Sneak pilgrimage: The development of domestic tourism in Japanese culture

Ritgerð til BA prófs í Japónsku máli og menningu

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Abstract

Japanese domestic tourism has its historical roots back for centuries, all the way back to the Edo period, where Japan became unified nation for the first time, and developed its literature and art culture, as well having many traditions concerning travel originated from Edo period, also many still existent social structure can be found in the same period. Japan does have one of the largest domestic and international tourism, gaining billions of Japanese yen only from tourism annually and it is still growing. This paper will go over the historical origins of domestic tourism in Japan and point out traditions that are still performed by the Japanese people. Then we will go over the three major organized tourism campaigns, their objectives, outcomes, effects and their differences, with an analyze on the Japanese language. Furthermore, this paper will show the strong connection between domestic tourism and Japan as a nation.
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Introduction

According to OECD’s report, international tourism to Japan is at a record high in 2015 (OECD, 2016). Furthermore, Financial Times reports that in 2017, the number tourists coming to Japan has hit a record high (Harding, 2017). The Abe Administration has aimed to transform Japan’s tourist industry into an economic engine, with hopes to develop 400,000 jobs, and raise annual profits from 2 trillion to 4 trillion Japanese Yen by 2020. Then in 2020, Japan will host the summer Olympics, driving up this revenue even further. The Abe Administration is planning to develop Japan’s tourist boom to be ongoing, rather than a short-term trend, to boost the economy (OECD, 2016).

Despite these record breaking numbers regarding international tourism, domestic tourism has been an integral part of Japan’s history for many centuries. During the 21st century Japanese domestic tourism promotions have been done in various manners, for example the ‘yuru kyara’, that are mascots which have their own special characteristics, such as their personality, background story and their purpose (Occhi, 2014). The pioneer in marketing ‘yuru kyara’ is the ‘Kumamon’. ‘Kumamon’ represents the Kumamoto prefecture. The mascot can be described as a black bear, with short limbs, white stomach and apple red cheeks, with an unemotional expression on its face. What puts ‘Kumamon’ apart from other ‘yuru kyara’ is the marketing strategy. Instead of introducing the ‘yuru kyara’ within its own region, ‘Kumamon’ was however introduced nationwide. Soon after ‘Kumamon’ was introduced in 2011, it became the most popular mascot in Japan. It also made Kumamoto prefecture more sought out as a tourist attraction (Halldórsdóttir, 2014).

Another regional promotion tool is the ‘ekibento’ or the short version ‘ekiben’, which are compact lunch boxes sold in majority of train stations throughout Japan. The ‘bento’ word has its origin from the Warring States Period (1477-1573), later it would become a regular lunch box, called ‘maku-no-uchi bento’ served during breaks at ‘Kabuki’ theater which often took a long time. However, the ‘ekiben’ phrase was not born until the year 1885, as it had become a regular purchase for train passengers during their travel in Japan. What makes ‘ekiben’ a good example of a regional product, is the fact that each ‘ekiben’ has its region’s traditional dishes, making it a perfect opportunity for travelers to get a taste of local produce while riding the train (Noguchi, 1994).
From personal experience while traveling to various locations in Japan, the focus on buying locally produced products, such as sweets or talismans from local shrines or temples. Furthermore, tasting traditional dishes, for example when going to Nagasaki, it was almost necessary to taste ‘kasutera’ cake and buy as a gift for people waiting at home. This trend became a tradition when traveling. This tradition could also be seen inside of train stations, where people would be walking with bags full of local sweets, which could be bought within the train station or in close by gift-shops, to take home to share with family, friends or co-workers.

In spite of the rising numbers of foreigners coming to experience Japan, it is still the Japanese citizens themselves that contribute the most to the tourist industry by far, with domestic tourism totaling 20.7 trillion Yen in 2015 (Statistics: Statista, 2017). Through various ‘mura okoshi’, or village revival programs, domestic tourism has been utilized to obtain economic gain. Many small villages and rural industries have survived the greying population crisis thus far due to domestic tourism. Greying population is when the average age of the population is getting higher due to diminished birthrates and increased longevity. As many young people gravitated towards the larger cities seeking more employment opportunities, it was critical for smaller populated areas to bring in more people to sustain their local businesses and way of life (McMorran, 2008; Siegenthaler, 1999).

Yet domestic tourism in Japan has also impacted this way of life for many Japanese people, both those who visit and those who call tourist destinations home. Many of the effects have been deemed positive, but some critics would argue that too much tourism can be detrimental to the residents and their environment (Creighton M., 1997).

Domestic tourism in Japan has proved its value both socially and economically, but with consequence. Is the ‘mura okoshi’ tourism sustainable in the long run, and given historical perspective, how is it likely to develop. In order to better understand domestic tourism and the concept of tourism in Japan we will first examine the historical background.

There were three major organized tourism campaigns that were established in this order, the 1970s, 1980s and the last in the 1990s, the first two were created by the Dentsu advertisement firm for the Japan National Railways, and the last campaign was created by the ‘Rekishi Kaido’ promotional council. All of the three campaigns would have their own influence both economically, culturally, positive and negative (Creighton M., 1997; Creighton M., 2011).

Before analyzing the campaigns, it is first important to understand the need for them. Japan is leading the world in low birthrates and high life expectancies (United Nations, 2015). Can be connected to the increasing quality of life for citizens a pattern largely due to a rapid westernization and urbanization. In developing countries, life expectancies are lower for various reasons, such as less access to healthcare and other resources, as a country develops, people tend to have more privileges leading to longer lives. When this shift happens, children become luxuries instead of necessities, less industrialized nations tend to rely on big families so there are more people bringing income into the household, but in more industrialized nations where people have more opportunities to be self-sufficient, children become an added expense. (United Nations, 2015)

Additionally Japanese women entering the workforce adds another layer, to lower birthrates. Now that women have more options other than homemaking, marriages are on the decline in Japan as many Japanese women frequently feel that they have to choose between a family and professional life (Holloway & Nagase, 2014). This family-averse attitude is one that has been recorded for at least the past 20 years. If women end up marrying, it seems that they are getting married later and later, probably after spending some time in the workforce. The national average for marriage is roughly 30 years old, nonetheless many Japanese adults have shown to almost have no interest in marriage (Masa, 2015). Unmarried women are less likely to have children, as marriage is still the most socially acceptable way to have children and most practical for child-rearing given Japanese working culture and the expenses of child-care. As there were fewer young people commit into marriage, they also subsequently are not having children (Thang, 2011).
The crisis that comes out of all of this is due to the fact that young people are naturally expected to fill the roles in society that their ancestors left behind. Older population in Japan are entering retirement and are in need of care, and not enough young people are available to take all of the jobs left behind. For the past two decades, deflation has overwhelmed the economy in what has become known as the ‘Lost Score’ or ‘Lost Twenty Years’ (Creighton M., 2011; Powell, 2002). Less people means there is less money being spent, people have also become unable to keep up their businesses in the same way that they used to, and pressure rose for higher wages to maintain the balance. The exchange rate value of the Japanese yen also continues to decrease with Japan’s growing debt. As towns shrink, the rural areas get hit the hardest and the young people flock to cities. In cities there is more people, so there is more money being spent, which means there are more economic opportunities (Powell, 2002).

If these small towns had any hope for survival, they needed to be able to lure people back. At the end of the 1960’s, Japanese government began to look towards domestic tourism as a way to return the rapidly decreasing cash-flow.
The Origins of Domestic Tourism (1600-1867)

In the 1960’s and 1970’s Japan had become quite skilled in controlling the population’s traffic, according to historian Nelson Graburn. Japan is “the best organized in the world for mass internal travel” as quoted in (Siegenthaler, 1999, p. 179). To understand this notion it is essential to refer back to the historical roots of the Edo Period (or Tokugawa Period) (1600-1867), where Japanese domestic tourism culture really began. Prior to the Edo period, not many were travelling great distances in Japan, only very influential families did any leisure travel. There were some notable instances recorded of the social elite traveling for pleasure. One great example of this was the 30 trips of Empress Jito in the 7th century. Then additionally in the late 7th and early 8th century it became more frequent for commoners to travel for religious means as it would prove to be the only permitted way of travel. (Ishimori, 1989).

However, under the Tokugawa military regime, drastic social, infrastructure and political changes were made, that would profoundly impacted the way that people moved, during early Edo period (1600-1867) (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995; Noritake, 1995; Ishimori, 1989). The first change made was the sekisho, like Vaporis describes:

Fifty-three checking stations were established on the Gokaido in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Their initial purpose was military—to control the movement of the defeated forces backing the Toyotomi side at Sekigahara in 1600—but later it was expanded to include the monitoring of the general traffic, the transport of guns, and compliance with the institution of alternate attendance. (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995, pp. 27-28).

The Edo period (1600-1867) was distinguished by a very strict class system which placed people within a nigh unmovable society. At the top were the Emperor and then the Court nobility as the upmost elite. Following them were the Military class, or Warrior class, in order from top to bottom rank: Shogun, Daimyo, and Samurai. Lastly, making up the rest of the population at nearly 80% were in order from top to bottom rank: Artisans, Farmers, and the lowest on the rung Merchants. The socio-economic status-quo was extremely restrictive, there was no way for people to move out of their position in the social ladder. Of course there is the exception in which some cases women had mobility when they married into their husband’s position, but men were unable to move even if their wife had originally had a higher position on the ladder (Hall, 1974). This complicated travel for the vast
majority of the population because only the elite and the warrior class were permitted to travel. Peasants on the other hand, had to seek out different methods to travel.

To regulate this privilege, there were fifty three checking stations or sekisho established, where people had to show their Transit permit or sekisho tegata. These checking stations were distributed alongside the ‘Gokaido’. The ‘Gokaido’ road system was formally established during the Edo period (1600-1867). The system had five roads or highway called, Tokaido, Nakasendo, Oshu kaido, Koshu kaido and Nikko kaido. These roads crossed crucial points in the country, making Edo perforce the heart of communications and traffic control. Because the purpose of ‘Gokaido’ which abled the government to maintain fast and secure communication throughout the country, it also assisted the Daimyos in the country with their forced ‘Sankan Kotai’ system. ‘Sankan Kotai’, or alternate residence duty, was a system where the Daimyo were required to serve the castle of their homes but also serve time at the Tokugawa castle at Edo (Modern day Tokyo). As a result, Daimyo would be traveling back and forth from Edo to home quite frequently (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995; Noritake, 1995).

In addition to the ‘Sekisho’ and ‘Gokaido’, there were also the post-stations that were created alongside the five highways. The post-stations were mainly transport centers, but with other functions as well, as Vaporis describes, “besides fulfilling their main function as transport centers, the post stations also served as rest stops, information communications centers and recreation areas., (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995, p. 27).

The ‘Tokaido’ road, which goes from today’s Tokyo and goes through Osaka and Kyoto that are the 2nd and 3rd largest cities in Japan, ‘Tokaido’ is even today still an important route in modern Japan. The ‘Tokaido’ has also been immortalized in modern art work, notably 53 station of the ‘Tokaido’ by Utagawa Hiroshige (Ishimori, 1989). For example post-towns on ‘Tokaido’ had to have enough, inns, horses and porters just to support the traffic of the Daimyo (Ishimori, 1989). The emperor himself spent large amount of his revenue to support his Daimyo’s journeys. The Swedish physician Olaf Willman was so impressed with conditions on the ‘Tokaido’ that he wrote, “Probably no other road in the world costs as much as this” as quoted in (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995, p. 27). So although the emperor never meant to popularize domestic travel, however in a way it
functioned in a similar way as the ‘mura okoshi’ intended to today. Post-stations were well placed as they were along the main roads routes, because at each post-station there would be couple of post-villages that would support nearest station. The support involved attending to horses, managing inns for travelers, offer transport services and selling local goods called ‘meibutsu’, which were representative wares from the surrounding area. ‘meibutsu’ can range from local sourced food, representative dishes, lacquer wares and various local produce and also talismans (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995; Noritake, 1995).

There were further restrictions to tourism brought by the fifty-three established checking stations in early-Edo period, but these restrictions were put on women, because out of the fifty-three stations, women were only allowed to pass through twenty of them. This was done to keep women to certain routes, “where it could be more easily monitored” (Vaporis, 1995, p. 28). Women also were limited to travel for another reason, as Vaporis describes “That women travelers came under greater political constraints than men is evident from a reading of domain regulations.” (Vaporis, 1995, p. 29). However Vaporis also points out that it “needs further investigation” (Vaporis, 1995, p. 29).

The Daimyo were not the only ones traveling even if it was only official travel, there was also another party that would begin traveling, but with a different objective. The government did never fully ban commoners to travel. This was perhaps because the government were also benefiting from the new circulation of wealth from the increasing of travel, as more travel meant more profit that would lead to softer regulations, making travel for commoners in mid-Edo more accessible and popular for lower classes. The ‘Gokaido’ would also bring wealth to lower classes, because of the post-stations and post-villages, that would assist lower classes to travel (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995; Watkins, 2008). Even though regulations on populace movement had softened, did not mean that commoners could simply travel for recreational purposes or leisure, those who wanted to travel had to go on a pilgrimage. One of the vast types of pilgrimages, ‘Okage-Mairi’, is also known as thanksgiving and was the most popular way of going on a pilgrimage (Noritake, 1995). However, during late Edo-period or mid-19th century ‘Okage-Mairi’ had lost its popularity (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995). When going on ‘Okage-Mairi’ it would be consisted of visiting shrines such as the Grand Shrines of Ise, which is located in
today’s Mie prefecture. Ise was also the most visited shrines during mid-Edo, records from spring 1708 show that 427,500 pilgrims had visited the Ise shrine, “between New Year’s day and April 15th in 1718” (Noritake, 1995, p. 39). Still, pleasure travel was also gaining popularity as well (Noritake, 1995). The official purpose of ‘Okage-Mairi’ was to pray at shrines, often multiple shrines, for the wellbeing of the one’s family, village and Japan. However, peasants would not only visit shrines and temples, but also they would almost without exception buy gifts called ‘omiyage,’ ‘omiyage’ were gifts that could be talismans from shrines or temples, food or sweets unique to its own region. This tradition is still present today, however it does rarely include the ‘senbetsu’ part of ‘senbetsu’ and ‘omiyage’, the former would be a gift given by the ones who are left behind while the other goes on a trip, however the person leaving has to bring a ‘omiyage’ back in return (Siegenthaler, 1999). However, travelers would not be in any hurry back home, travelers would instead take their time by stopping at luxurious inns and ‘onsen’, which had become popular attraction as pleasure tourism (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995). Today there is still a ‘onsen’ resort called Keiunkan that has been receiving guests from the year 705 and is still counting, making it the oldest hotel and ‘onsen’ in the world, certificated by Guinness Book of World Records (Keiunkan, n.d.; World-Records: Guinness world records, n.d.). While there was the official way to travel during the Tokugawa period, there was also the unofficial way, which was when the travelers would not notify local government about their travel. That way of traveling was called the ‘sneak pilgrimage’ (Noritake, 1995). “‘Sneak pilgrimage’, where young men went to Ise without formally notifying the authorities, was very popular then,” (Noritake, 1995, p. 39).

Perhaps the key information about this period to consider is that travel in Japan was the only available to the Japanese people, by using religious pilgrimage as an excuse to travel. Japan had adopted a goal at this time to become self-reliant and closing its border from the rest of the world making it impossible to travel outside of Japan (Noritake, 1995). This was under the authoritarian regime to be completely cut off from travel inside or outside of Japan, some international relations still went on for trade purposes, such as at the Nagasaki sea port, but the majority of the population including much of the elite never left the country for over two centuries (Kazui & Videen, 1982). Out of this period, group travel developed, or “tabi wa michizure” (Vaporis, 1989, p. 466) meaning (travel
calls for a companion), there were also groups called ‘Ko’, it was usually group of farmers formed from various villages with its chosen representative, there were cases of groups formed within a single village, Noritake describes, “A ko consisted of a group of people from various villages (occasionally it was formed within a village, but generally it had members from several villages in the area)” (Noritake, 1995, p. 42). Even today Japanese tourists like to travel in groups, even with people they have never met, it is called package tour where every member of the group would receive the same tour. Noritake proposes that “ko was, in effect, a group tour, or in more modern minology, a package tour.” (Noritake, 1995, pp. 42-43). Many customs emerged over this time in travel, such as the group travel, long lasting popularity of ‘onsen’ and the importance of ‘omiyage’, which makes domestic tourism of the past is linked to the domestic tourism today (Siegenthaler, 1999).

Post-towns show a historical example in Japan of how the movement of people transformed areas by bringing them wealth. However, what is really important about understanding the mass travel of the Edo period is actually that in the seclusion itself and the innately Japanese traditions it created that are still existing today. Japan is a country that has been heavily influenced by the west, and the Edo period ending was the beginning of Japan's shift towards globalization. So today when Japanese people still walk the ‘Gokaido’ roads and maintain their customs such as gift-giving or visiting the same shrines that their ancestors did, they are embarking on a very personal journey (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995). In a rapidly globalizing world, domestic tourism campaigns have in part been successful because they help the travelers experience and preserve that which makes Japanese people truly Japanese. Domestic tourism in many ways is not only done for religious pilgrimage today, but also as an identity pilgrimage. Which is why, much of the domestic tourism campaigns have been structured in a way that re-connects Japanese people with their heritage (Vaporis, The Early Modern Origin of Japanese Tourism, 1995; Noritake, 1995).
The Campaigns

There were three major travel campaigns, two of them were created to evoke more cash-flow for villages that were on the verge on collapsing or had its population decreased drastically, and the last one had the focus on promoting specific region in Japan. The campaigns were called ‘Discover Japan’ and ‘Exotic Japan’, created by the Dentsu advertisement firm for the Japan National, in the 1970s and 1980s. ‘Rekishi Kaido’ or History Highway campaign is the last campaign, was lunched in the 1990s by the ‘Rekishi Kaido’ Promotional council (Creighton M., 2011).

First Campaign

At the beginning of the 1970s, the very first domestic-travel campaign was launched with the intent to revive rural areas. This campaign's strategy was centered on the rediscovery of Japanese heritage. It was called ‘Discover Japan’. It was “designed for Japan National Railways by the Dentsu advertising firm” (Creighton M., 1997, p. 245). The main pitch of this campaign was focused on encouraging the Japanese people to reconnect to their Japanese roots through domestic-travel experiences. This was done through posters at the stations, aiming to influence families to use the railways to go and visit more rural, less-traveled areas. Often advertisements would try to sell these experiences as family enriching activities. For example, visiting an old and rural village where visitors could take part in local festival or traditions, was sold as a wholesome opportunity for Japanese children to share the experiences of their ancestors, and get away from the new chaotic and bustling urban life. Some of the posters emphasized this through images of a family in a crowded and cramped city, next to a much happier, refreshed family out in countryside with wide open spaces (Creighton M., 1997; Creighton M., 2011).

These advertisements did not explicitly advertise specific towns or events, but instead tried to build general nostalgia with an older, ‘lost’, Japan that was fading because of for example the fact that Japan was becoming more westernized after the war, then furthermore the fast urbanization which was brought by strengthened economy (Creighton M., 1997). Even more so of an influence for an older, lost Japan than urbanization at this time, was the time period itself. It is important to note that this was
all happening during the post-war era of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Anthropologist David H. Slater describes that socially at this time Japanese people were experiencing a period of disorientation of national culture identity in response to their emperor’s surrender (Slater, 2011). People were in many ways trying to put the war behind them and rebuilding economically. Japan had much success in this by becoming an economic-superpower by the 1980s. Socially there were changes as well to put pre-war Japan behind them, such as dismissing the idea of social classes because of the term's association with the limited feudal Japan (Slater, 2011). However, in these newer times as economics were looking brighter, people were still yearning for a Japanese identity. Now that the war was lost and all these changes are happening, what was left that made Japanese people truly Japanese? (Creighton M., 2011). It seems that despite all the future possibilities, Japanese people still sought out nostalgia this is where the campaign Discover Japan came in perfectly. The entirety of the campaign's approach was to build nostalgia, this nostalgia was known as ‘Furusato’, the word ‘Furusato’ is made of the two words, ‘Furu’ and Sato, ‘Furu’ or ‘Furui’1 which means old, while ‘Sato’ means Home village. Hence ‘Furusato’ can be translated to old home village (Robertson, 1995). The ‘Furusato’ meaning is cognitive, in other words, the meaning will depend on each individual and their own personal association. Each individual would have had a personal image of how ‘Furusato’ should be imagined, whether it be young people imagining their heritage or the older generations feeling a sense of obligation to bring their families back to their pastimes. Essentially, the goal would be reversing the phenomenon of the youth leaving rural areas by targeting both them and their families (Creighton M., 1997; Robertson, 1995).

Second Campaign

The next campaign came later, in the economic swell of the 1980s and 1990s, this campaign was called Exotic Japan, and in a way it was an extension, or really more of an update, to the ‘Discover Japan’ campaign. This campaign was also created for the Japan National Railways. The ‘Exotic Japan’ campaign takes on a completely reversed focus from experiencing nostalgia for the past, the campaign

1 In Japanese characters it is written as 古い
added the element of making Japan and Japanese culture appear new and mysterious or as the title suggests, ‘exotic’. It re-created an image of Japan that was seemingly foreign to the native population (Creighton M. , 1997). This way, if the campaigns had not already drawn you in with seeking an experience from an old Japan, it encouraged that there were new things to discover as well. During this time in Japan’s new-found position as an economic-superpower, anything in the future seemed possible. So instead of nostalgia for the past, it makes sense that this campaign would transition into an exciting futuristic Japan full of possibilities (Ivy M. , 1995). Particularly in contrast to the previous ‘Discover Japan’ campaign that sought after innately Japanese experiences, the exoticism also newly expressed in this campaign had much more to do with experiencing ‘the Orient’ rather than Japanese culture exclusively (Creighton M. , 1997; Ivy M. , 1995). Scholar M. Ivy sums up this phenomenon well:

Exotic Japan implies a counter narrative strategy: Japan is represented as a montage of exotic objects—brocades, statuary, paintings—around a new wave teenager who looks enigmatically out from the montage, appearing herself as an object among objects. We are led to believe that what is really exotic is a Japan that can montage such disparities with such exciting aplomb. The seemingly indiscriminate cultural mixing and matching that some have taken as the hallmark of modern Japan becomes, in the global matrix of advanced capitalism, the stylish prerogative of an affluent nation. Quoted in (Mostow, 2003, p. 224).

‘Furusato’ was changing in this era, and that is reflected in this campaign. Japan had begun to draw from all different kinds of cultures and take in customs they appreciated, but reinvented them to make them their own. to make them the ‘new Japanese’ way. This campaign was very much concerned with drawing people into domestic travel by promoting Japan as new and improved instead of redirecting to old roots. Instead of domestic travel encouraged to re-discover simpler and more wholesome, humble times, the campaigns instead became much more high-culture oriented, and drew people to museums and theatre performances (Creighton M. , 1997; Ivy M. , 1995).

The Exotic Japan campaign also targeted its audience with the new slogan: “Now Japan is heart-bleatingly exciting!”, and featured a pop-song called ‘Exotic Japan’ by Hiromi Go with a Buddhist music video. Exotic Japan was all about reinventing, and after everything that the Japanese people had endured and then rebuilt after the war, reinvention could arguably have been exactly what the
Japanese psyche perceived as the Japanese identity. However, as the economy shifted in the 90s, so did the next campaign (Ivy M., 1995).

**Third Campaign**

The third campaign was called the ‘Rekishi Kaido’ campaign and was aimed to increase tourism in the Kansai area. This was created by ‘Rekishi Kaido’ Promotional Council. The campaign was launched officially in 1991, which is the beginning of the lost decade, or as it is known in Japan, “ushiwareta jinen” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 47). Prior to this an economic finance bubble was created that was responsible for the surplus of economic wealth that took place during the last campaign (Creighton M., 2011). But this bubble became so inflated that it finally popped in 1991. This was caused by the extensive loan growth quotas that were placed on the banks by Japan's central bank, also known as the Bank of Japan. Japan had eventually borrowed so much that paired with the rising interest rates it became impossible to pay it all back. Even with a mild economic recovery in the 2000s, many policy makers still struggle to overcome the lasting effects of this plummeting debt today (Powell, 2002). Between 1990 and 2000, the GDP had only risen from 428,826 billion yen to 469,480 yen, however “Growth has been negative since 1998” (Powell, 2002, p. 36), unemployment had also risen by 2% from 1991 to 2000 (Powell, 2002). 1991, the launch year of Rekishi Kaido, has been generally regarded as the beginning of this economic recession in Japan (Creighton M., 2011).

However, more was lost than finances. Anthropologists commonly remark at this time that with the loss of the booming economy, the country had also lost their spirit and sense of self. They previously saw themselves as the re-inventors who built themselves up after the war, and to have this period of economic collapse after their success story must have been particularly devastating (Powell, 2002). Millie Creighton argues that “with culture loss merged with a sense of economic loss, loss of purpose and loss of direction. ‘Rekishi Kaido’ was a campaign that offered a direction, a purpose and a route.” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 48). This route, as Millie Creighton describes, is “a route one could travel through space and time to recapture something lost by directly experiencing Japanese history” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 48).
According to a brochure made by the ‘Rekishi Kaido’ Promotional Council and translated by Millie Creighton, the highway was 300 kilometer long, and went through for example, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Ise, Asuka and Nara. On top of that it was also divided into zones, which were Ancient Times Area, The Nara Period Area, The Heian Period to Muromachi Period Area, The Warring States to Edo Period Area and at last The Modern Period Area (Creighton M. , 2011).

Similar to previous campaigns, this one also targeted group travel, by establishing a history road-club, which allowed its members to experience the history of Japan and historic events, with other members. The history road promotional council also produced a guidebook, magazine, and a handbook which club members could receive for free. There were also smaller history museums supported by the council, to emphasize the combination of leisure travel while having a focus on learning about past history (Creighton M. , 2011).

The Language Importance

All of the three campaigns had their difference, to further underline the difference between them, it is possible to see the difference from perspective of the Japanese language. The first campaign was named Discover Japan and written in English and with the Roman alphabet, not as one would have expected with Japanese ‘katakana’ characters, which are characters generally used for foreign words such as discover and Japan. The goal of that strategy was to make Japanese people the foreigners who are discovering or rediscovering Japan. The Exotic Japan campaign however was written in ‘katakana’ characters, which underlines the more foreign elements of that campaign. Ivy describes this “as if ‘Japan’ had been introjected as the foreign, as something that entered from the outside” (Ivy M. , 1988, p. 25). The History Highway campaign was however quite different. The name ‘Rekishi Kaido’ was however written in full ‘kanji’, traditional Chinese scripts. Furthermore the ‘Kaido’ part even had the more unusual Chinese reading, instead of the more general Japanese reading. If ‘kai’ is on its own it could be read as ‘machi’, meaning town, and ‘do’ could be read as ‘michi’ which means road.

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2Written as 歴史街道 with Chinese characters.
(Creighton M., 2011). The explanation for why the word *Rekishi Kaido* is connected to the objective of its campaign, is summarized well in Millie Creighton’s text:

*Rekishi Kaido* shifts the emphasis back to an indigenous pre-western self by use of the Japanese phrase even in English descriptions. It suggests deeper connections to a prior Chinese influence on Japanese identity with *Kaido*, a Japanese word based on combined Chinese character readings.” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 47).

The Japanese language itself had an exerted significant role when promoting each of the three campaigns, and even further when describing the core difference between each of the campaigns. Proving that each of the campaigns were unique.
The Outcomes of the Campaigns

These domestic tourism campaigns offer a reflection of the ever-changing dynamics of Japanese history and culture. The intent of these campaigns was to revitalize rural areas by bringing more traffic to them. With this the campaigns did have much success, and helped assure sustainable incomes to once struggling villages.

However, with this newfound wealth there came great consequences. One good example is of the Kazuki village. Many tourists were drawn to the Kazuki village for their unique pearl diving custom. The pearl divers were generations of women who did not use traditional abalone diving equipment to assist them, and could instead hold their breath for incredible lengths of time (Creighton M., 1997). Their developed ability to dive in this fashion drew contestable academic research, as a result of ad campaigns featuring the divers, as well as many visitors genuinely interested in their fascinating abilities. This in turn, brought income to the village that has helped carry on the tradition. On the other hand, these ad campaigns prominently featuring women scantily clad in bathing suits also drew in many male tourists who were more interested in the women themselves instead of their traditional professional knowledge (Creighton M., 1997). The divers village was able to survive the recession, but the women became hyper-sexualized in the process, and what once was a family tradition became much more of a public spectacle. As a result, it seems the village has made an effort to keep some of their other traditions, for example their religious traditions, very private and away from the prying eyes of outsiders in order to avoid a similar exploitation of their customs (Creighton M., 1997). While their village is now thriving, cases of domestic campaigns such as this one appear to have a give-and-take relationship. In many cases it seems that adapting culture to be entertainment sensationalized the practices so much that they almost became foreign, or more than less invented all together, from the perspective of the residents themselves. This was especially apparent with the ‘Exotic Japan’ campaign where the people were encouraged to find new, mysterious things in rural Japan. The danger of romanticizing and exaggerating these traditions is this way is that it does not entirely solve the crisis of the greying population. The villages themselves may be able to stay alive, but the culture suffers. If the elders have to hide their traditions and history from the public in
order to maintain and practice it accurately, then it is very likely that the customs will not survive to the next generations. Domestic tourism campaigns still need to find a way to function in a way that will preserve Japanese heritage.

When discussing the first two travel campaigns, ‘Discover Japan’ and ‘Exotic Japan’, it can be argued that both campaigns in their own way bring both positive and negative effects. The positive effects mostly being the flow of money created and preventing villages collapsing. While the negative effects are more social and cultural, for example the Kazuki villagers (Creighton M., 2011). The third Travel campaign is different however. The History Highway campaign had its focus on a specific but large region, the Kansai region. It was a route through history that in its own way helped the Japanese population to find their way again (or at least head towards the right path) during the fast westernization, rapid urbanization and the bubble burst. Again Millie Creighton suggested “that the conflation of the Edo as time and place helps mediate tensions between a desire to more fully internationalize and a reverse desire to re-embrace ‘home town’ Japan.” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 68).

The campaign also encouraged people to get together and travel in groups to learn about their place in the past, which had also became popular method of travel during the Mid-Edo-period (1600-1867) (Noritake, 1995). Which was particularly focused in the History Highway campaign, further similarities between Edo period travelers and travelers in the 1990s, is that both were using travel for a new purpose, while in the Edo period, travel used to be used only for religious reasons, but started to change to pleasure and leisure with the uprising of the common people. Then in the 1990s, people were using travel as a tool for educational purposes, by educating themselves about Japan’s history. “Now middle-class Japanese travelgrims pursue history tourism ad edutainment (education and entertainment) by wrapping themselves in the legitimating cloak of education” (Creighton M., 2011, p. 68). While the third travel campaign can be viewed as being more positive, it is still possible to argue that there could have been some negative effects. For example, the fact that the campaign was focusing on such a large area, could have affected local and smaller socio-cultural traditions, by all of the bigger more common traditions that would be highlighted and cast a shadow upon the smaller traditions.
Today’s Challenges in Tourism

Another great concern of past and future travel campaigns both domestic and international, is the environmental effects of tourism. The high traffic of tourists create a demand for infrastructure to support them, such as more public transportation and roads, restaurants, and hotels. This requires space that endangers the local ecosystem, and emissions can also cause air pollution threatening other life and even the local resident’s health. Additionally tourists who are visiting are not always as respectful to the areas they visit as they would be in their own homes. Non-profits, as a result, have sprung up all over the country to counteract the overwhelming amounts of waste, such as ‘Fujisan Club’ whose volunteers haul off about 77 tons of trash annually from Mt. Fuji (Belson, 2013).

Similarly islanders in Okinawa fear that the mass amounts of trash left behind on their beaches could extinguish the natural beauty of their home completely if nothing is done. The domestic tourism campaigns create a fascination with nature in Japan and help its landmarks, such as these beaches and mountains, become symbols of heritage, but on the other hand, the campaigns could be doing much more to protect these symbols (Ross, 2017). Some non-profits have proposed solutions for more environmentally sustainable tourism in Japan. One example is home-stay programs, where guests can, instead of staying at hotels, reduce their waste footprint by staying with local farmers. The guests can learn about the local environment in this way and appreciate and respect the nature by participating in agricultural activities such as harvesting apples and planting rice (Location: Japan National Tourism Organization, n.d.). Over 200 areas in the Tohoku region, which is north-eastern part of japan and consists of six prefectures, Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi and Fukushima, that have benefited from this style of tourism and have impacted the agriculture industry in the region, the government plans to increase the number of areas, that would offer home-stay programs, up to 500 areas, by 2020 (Kyodo, 2017). If more campaigns take a similar shift in this direction, the future of Japanese nature would look much brighter. However, with all the tourists in Japan, homestays cannot possibly be the only infrastructure to support travelers as it cannot host all of their numbers. A method to decrease the pollution brought by tourism, could be promoting advertisements that would be
increasing awareness, towards the pollution brought by tourism, both domestic and international, and show that each tourist can make a difference.

Example of promoting awareness of pollution created by tourism is the Iceland’s “The Icelandic Pledge” Campaign that is currently being promoted. The objective of the Campaign is to encourage tourists to become more responsible and most of all safer travelers, while traveling around the country (Take the Icelandic pledge: Ferðamálastofa, 2017). To sign under the Icelandic pledge, tourist who are interested just need to fill in their e-mail, on the inspired by Iceland website, which will give them online certification that can be shared on Facebook, Twitter and other social media (Icelandic pledge: Inspired by Iceland, n.d.; Take the Icelandic pledge: Ferðamálastofa, 2017).
Conclusion

Will it be possible to continuously maintain domestic travel campaigns, which have the objective to create a stable wealth income for local villages, cities and Japan?

Tourism in Japan has indirectly and directly affected the economy and culture in Japan. That can be traced to *Edo* period (1600-1867) where today’s notion of tourism began to grow. The reason for that growth is because commoners began to become wealthier, which abled them to seek out travel. However, the government did not officially allow commoners traveling in the country, or at least not staple it as travel for recreation or leisure purposes. The Japanese populace during *Edo* times (1600-1867), did however have a solution, during the beginning of the 17th century farmers or peasants would have traveled in large numbers under the guise of religious pilgrimage, the *Ise* pilgrimage being the most popular pilgrimage. There were two major ways to go on a pilgrimage, first it was the ‘Thanksgiving pilgrimage’, then the ‘sneak pilgrimage’ which was notably popular with younger generations (Noritake, 1995; Vaporis, 1995).

The first out of three organized tourism campaigns began in the 1970’s, this was created for the Japan National Railways by Dentsu advertising firm and was called ‘Discover Japan’. Its objective was to encourage the Japanese people to travel to rural villages in order to discover Japan. Discover or rediscover their Japan that had been lost through the process of becoming more westernized and the increased urbanization (Creighton M., 1997). By promoting rural village travel would safe many small villages who were at the time losing their population, because the younger generation had left for the opportunity of better life in the bigger cities. This was in fact the true objective of ‘Discover Japan’ campaign, this notion was called ‘*mura okoshi*’ (Siegenthaler, 1999).

‘Exotic Japan’, the next campaign which started at the beginning of 1980s was also made for the Japan National Railways. The campaign was an updated version of the former ‘Discover Japan’ campaign, its focus was changed from discovering Japan again that had been lost, into making Japan and Japanese culture foreign within Japan itself, which is the ‘exotic’ element of the campaign. The concept of ‘*Furusato*’ that had been popularized in the previous campaign, also changed with the new and the updated campaign. ‘*Furusato*’ that represented old villages or a village to return to, began to
represent for example the invented and reinvented cultural traditions, which was brought by the different focus of the ‘Exotic Japan’ (Creighton M., 1997; Robertson, 1995).

The third and last campaign is the History Highway campaign, which began the year 1991, during Japan’s recession in the 1990s. The History Highway had a different focus from the former campaigns, being that it was Kansai region orientated only. The objective of the History Highway campaign was to encourage travelers to educate themselves about Edo period (1600-1867) Japan through tourism. Furthermore it recommended travelers to travel in groups, as it would be better experience, group travel appropriately is originated from Edo period (1600-1867) (Creighton M., 2011; Noritake, 1995).

The historical evidence show that Japan as a nation and domestic tourism has a strong cultural connection that have been maintained and developed over centuries, and recently both domestic and international tourism are at their highest. However, more recent domestic tourism campaigns have shown, that organized tourism can have its effects on for example villages and cultural traditions, both positive and negative. All of the three campaigns had positive economic effects, the ‘Discover Japan’ and ‘Exotic Japan’ were designed to create income for disappearing villages, which is seen clearly with the ‘mura okoshi’ objective, while the History Highway campaign only benefited the Kansai region economically. The negative effects however, are unique to each campaign, the Kazuki village is an example for ‘Discover Japan’ were an existing tradition is practically invented in order to attract tourist, that forces the villagers to keep their most valuable tradition away from the masses, or risk the privilege to conduct their tradition in peace. The ‘Exotic Japan’ campaign is unique because there were considerable more cases, where new or reinvented traditions were made, which creates the danger of creating too many fabricated traditions and losing the authentic traditions instead. The History Highway campaign had chiefly positive effects, however it could still present the danger of getting stuck in history, making it more difficult to adjust and accept the present, furthermore there would be the risk of standardized traditions would overshadow the smaller less known traditions. In order to have travel projects such as ‘mura okoshi’, there needs to be a stable and defined balance between the economic benefits and the cultural tradition fragility.
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