



Preface

Tourism research under the COVID-19

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This magazine is in its fifth year since its first publication and Vol. 5, No. 2 is published. Although an international conference on global tourism was planned as the turning point of the 5th year, the conference was canceled due to the occurrence of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) which occurred as a new infectious disease in Wuhan, China and spread all over the world in about three months.

The disease is restricting the movement of people and has a great impact on the world's economic and social activities. Japan's real GDP is forecasted to decrease by about 30 % year-on-year. The tourism industry is most affected and takes the longest to return to the original situation when an infectious disease occurs, and the damage continues for a long time. It is also difficult to conduct research activities related to tourism. The number of submitted papers to this journal is decreasing and the situation is severe. Although there are various definitions for tourism, it is basically various experiences by moving from everyday life to an extraordinary life. Transportation such as trains and planes is used for this movement and the travelers experience history/culture, sports, food, healing, etc. at the destination. The 'revenue passenger kilometers' is dramatically decreasing, which is derived by multiplying the number of paid passengers on world flights by the flight distance, and the value is down 80 % year-on-year in July 2020 (according to IATA announcement; International Air Transport Association).

Various experiences are important tourism resources. Although it is thought that the resources vary by region and visitors are scattered, most visitors tend to focus on the interesting resources and causes an overtourism depending on the resource. The quick solution for overtourism is to raise the price of accommodation and food (and drink). At this time, the improvement of hospitality of all tourism-related companies is required. The unique hospitality should be established that matches the tourist targets varying regionally. Japanese hospitality is the highest level in the world but the reward is very low (almost free). This issue is affecting the labor productivity in the area.

The infectious disease (COVID-19) complicates and its characteristics cannot be understood clearly at this time. Though

many researchers are striving to develop vaccines and therapeutic medicines, a leading development direction still cannot be found. It is thought this is due to the mutation of the virus. It is reported that the cumulative number of infected people in the world is about 30 million and the death toll is about 1 million as of the end of September. The infected area will be expanded due to 'movement' which is the essence of tourism, and the tourism industry must overcome this challenge. The most important thing is for each of us to consider and act on the following items.

- Wearing a mask
- Washing hands (disinfection)
- Gargling
- Avoiding three Cs
- Ventilation

Three Cs means crowded places, close-contact settings and confined and enclosed spaces. More attention and action are required when experiencing extraordinary life. Can next year's Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics be held? The development of therapeutic agents will be still insufficient. Is it going to be a fairly limited event? Furthermore the infectious disease prevention measures for athletes, officers, and spectators from overseas must also be established. The common pass (universal certificate for PCR test negative) must be adopted early and measures should be established to contribute to the spread of infection in Japan. Then the restrictions on the movement of the world can be loosened.

The occurrence of patient cluster is also considered and it is also necessary to introduce an action history and face recognition system while considering privacy. In each country/region of origin, a traveler obtains the common pass in advance and leaves the country, and checked that the pass has been obtained at the time of immigration in the destination country (or region). The path must be an electronic proof to prevent forgery. A development of simple PCR test (and an antigen test) is also urgently required. It is necessary to construct a system that al-

lows people to move easily while considering safety more than anything. There are many research targets to be studied due to the occurrence of COVID-19.

The stagnation in education and research fields is immeasurable due to this corona disaster. The tourism industry is most affected by the outbreak of infectious diseases. Our research needs to be linked to tourism policy which is considering the infectious disease countermeasures. Now is the time to work on research that contributes to the development of the tourism industry. Editorial board members are hoping to be sent related research papers.

About the author

Takashi Oyabu is a chief researcher of Nihonkai International Exchange Center. He received a B.E. and M.E. in 1971 and 1973 from Kogakuin University and also received a B.A. in 1975 from Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. He received his Ph.D. in engineering from Kogakuin University in 1984. He joined Kanazawa Seiryō University, Kanazawa, Japan as a professor of the Graduate School of Regional Economic Systems in 1998. He is president of the Society for Tourism and Informatics of Japan from 2014 and chairperson of the International Society for Tourism Research from 2016. His current research activities are on tourism strategy with advanced information technology, and its applications to welfare fields.