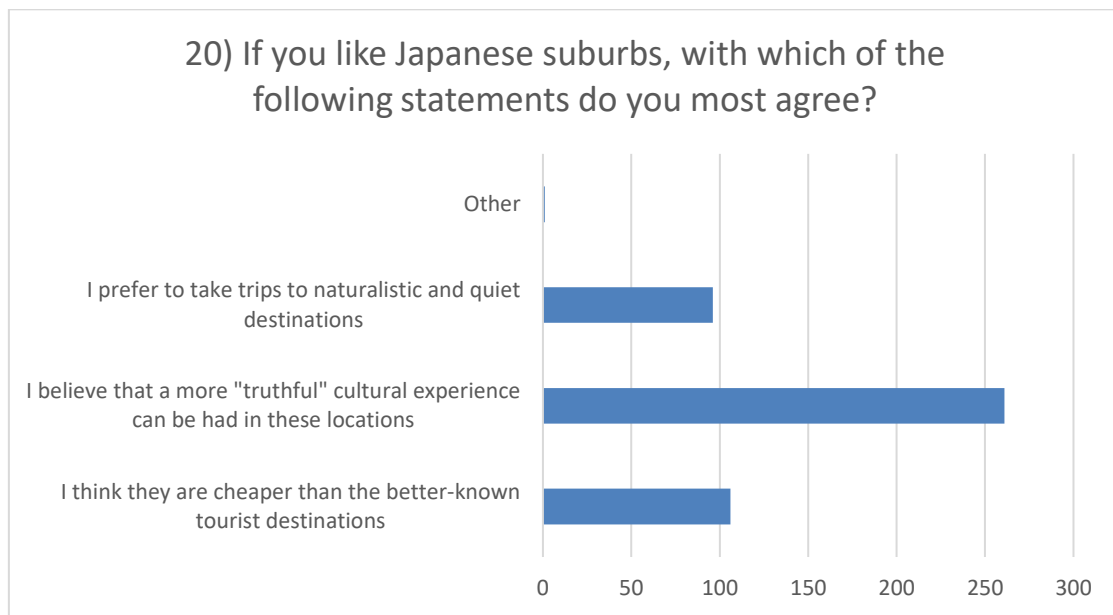


Figure 73, Question 20

With 56.4% of the references, the first reason from the graph is that Italians believe that traveling to these places allows for a more truthful cultural experience. In second place, on the other hand, with 22.9% are economic motivations, whereby these destinations are believed to be cheaper than the previous one. Finally, 96 people say they prefer nature destinations during as destinations for their trips²².

The answers to this question agree with those given to question 10 (figure 57), and both see the elements of “culture” and “nature” as the main drivers of Italians’ interest. At the same time, cities however turn out to be the destinations to which people actually tend to go, in line with the data given in figure 44 of chapter 3.2, which sees 86,3% of Italians choosing Tokyo as their destination.

²² This question, being multiple-choice, does not refer to the total number of people who answered the questionnaire but to the total number of preferences expressed.

The main reason, however, as shown by question 19, turns out not to be an interest in big cities, but rather a consequence of the problems that more peripheral destinations report: inconvenience and the lack of foreign language proficiency.

With this question, it was concluded the part about Japan.

The respondents were asked below whether or not they would like to continue the interview (question 21). 38 people ended the interview here, while 296 continued.

3.3.3 Beppu-related questions

The first question in this last part aims to see how many of the respondents know Beppu.

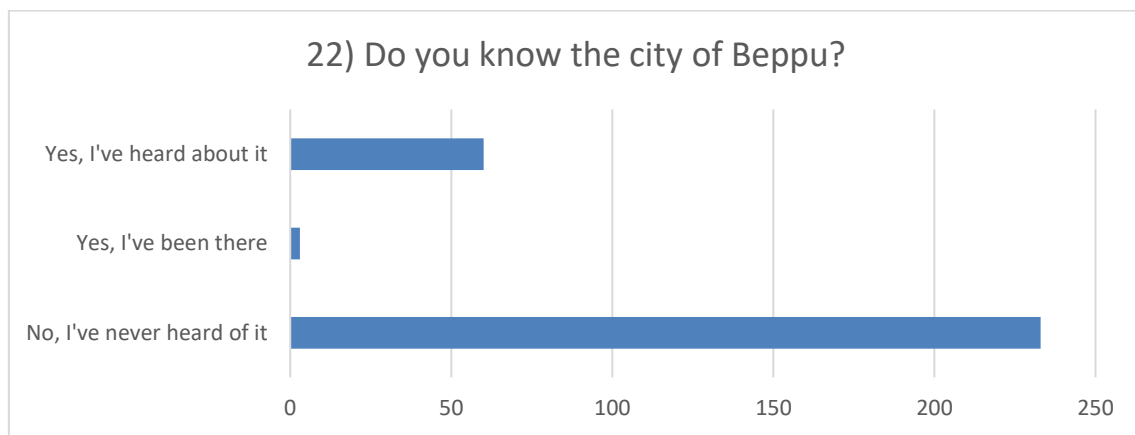


Figure 74, Question 22

As assumed, 78.9% of people have never heard of this small town. Instead, a 20.3% of people who have heard of it and 2 people who have been there turn out.

The people who responded that they had already been there were asked whether or not they would go back (question 23), and 2 out of 2 said yes, that they would go back to Beppu if they will have the chance.

There was another question in the questionnaire, for those who answered that they did not like Beppu, asking why. However, no one gave such an answer and therefore no one filled in question 24, the only open-ended question.

Those who claimed to know Beppu were asked how they knew the city in question.

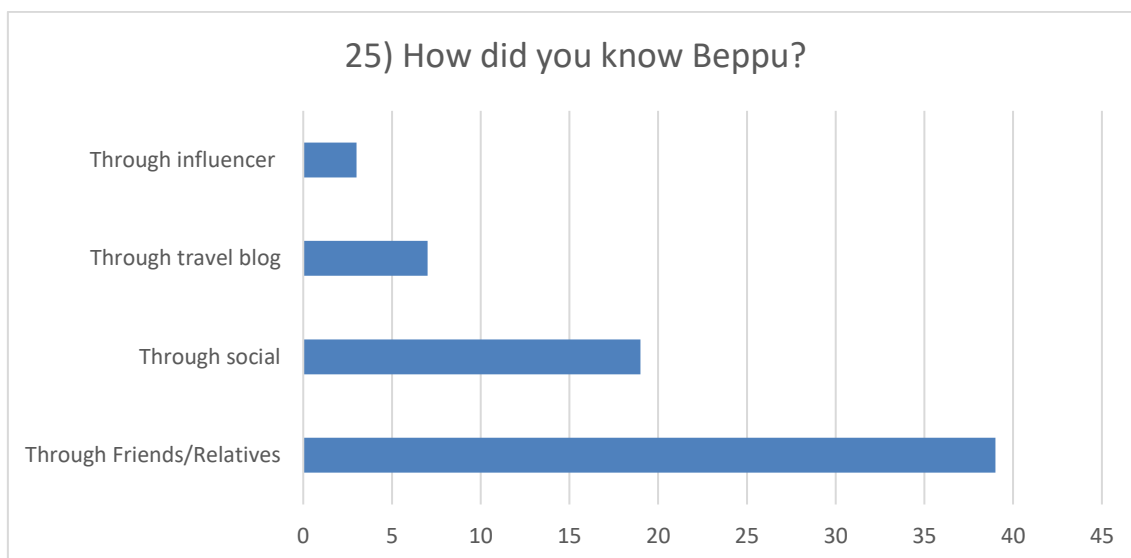


Figure 75, Question 25

The purpose of this question is to ascertain what method has been used so far to learn about Beppu.

The graph shows that 39 people know her through friends/relatives, to follow 19 people through social, 7 through travel blogs and 3 through influencers²³.

If disregard the 39 people who mentioned friends and relatives as the source of their knowledge about Beppu, it turns out that the most functional methods were social, with 27.9% of the votes. Then travel blogs with 10.3% and finally influencers with 4%.

Social therefore turns out to be the most functional method of publicizing Beppu, if word of mouth is not considered.

However, in Figure 54 of Question 7, among the top three methods most used by Italians in choosing their destinations there are “personal passions and aptitudes”, “suggestions from friends and relatives” and “social media”. Therefore, even if the number of people who know Beppu was influenced by this context, friends’ recommendations result to be

²³ Given that the questionnaire was initially circulated by the author to friends and relatives, and having talked about Beppu during the stay in Japan, it is assumed that a proportion of those who responded that they knew Beppu “through friends/relatives” were unintentionally influenced by this dynamic of events. Therefore, it is believed that by asking the same question to a different sample of people, the percentage of people who know Beppu might be lower.

very important in pushing people to visit one destination rather than another, and should therefore be considered as a good method of advertising.

Finally, before asking the last question “do you want to visit Beppu?”, to make sure that this question could be answered even by those who had never heard of it, a quick presentation of the city was made, together with 12 photos that depicted some of the places visited that were easily accessible from Beppu.

The premise was as follows:

“Beppu is famous as the city with the highest number of hot springs in Japan. Steams from the springs come out of natural pools and manholes. Each hot spring brings different benefits to the body of those who bathe in it.

The town is surrounded by mountains full of forests and waterfalls, and overlooks the sea.

Local specialties include food cooked with natural vapors from underground, battered chicken, and marinated sashimi.

It is a suburban area that retains the charm of rural Japan, well connected by public transportation (planes, ferries, trains, and buses) to major destinations in the region and Japan as a whole.

Here are some photos of Beppu and its surroundings”.

The photos shown were the same showed in chapter 2.1, that depicted the city, the beach, Kitsuki Castle, one of the *jigokumeguri* onsen, the Usuki Buddha stones, the fall maple coloring at ropeway park, Harajiri Falls, the samurai quarter in Kitsuki, the historic Usuki road, and the sacred rocks of Saiki.

After this presentation, the answer to question 27, the last one in the questionnaire was as follows.

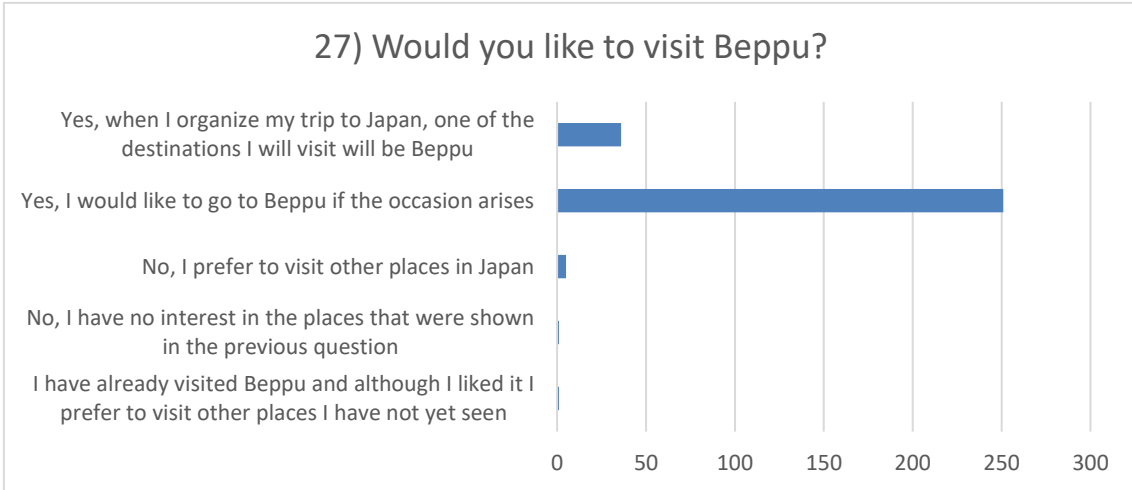


Figure 76, Question 27

As their first choice, 85.4% of respondents said they would visit Beppu if the opportunity arises, followed by 12.2% saying that as soon as they plan their trip to Japan, they will travel to Beppu. Next, 1.7% of respondents would prefer to visit other places if they went to Japan, and 0.3% say they have no interest in the places shown in the photos.

To better understand when actually the people interviewed might travel to Beppu, cross-referencing was done with the answers given to the question number 9 “when do you plan to go to Japan?”.

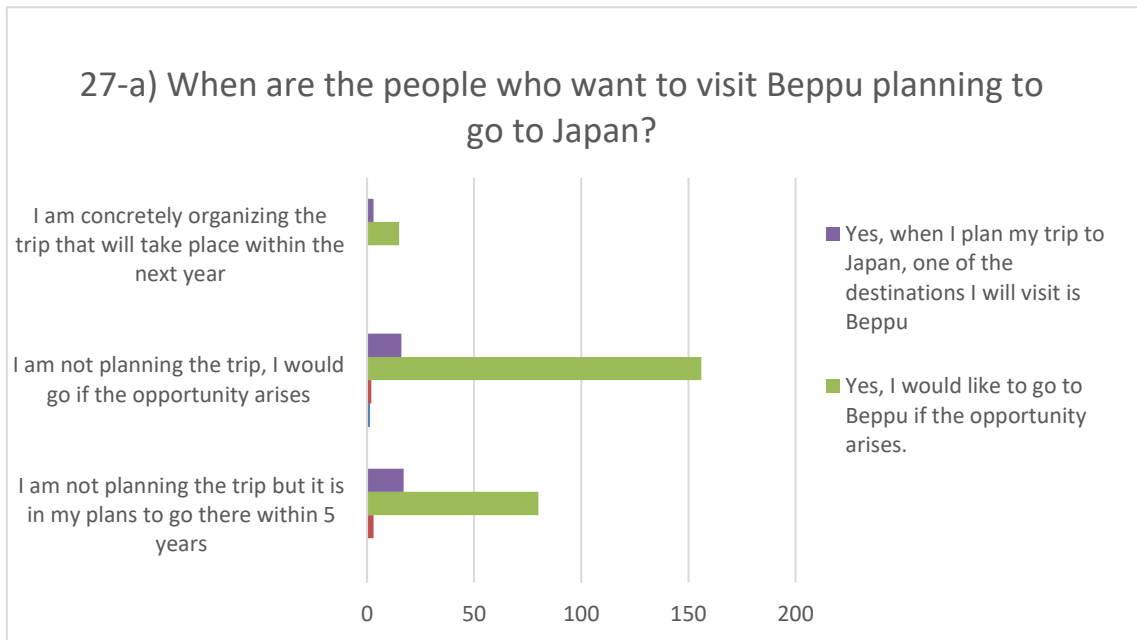


Figure 77, When are the people who want to visit Beppu planning to go to Japan?

Among those who will go to Japan if the opportunity arises, 16 people stated that they would list Beppu as one of their destinations, while 156 will go in case the opportunity arises.

Among those who will go to Japan within the next 5 years, 80 people said they would go to Beppu should the opportunity arise, while 17 said they would list it as one of their destinations.

Among those who will leave within the next year, 15 people will go if they have the opportunity, while 3 people state that one of the destinations they will visit is Beppu.

A second analysis was made to ascertain from which age groups the people with no interest in Beppu came, a cross-tabulation with age data was conducted.

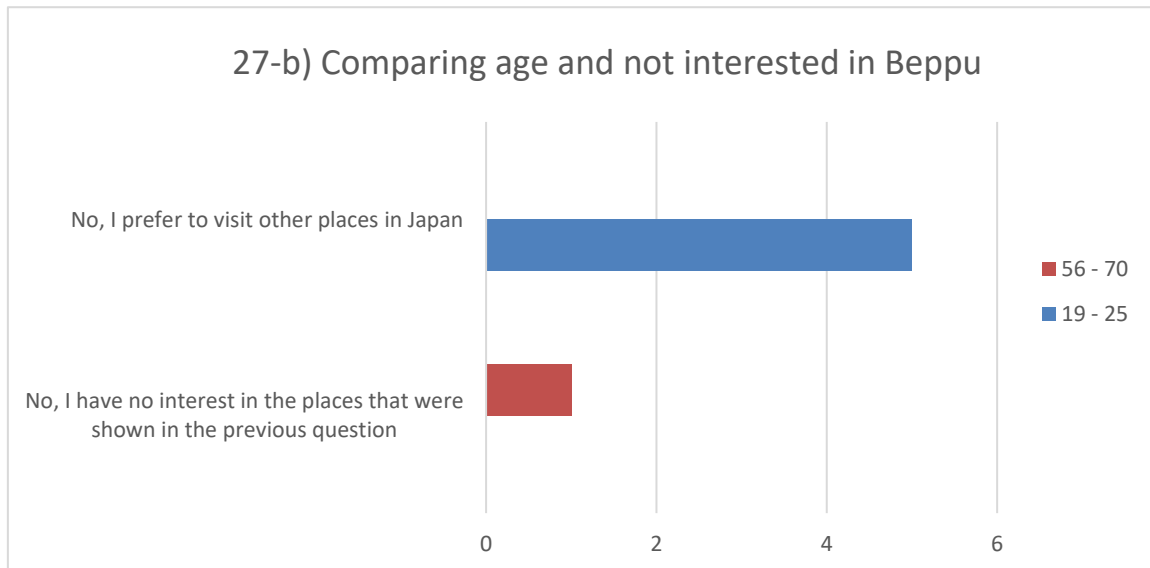


Figure 78, Comparing age and not interested in Beppu

The graph shows that the 5 people who have different interests than Beppu all belong to the 19-25 age group, while and the person who is not interested belongs to the 56-70 age group.

A final analysis was done to try to see if, even among those who do not show interest in onsen, they might be interested in going to Beppu.

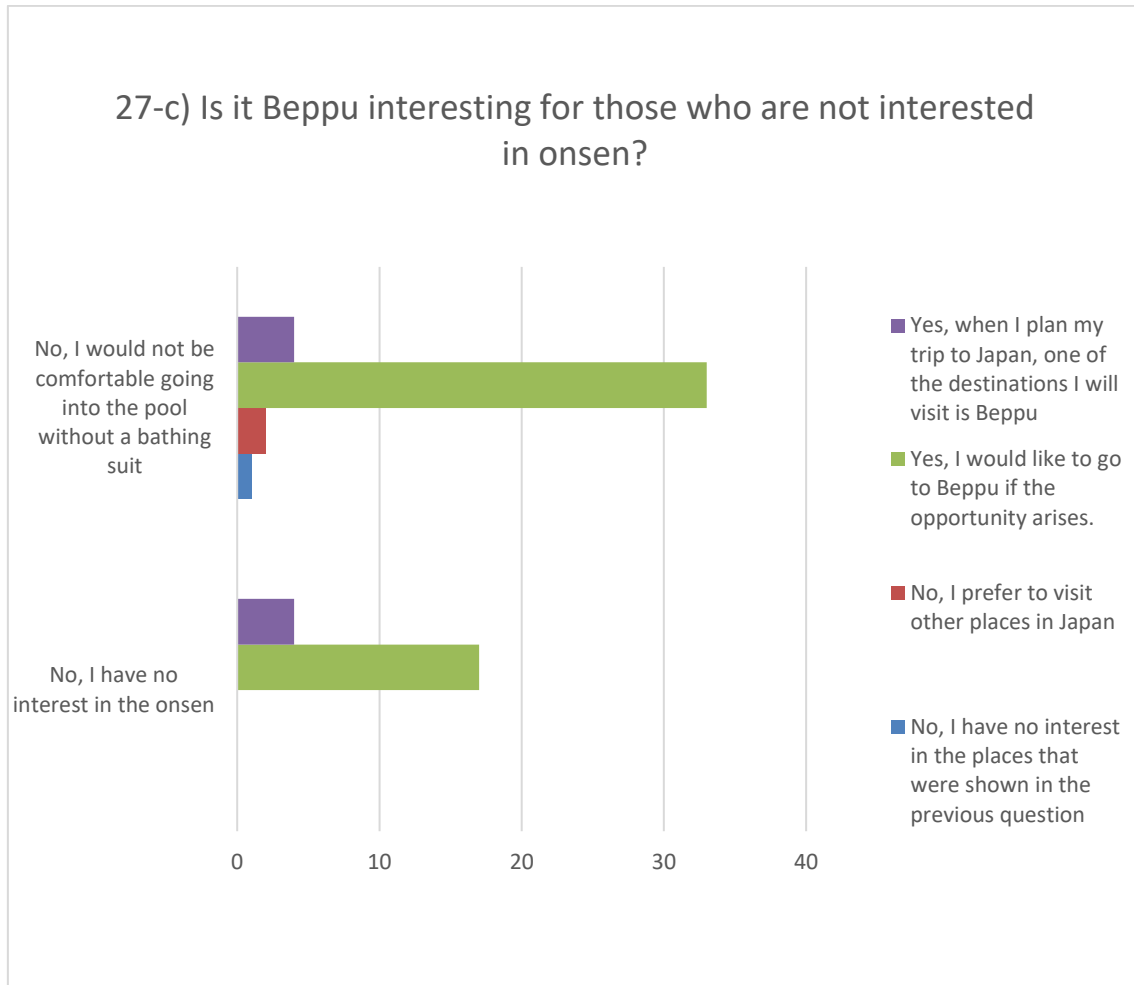


Figure 79, Is it Beppu interesting for those who are not interested in onsen?

The graph shows that even for those who said they had no interest in onsen or felt uncomfortable without wearing a swimsuit, Beppu still turns out to be an attractive destination.

These responses show that Italians' interest in this city can be a real possibility. The city's offerings meet what Italians are searching for and can be considered an alternative Japanese tourist market to that of the large cities that are already widely known.

3.4 Questionnaire summary

What can be deduced from the results of the questionnaire, is that the main goal of Italians during their travels is to visit places related to local culture, art and history, followed by the desire to taste typical dishes. In addition, the type of experience is for most of the people not impacting, while for those who express a preference, a trip devoted to

observation and contemplation of the places to which people travel is preferred. Regarding transportation, Italians are favorable to travel for distances of maximum 2h by bus/train for 48.8% and for even longer distances for 26.8% of cases. With respect to contact with other travelers or the staff of their host facility, more than 50% of the interviewed agree to have contact if it is surrounded by moments of privacy. Furthermore, it is found that not knowing the local language does not negatively affect the choice to visit a particular country. The last of the general questions investigates the method by which people choose where to go on a trip, and the results clearly indicate that personal passions and aptitudes are the biggest cause of Italians' choices, followed by advice from friends and inspiration given by photos on social media.

From the section regarding Japan, it is inferred that a majority of respondents have not traveled to Japan but plan to do so in the future, more specifically, 60% are not yet making travel plans, but will go if the opportunity arises. Among those who are not interested in going to Japan, the main reason is that there are other priorities for travel, while those who want to go have interest mainly in culture, history, art, and nature. 75% of Italians travel to Japan for tourism and stay/intend to stay there 70% of the time between 10 days and two weeks. Regarding guided tours, Italians turn out to be highly inclined because "it would help to get to know the culture better and avoid the problems of language or travel locally". The facility where 52% of Italians want to stay overnight turns out to be *ryokan*, while the main reasons for going for one facility over another are convenience with transportation and having staff who speak English or a vehicular language. As for onsen, more than 50% of Italians are willing to try them. It can be seen from the questionnaire that Italians want to visit both the big famous cities and the lesser-known locations, but for different reasons: of the cities they appreciate the convenience and less difficulty in communicating, while of the suburbs they appreciate being able to have more truthful cultural experiences.

Beppu turns out to be an unknown destination to most, and those who do know about it do so through friends or photos on social media. However, 85% of Italians after seeing some of the places that can be visited say they want to go there.

CONCLUSIONS

The initial purpose of this study was to see if the city of Beppu, which has great potential and wishes to grow in the tourism sector, could somehow expand its market by targeting Italian tourists.

The city in question already has a large number of incoming tourists, but 90% of them are Japanese tourists. They obviously represent an important source of income for local industries, but they do not allow the full exploitation of local resources. In fact, Japanese travelers tend to stay in Beppu for about one or two nights just to do the *jigokumeguri* or to go to the onsen, and their spending in the city is therefore limited.

Among foreign tourists, the largest visitors are Koreans, but they spend about one or two nights in the city, leading to the same conclusions as the Japanese.

In order for Beppu's economy to grow, it is necessary for tourists to stay longer and consequently increase the amount of their spending.

Beppu has received great pushes from the government to be able to grow in this perspective. In fact, the Japanese government sees the tourism sector as a strong boost to economic growth, in line with the assertions of Odiambo and Gwenhure¹, and as a way to reduce rural depopulation, a serious problem in current Japanese society. In order for the economy to grow, it was decided to take advantage of hot springs tourism and make it the centerpiece of the city's offerings.

However, the area around Beppu has multiple sites worth visiting, easily accessible through public transportation and very different from each other, which can satisfy the interests of different types of visitors. One of the problems encountered, therefore, is that these sites are not reported on official websites that concentrate information on the topic of hot springs.

In order to make tourists stay longer in this town, a wide range of activities needs to be presented, enticing travelers to spend few days. Instead, the strategy so far followed by local authorities is to limit the focus to onsen tourism. A first step in changing tourist

¹ (Odiambo & Gwenhure, 2017).

trends then could be to publicize all areas of historical, cultural, nature and so on interest, so as to make Beppu a place to spend longer vacations.

If international tourism is to be expanded, there are several steps to be taken.

First among them is to carry out an advertising campaign through, for example, social media, showing the beauty of Beppu and the surrounding area. In fact, as confirmed by the hotel owners interviewed in chapter 2, one of the problems why people do not travel to Beppu lies in the fact that it is not well known outside the country.

A second key step is to make the city ready to welcome foreign tourists, thus putting staff who know the main foreign languages in tourist offices, hotels, restaurants, etc., and making it easier for them to move around the area: using transportation apps that indicate which destinations to reach, directions in English or other vehicular languages, and so on.

At present, the biggest foreign tourists turn out to be Koreans with 40% of attendance among travelers from abroad. However, as inferred from the data, their near monopoly of the market does not prove to be a desirable situation. In fact, in 2019 Beppu experienced a large reduction in the number of visitors, which turned out to stem, however, from the non-arrival of Koreans, whose attendance suddenly declined.

This shows how, in order to maintain a stable economic situation, it is necessary to differentiate the market from which tourists come, so as not to depend on a single country.

In fact, the tourism sector is very sensitive to different types of crises, from economic to political or pandemic, and diversifying the origins of tourists could be a way to avoid incurring future crises given by their non-arrival.

For this reason, this study seeks to see whether Italian tourists could enter this market and increase its differentiation. To do so, a qualitative analysis was conducted through a questionnaire, which yielded encouraging results.

In fact, Italians not only turn out to be interested in traveling to Japan, but also specifically in visiting Beppu. After showing photos of the town, 97% of those who want to go to Japan said they would like to visit it, showing that the main reason they would not go there is precisely because they were unaware of its existence.

To be precise, among the answers, the 85% of the people, say they would like to go there if the opportunity arises. This means that with the right strategies, one could easily lead Italians to Beppu.

Therefore, strategies should first address those of publicizing the city. Since one of the most widely used means of choosing travel destination for Italians turns out to be social media, campaigns should be focused on in this area, through the use of photos and videos.

Secondly, there should be an increase in the spread of foreign languages at least in hotel facilities, where one of the basic requirements for Italians turns out to be to being able to communicate with the facility. Since this transition requires some time for staff training, a replacement strategy was devised for the immediate period that in case of success can also be maintained over time. These are the organized trips led by a local expert guide.

In fact, this type of travel would make it possible to bypass the language problem, as a guide who speaks both the local language and Italian would always be available to travelers to solve the eventual problems during the trip. It would also save time and avoid problems during travel, as the Japanese system, being different from what tourists might be used to, might be unclear to visitors. Not to mention that, in the case of sufficiently large groups, private vehicles with drivers could be hired, which would allow for even easier travel and more detailed personalization of the trip.

71% of Italians say they are interested in this type of travel, which could therefore become a real possibility to implement in the immediate future.

The reason Italians could become an asset to Beppu City, besides allowing diversification in the tourism market, is that they tend to take much longer trips than Japanese or Koreans. In fact, according to questionnaire data, more than 60% of Italians are planning or have already made a trip to Japan for between 10 and 15 days, not to mention the percentage of those who stay an even longer period of time. Only 2% of the total intend to carry out a trip between 2 and 5 days.

If Italians spent this time or even half the time in Beppu, it would bring in much higher earnings for the hotel and restaurant establishments, on which they have been seen to focus most of their expenses.

Therefore, they would help solve the city's two main problems: too much dependence on the domestic and Korean markets, and the low percentage of overnight stays (and thus related expenses).

Likewise, Beppu is found to meet the needs of Italians: here it is possible to experience Japanese-related traditions in the areas of architecture, culture, and cuisine, not to mention the naturalistic destinations in the area with forests, waterfalls, sea, mountains, and so on.

Therefore, it is concluded that a match between Beppu's supply and demand from Italians is positive and desirable, because it can solve some of the problems present there.

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APPENDIX A

November 22, 2022

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Ikari Seminar, Oita University)

Elena Denurchis Faculty of Economics, Oita University

Kunio Ikari

Request for Interview Survey

Dear Sir or Madam,

this late autumn, we would like to congratulate you on your continued prosperity. I am writing to inform you about Mrs. Elena's research project. We are sending you this letter to ask for your cooperation in the research project of Ms. Elena, who is visiting Japan from Italy as an exchange student at the Faculty of Economics, Oita University. We are sending this letter to ask you to collaborate on her research project. Elena's research topic is the business of tourism. She is studying the impact of the pre- and post-Corona period on Japan's tourism industry and the change in strategies. Below is a summary of her findings. We then ask you to cooperate in conducting an interview on tourism business strategies. For an overview of the survey, please see below.

We thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kunio Ikari

NOTES

- Hearing on the impact of Corona on the tourism industry and post-Corona business strategy
 - Date and time: Between November and December 2022
 - Format: Face-to-face or online
 - Duration: Approximately 1 hour
 - Language: English
 - To preview the questions refer to the following page
 - Host Institution: Kunio Ikari Laboratory, Faculty of Economics, Oita University
- Mail: kunioik2@oitau.ac.jp

A collection of possible questions

A. General questions:

- 1. Provided services from the structure (meal, onsen, excursion..)
- 2. Foreigners: where do they come from? How long do they stay? Do they speak Japanese? How do they communicate with the structure (email using translator? Reception with different languages?)
- 3. Foreigners and Japanese: What type of travelers (alone, couples, family, friends..)? Age of travelers? Extra charges due to the use of services?
- 4. What do they do outside the hotel? There are suggestions from the structure for the activities? How do they move (train, bus, taxi, rent a car)?
- 5. Are there any coupon for international tourists? For Japanese people (like go to etc)? What kind of coupon? How can they have it? Is it a cost for the hotel itself? Do you think it helped?

B. Corona related problems:

- 1. Numbers of Japanese travelers and foreigners (before corona, in 2021 and from October 2022)
- 2. Did corona crisis infect your income? How? For how long? What do you think about the stop of incoming tourists?
- 3. What measures your hotel has taken to prevent the spread of covid? There were instructions from the government about what to do? Did you have to close your activity for some period? If yes, did you have some help from the government for this period? There were redundancies (licenziamenti)? New recruitments (assunzioni)?
- 4. How much does it cost to sanitize everything monthly? Do you have some income from the government for sanitize? If not, would you like to have some income from the government? Do you think the government could have done something more to prevent the corona crisis? Do you have ideas on what government could do in order to prevent another crisis caused by pandemic?
- 5. There are specific request from guests about covid spread prevention?
- 6. Does the hotel itself give masks to workers?
- 7. As a worker, have you had experience with the 2003 SARS epidemic or the 2009 swine flu? Do you find similarities or differences with the current covid epidemic with regard to

the economic crisis? (es: fewer tourists, restrictions dictated by the government on entering or leaving the country)?

C. Strategies:

- 1. In your opinion, what are the most important problems in tourism in Kyushu/Oita? What can be done? Who should do something?
- 2. Do you have interest in increase the number of foreigners tourists? If no, why? If yes, what kind of tourists do you would like to attract (both Japanese and foreigners? Young people? Workers? Families..)? Why them? What is your actual strategy for increasing tourists number?
- 3. Do you know workation program? Do you think it can be a possibility?
- 4. Do you think that having an International airport like Narita/Haneda would help Kyushu tourism?
- 5. Do you think it is important to have more English/Chinese/Korean speakers working in tourism sector? Are you thinking about increase this service in your hotel? If yes, how?

APPENDIX B

2022年11月22日

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (大分大学礎ゼミ所属)
Elena Denurchis
大分大学経済学部
礎 邦生

インタビュー調査のお願い

拝啓 晩秋の候、貴殿におかれましては益々ご清栄のこととお慶び申し上げます。この度、大分大学経済学部に交換留学でイタリアから来日しているエレナ氏の研究プロジェクトに協力をお願いしたく本状をお送りしました。エレナ氏は、観光ビジネスを研究テーマとして、コロナ前後の日本の観光業における影響と戦略の転換について調査を行っています。つきましては、観光事業の戦略について、ヒアリング調査に協力をお願いできますでしょうか。調査概要につきましては、下記ご参照ください。何卒よろしくお願いいたします。

敬具 (文責 礎 邦生)

記

- 依頼内容 観光業に対するコロナの影響とコロナ後の事業戦略に関するヒアリング
- 日時 2022年11月～12月の間
- 形式 対面もしくはオンライン
- 所要時間 1時間前後
- 使用言語 英語
- 想定質問 次ページ以降を参照ください
- 留学生の受入先機関
大分大学経済学部礎邦生研究室
Mail: kunioik2@oita-u.ac.jp

以上

想定質問集

【パート1：一般質問】

1. 構造物から提供されるサービス（食事、温泉、アクティビティなど）について話してもらえますか。
2. 外国人観光客について：彼らはどこから来たのか？どのくらい滞在しているのか？日本語を話せるのか？施設との連絡方法はどのようなものがあるか？
3. 外国人と日本人旅行者双方について：旅行者のタイプ（一人、カップル、家族、友人など）、旅行者の年齢層は？サービス利用による追加料金はどのようなものがあるか？
4. 体験について：ホテルの外では何を楽しむことができるのか？楽しむことができるアクティビティの一覧などの提案はあるか？移動手段（電車、バス、タクシー、レンタカーなど）はどのようなものがあるか？
5. クーポンについて：外国人観光客向けのクーポンはありますか？日本人向けのクーポン（旅行など）はありますか？もしあるとしたら、どのようなクーポンですか？どのように入手できますか？ホテル側の負担は？役に立つと思いますか？

【パート2：コロナで生じた問題に関する質問】

1. 旅行者数について：日本人旅行者数、外国人旅行者数をうかがえますか（コロナ前、2021年、2022年10月以降）
2. 収入の増減について：コロナ危機はあなたの収入に影響しましたか？影響があったとしたら、収益の増減の幅と期間はどのようなものでしたか？コロナ期間中の観光客の受け入れ停止についてどう思われますか？

3. 感染対策について：ホテルではどのような対策をしていましたか？政府からの指示はありましたか？一定期間、活動を停止せざるを得なかったのでしょうか？もしそうなら、その期間、政府から何らかの援助を受けましたか？余剰人員削減がありましたか？危機を終わった後新規採用はありましたか？
4. 政府からの支援について：毎月の消毒にいくらかかりますか？除菌のために政府から何らかの補助がありましたか？もしそうでなければ、政府からの補助があってもいいと思いますか？コロナ危機を防ぐために、政府はもっと何かすることができたと思いますか？また、パンデミックによる危機を防ぐために、政府ができることは何だと思いますか？
5. 宿泊客について：宿泊客から感染予防について特別な要望がありましたか？
6. マスク対策について：ホテルが従業員にマスクを配布していますか？
7. 過去の感染症について：観光業に従事するなかで、2003年のSARSや2009年の新型インフルエンザを経験したことがありますか？なかったらこの過去の危機について聞いたことがありますか。あったら経済危機に関して、今回のコロナの流行との共通点や相違点を見つけられますか？(例：観光客の減少、政府による出入国の制限)?

【パート3：事業戦略に関する質問】

1. 地域の課題について：九州・大分の観光で最も重要な問題は何だと思われますか？

問題の解決のためには、どうすればいいのか？また、誰が何をすべきでしょうか？

2. 外国人観光客について：あなたは外国人観光客を増やすことに関心がありますか？ない場合、その理由はなんですか？関心がある場合、どのような観光客（日本人、外国人、若者、労働者、家族など）を誘致したいとお考えですか？また、その理由はどのようなものですか？観光客を増やすための実際の戦略はどのようなものが考えられますか？
3. ワークেশョンについて：ワークেশョンプログラムはご存知ですか？ワークেশョン事業には将来性があると思いますか？
4. 空港について：成田・羽田のような国際空港が九州にあれば、九州の観光に役立つと思いますか？
5. 言語対応について：観光産業において、英語、中国語、韓国語を話せる人材をもっと増やすことは重要だと思いますか？あなたのホテルでは、このサービスを増やそうとお考えですか？もしそうなら、どのような方法をとっていますか？

以上

APPENDIX C

COSA CERCANO I TURISTI ITALIANI ALL'ESTERO 🌍

Ciao! Sono Elena Denurchis, laureanda al corso di laurea magistrale in **Lingue, Economie ed Istituzioni del Giappone** dell'università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

Hai ricevuto questo questionario perché sto scrivendo la mia tesi di laurea e mi servirebbe il tuo aiuto. Il questionario comprende solo **20 domande** a scelta multipla, non ti prenderà più di **7 minuti**. Sarà pochissimo tempo per te ma un grande contributo per la mia ricerca.

Se ti interessa saperne di più di seguito troverai i dettagli, altrimenti **puoi iniziare subito il questionario** senza leggere il resto. **Ti ringrazio in anticipo!!**

Il **tema** della mia tesi riguarda il settore turistico, il mio **obiettivo** è quello di capire se gli italiani hanno interesse nel viaggiare in Giappone e, in questo caso specifico, nella cittadina di Beppu. È un luogo poco conosciuto all'estero ma molto famoso in Giappone. Durante il mio periodo di studi all'estero ho avuto l'occasione di visitarlo e conoscerne da vicino le potenzialità, e ora vorrei verificare se l'offerta della città possa soddisfare i bisogni dei turisti italiani.

PRIVACY: i dati del questionario non verranno utilizzati per scopi esterni alla ricerca, non verranno condivisi a terzi e non potranno essere ricondotti al singolo una volta che verranno elaborati nello studio.

CONTATTI: Nel caso in cui volessi avere ulteriori informazioni, avessi domande o perplessità di seguito trovi la mia mail istituzionale: 868348@stud.unive.it

* Obbligatoria

GENERALI

1

Quanti anni hai? *

- < 18
- 19 - 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 55
- 56 - 70
- > 70

2

In generale nei tuoi viaggi, cosa cerchi?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Divertimento e feste (discoteche, feste in spiaggia, locali notturni...)
- Gite di tipo culturale/storico/artistico (tesori nazionali, musei, aree archeologiche, castelli...)
- Località marittime (snorkeling, relax in spiaggia...)
- Zona di montagna (escursioni in montagna, scii, pattinaggio sul ghiaccio...)
- Avventure (parchi divertimento, parchi a tema, zoo...)
- Tour culinari (assaggiare pietanze o bevande tipiche del luogo...)
- Altro

3

In generale nei tuoi viaggi, preferisci:

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Visitare luoghi ed osservare (esempio: vedere una cerimonia del the)
- Partecipare ad un'attività (esempio: partecipare ad una cerimonia del the come "ospite" e bere il thè che viene servito dall'espert*)
- Vivere esperienze legate al luogo in cui mi trovo (esempio: seguire dei workshop su come eseguire la cerimonia del thè in Giappone e imparare attivamente come svolgerne una)
- Tutte le risposte precedenti, non ho nessuna preferenza particolare

4

In generale nei tuoi viaggi, preferisci restare sempre nello stesso posto o girare più luoghi?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Restare sempre nello stesso posto, anche per periodi lunghi
- Visitare più città, a patto che siano ad una distanza inferiore di 2h di bus/treno l'una dall'altra
- Visitare più città, anche se richiedessero uno spostamento maggiore alle 2h di bus/treno
- Visitare più città, anche se dovessi spostarmi con l'aereo in un volo interno al paese in cui mi trovo

5

Per quanto riguarda il **contatto con lo staff e gli altri ospiti**, in generale preferisci pernottare in una struttura che:

- seleziona una sola opzione -

*

- Permetta di rilassarsi senza il contatto con altri turisti o membri dello staff
- Permetta di conoscere persone nuove con cui condividere momenti del viaggio
- Permetta di avere un contatto con l'albergatore, farsi consigliare i posti in cui andare e se ci fosse la possibilità girare insieme a lui
- Permetta di avere un contatto con staff e ospiti in alcuni momenti, ma che garantisca la possibilità di avere momenti di privacy
- Altro

6

Non conoscere la **lingua locale** quanto limita i tuoi viaggi?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Non è un limite, posso gestire in autonomia trasporti e conversazioni con le persone del luogo tramite app o utilizzando altre tecnologie
- Non è un limite nel caso in cui sia presente una guida o un compagn* di viaggio che conosca la lingua locale
- Non conoscere la lingua locale è un limite che mi impedisce di recarmi in un determinato paese
- Altro

7

Come decidi dove andare in viaggio?

- seleziona una o più opzioni -

*

- Seguo i suggerimenti degli influencer sui social
- Mi faccio ispirare dalle foto che trovo sui social
- Seguo i consigli di amici/parenti eccetera
- Seguo le indicazioni di organizzazioni (esempio: UNESCO), riviste...
- Scelgo da google maps
- Mi faccio suggerire dalle agenzie di viaggio
- Seguo le mie passioni/attitudini personali
- Scelgo un paese e cerco i blog delle città/regioni che ci sono
- Vado nei luoghi in cui hanno girato film/serie tv che ho visto o libri che ho letto
- Altro

Sezione 2

8

Sei mai stat* in Giappone?

- seleziona una sola opzione -

*

- No, non è una meta che mi interessa
- Non ancora, ma sto valutando di andarci in futuro
- Sì, una volta ma NON credo di tornarci in futuro
- Sì, una volta e ho intenzione di tornarci in futuro
- Sì, più di una volta

9

Perchè non ti interessa/Perchè non ti è piaciuto?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Non ho interesse nel paese in questione
- Ho altre priorità per i miei viaggi
- Costa troppo
- È troppo lontano, non sono a mio agio nel viaggiare in aereo per tante ore
- Non conosco la lingua e credo potrebbe essere un problema insormontabile per il mio viaggio
- Non mi piace la cucina locale
- Altro

Sezione 3

10

Perché vorresti andare in Giappone? Cosa ti piace del Giappone?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- La cucina giapponese
- La lingua (letteratura, calligrafia, seguire corsi di lingua..)
- La cultura/storia/arte/tradizioni (samurai, geisha, cerimonie del thè, templi e santuari..)
- La natura (assistere alla fioritura dei ciliegi o alla colorazione delle foglie in autunno, vedere il monte Fuji, vedere le cascate..)
- Le grandi città e la tecnologia (fare shopping, prendere il treno ad alta velocità..)
- Piccoli borghi periferici (paesi in stile classico, castelli, antiche ville..)
- Design, architettura (edifici, ponti..)
- Altro

11

Quando pensi di andare?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Sto concretamente organizzando il viaggio che avrà luogo entro il prossimo anno
- Non sto organizzando il viaggio ma è nei miei piani andarci entro 5 anni
- Non sto organizzando il viaggio, andrei se dovesse presentarsi l'occasione

12

Se sei già stato in Giappone o hai intenzione di andarci in futuro, qual era/quale sarà lo scopo del tuo viaggio?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Turismo
- Lavoro
- Frequentare una scuola di lingua
- Frequentare scuola superiore/università/dottorato
- Altro

Ti piacerebbe svolgere un **viaggio organizzato in Giappone** seguito da una **guida esperta del luogo**?

- seleziona una o più opzioni -

*

- Sì, perché in generale mi piacciono i viaggi organizzati
- Sì, perché credo che aiuterebbe a conoscere meglio la cultura e ad evitare i problemi legati alla lingua o agli spostamenti in loco, **ANCHE NEL CASO IN CUI** non sia possibile svolgere attività in autonomia
- Sì, perché credo che aiuterebbe a conoscere meglio la cultura e ad evitare i problemi legati alla lingua o agli spostamenti in loco **MA A PATTO CHE** venga dedicato del tempo a momenti liberi
- Sì, ma solo se il gruppo è composto da amici/parenti/conoscenti
- No, preferisco organizzare un viaggio in autonomia per essere più libero, non mi preoccupano le difficoltà legate alla lingua
- Mi piacerebbe ma penso che sia troppo costoso
- Ho già partecipato ad un viaggio organizzato in Giappone ed è stata un'esperienza **POSITIVA**, lo rifarei
- Ho già partecipato ad un viaggio organizzato in Giappone ma è stata un'esperienza **NEGATIVA** che non rifarei

14

Quanto **tempo** pensi che trascorreresti in Giappone?

Se sei stato già stato in Giappone, quanto tempo sei rimasto?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Tra 1 e 3 giorni
- Tra 3 e 5 giorni
- Una settimana
- 10 giorni
- Due settimane
- Più di due settimane
- Un mese o più

In che tipo di struttura preferiresti soggiornare **in Giappone**?

Se sei già stato in Giappone, in quale struttura ti è piaciuto di più soggiornare?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Struttura giapponese classica Ryokan: pavimenti in legno, porte scorrevoli in carta di riso, i futon (materassi giapponesi che si poggiano sul pavimento)
- Guest house stile giapponese classica (pavimenti in legno, porte scorrevoli ma SENZA SERVIZIO DI RISTORAZIONE)
- Guest house stile europeo (SENZA SERVIZIO DI RISTORAZIONE)
- Struttura alberghiera in stile europeo
- Struttura alberghiera moderna stile giapponese-europeo
- Capsule hotel
- Ostello con stanze condivise
- Altro

Gli **elementi più importanti nella struttura** in cui vorresti soggiornare/hai soggiornato **in Giappone** sono:

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Il prezzo basso
- La comodità (vicinanza con i luoghi di attrazione, facile da raggiungere dall'aeroporto/stazione...)
- L'eleganza/il design – STILE MODERNO
- L'eleganza/il design – STILE CLASSICO/TRADIZIONALE del luogo in cui si viaggia
- Che lo staff parli la mia lingua, l'inglese o un'altra lingua veicolare
- L'attenzione alla sostenibilità della struttura
- Altro

Ti piacerebbe provare le terme giapponesi?

*Le terme giapponesi raggiungono temperature anche di 80°, e le loro acque hanno grandi benefici sul fisico di chi vi si immerge. La particolarità è che **all'interno delle vasche si entra nudi.**

Tradizionalmente ci sono zone divise tra uomini e donne, ma esiste la possibilità di vasche miste oppure vasche riservate a coppie o famiglie*

- seleziona una o più opzioni

- *



- Le ho già provate ed ho avuto un'esperienza POSITIVA, ci ritornerei
- Sì, mi piacerebbe provare l'esperienza delle vasche femminili o maschili o quelle comuni
- Sì, ma solo nelle vasche private
- No, non ho interesse per le terme
- No, non sarei a mio agio ad entrare in vasca senza il costume
- Le ho già provate ed ho avuto un'esperienza NEGATIVA, non ci ritornerei

Sezione 4

18

Dovendo andare in Giappone, che tipo di **meta** preferiresti?
Se sei già stato in Giappone, che tipo di meta ti è piaciuta di più?

- seleziona una sola opzione -

*

- Le periferie meno conosciute
- Le città più famose (Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nara ...)
- Entrambe le opzioni

Se ti piacciono le **città giapponesi**, con quale delle seguenti affermazioni sei più d'accordo?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Credo siano più facili da raggiungere e quindi comode
- Credo sia più facile gestire le differenze linguistiche nelle grandi città
- Credo sia più economico recarsi nelle principali località turistiche rispetto alle zone meno conosciute
- Credo che le principali attrazioni siano solamente o per la maggior parte in queste località
- Preferisco visitare grandi città durante i viaggi
- Altro

Sezione 5

20

Se ti piacciono le **periferie giapponesi**, con quale delle seguenti affermazioni sei più d'accordo?

- seleziona una o più opzioni -

*

- Credo siano più economiche rispetto alle mete turistiche più conosciute
- Credo che si possa vivere un'esperienza culturale più "veritiera" in queste località
- Preferisco fare viaggi verso mete naturalistiche e tranquille
- Altro

21

Grazie mille, il questionario generale è **finito!**

Hai voglia di rispondere ad **un altro paio di domande** (non più di 2 minuti)?

So che il tempo è prezioso quindi anche se rispondi "no", **hai già fatto molto e ti ringrazio!! :) ***

- Sì, ho altri 2 minuti
- No, mi dispiace

BEPPU

22

Conosci la città di Beppu?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Sì, ci sono stat*
- Sì, ne ho sentito parlare
- No, non ne ho mai sentito parlare

23

Ti è piaciuta?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Sì, ci tornerei
- Sì, ma NON ci tornerei
- No, non mi è piaciuta e non ci tornerei

24

Cosa non ti è piaciuto? Perché non vorresti tornarci? *

25

Come hai scoperto Beppu?

- seleziona una o più opzioni - *

- Tramite amici/parenti
- Tramite social media
- Tramite blog di viaggio
- Tramite influencer
- Tramite agenzie di viaggio
- Altro

Beppu è famosa come la città con il più alto numero di **sorgenti termali** in Giappone. I vapori delle sorgenti escono dalle vasche naturali e dai tombini. Ogni sorgente termale porta **benefici** diversi al corpo di chi vi si immerge.



La città è circondata da **montagne** ricche di **boschi** e **cascate**, e si affaccia sul **mare**.

Le **specialità locali** sono il **cibo cucinato con i vapori naturali** provenienti dal sottosuolo, il **pollo fritto in pastella** e il **sashimi marinato**.

È una zona **periferica** che conserva il fascino del **Giappone rurale**, ben **collegata** con i mezzi pubblici (aerei, traghetti, treni e bus) alle mete più importanti della regione e del Giappone intero.

Ecco qualche foto di Beppu e dei suoi dintorni

- non è necessario selezionare la risposta a questa domanda -



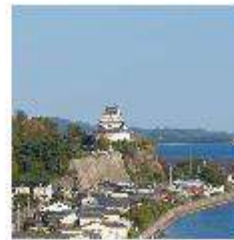
Vapori in città



Piscine termali naturali e vapori a Beppu



La spiaggia di Beppu



Castello di Usuki



Colorazione degli aceri in autunno



Colorazione degli aceri in autunno in un parco



Cascata di Harajiri



Strada del periodo dei samurai



Villaggio samurai



Tesoro nazionale: Usuki Stone Buddhas





Torii



Rocce sacre di Saiki

28

Ti piacerebbe visitare Beppu?

- seleziona una sola opzione - *

- Sì, quando organizzerò il mio viaggio in Giappone, una delle mete che visiterò sarà Beppu
- Sì, mi piacerebbe andare a Beppu se si presentasse l'occasione
- No, preferisco visitare altri luoghi in Giappone
- No, non ho interesse nei luoghi che sono stati mostrati nella domanda precedente
- Ho già visitato Beppu e anche se mi è piaciuta preferisco visitare altri luoghi che non ho ancora visto
- Altro

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