

Covid-19 as a Transformative Power in the Inbound Tourism of Japan: Multiple Case Studies of Foreign Tourism Professionals in Kyoto

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Abstract

Purpose: This study seeks to explore the transformative power of covid-19 in the tourism sector of Japan, with attention to the unprecedented changes, growing activities and interconnectedness caused by covid-19 crisis through multiple case studies conducted among foreign tourism professionals in Kyoto.

Design/methodology/approach: This study applies participant observation, in-depth interviews and narrative analysis.

Findings: Tourism shifted to offer experiences in a digital way and new forms of digital travelling became popular like travel live streaming, virtual tours, virtual experiences. Not just previous travelers, but people who don't have the chance to travel became digital tourists and frequent interactions happen between tourists and guides, forming new communities in virtual space. The role of tour guides in digital context became more important as their interpretation reach a wider audience and shape the image of Japan. The data also shows that live streams increase the willingness to visit the destination and create connections among digital tourists as well.

Originality/value: Shifting away from the negative impacts of covid-19 in tourism, this study shows the growth and industry shaping transformations in the tourism sector during the pandemic era, and presents forward-looking solutions through increased interconnectedness in virtual space.

Keywords: Transformative Power; Covid-19; Inbound Tourism; Digital Tourism

1. Introduction

The Japanese word for crisis contains two characters: one is for the danger and fear, other is for opportunity and occasion. Every crisis brings opportunities, “crises are adrenaline for innovation” (Fursenthal et al., 2021). This is also true for the tourism industry, which on one hand, felt the devastating effects of the recent corona pandemic, but it is also that which tried to survive with innovative methods and offering the experience of travel without physical travelling. Globally the international tourist arrivals decreased by 74% according to UNWTO (2021), and the complete recovery is not likely to happen before 2024.

Early in 2020 Japan was preparing for the upcoming Olympics and many new facilities were open or scheduled to be opened along with services to offer for the visitors. So among all countries, Japan has a special situation related to inbound tourism in the pandemic era, and with the 99% fall in international tourist number, Japan is one of the biggest victims, - 9th in global ranking (COVID-19: Global Tourism Revenue Loss by Country, 2021) - as it expected 40 million tourists, but in the end only a minimal number were accepted into the country due to the exceptionally strict border control. Japan only started to open the border for individual tourists after more than 2 years of closure.

Inside Japan, the Kinki region lost the most tourists (Yagasaki, 2021), especially the city of Kyoto, which in the past was dealing with the problem of overtourism, but it became almost deserted in the early months of the travel ban. In Kyoto several tourism services were offered by foreign residents, who were targeting inbound customers, therefore after the inbound tourism restriction was in effect, their commerce fell to zero. As it was summarized pre-covid (Szabo, 2021), the combination of the future vision of the government about “tourism nation”, the record high number of inbound tourists, the lack of foreign language abilities among locals and the “mysterious” image of the country led to a new phenomenon in Japan: growing

number of foreign tourism professionals, who resides in Japan and became tour guides, accommodation owners, event organizers, experience and content creators for inbound tourists.

As Japan is one of the countries which shut down its borders for the longest, their dealing with the crisis produces a valuable and unique field to investigate the transformative power of covid-19 related to tourism. During this time new forms of tourism got implemented, foundations of new communities were laid down, thousands of online tourists “visited” Japan, collaborations started to happen between previous competitors, and it also exposed new perspectives in the relationship between international tourists, tourism stakeholders and locals, altogether potentially shaping the future of the industry. Tourism arrivals are not in a vacuum, and they shape the lives and interactions of residents (Jordan et al., 2019), but still the majority of researchers are focusing on the loss compared to pre-pandemic and the possibilities of recovering post-pandemic from an economic and sustainability viewpoint, but covid-19 crisis is not a pause button, as it reshapes the social behavior of communities worldwide and transformations are happening during the inbound travel ban period in the local societies. Since previous crises in tourism did not lead to long-term decline as this one (Gössling et al., 2020), therefore this period can shed light on how Japan is exposed to globalization.

Moving away from the negative impacts, this study seeks to explore the transformative power of covid-19 with attention to the unprecedented changes, growing activities and interconnectedness caused by covid-19 crisis through multiple case studies conducted among foreign tourism professionals in Kyoto. In order to explore how foreign tourism professionals are adapting to the covid-19 crisis, the following sub-questions are beneficial: what kind of activities foreign tourism professionals are conducting during the inbound travel ban (despite the impossibility to travel as a tourist to Japan), what are the growing areas in inbound tourism sector, and what is their core motivation behind the adaptation process.

2. From overtourism to empty streets

2.1. Covid as a transformative power

“The COVID-19 pandemic has upended nearly every aspect of life, from the personal (how people live and work) to the professional (how companies interact with their customers, how customers choose and purchase products and services, how supply chains deliver them)” (Fursenthal et al., 2021). However, the effects of covid crisis were not equal in all sectors and regions of the world, it caused major discontinuities and changed the way of living and working. Crisis stimulates the development of new technologies and solutions, and could work as a catalysator, speeding up the process of innovation (Colombo et al., 2016). “Organizations that innovate through crises by focusing on generating new growth versus simply weathering the storm outperform significantly over time” (Am et al., 2020). Following this mindset many fields such as robotics, artificial intelligence and the hospitality industry looked into new solutions during the pandemic (Zeng et al., 2020), in this spirit Macau adopted a public-private partnership led by the government to aid the recovery (Wan et al., 2022), as for Tanzania, the future could be a more sustainable and nature-based tourism (Henseler et al., 2022), in other cases changing into a smart destination could support the recovery (Bulchand-Gidumal, 2022), and in general this period opened up a window to the complexities of sustainable tourism (Jones & Comfort, 2020).

The pressure of the pandemic is a transformative power for the tourism sector, not just a simple rebound, as this size of impact and recovery never happened before - but could happen later too. The rate of pandemics and epidemics will increase as the world population becomes more mobile, and urbanization makes more concentrated areas all around the world (Gössling et al., 2020). This could also mean that innovations and solutions adopted in the tourism sector during covid-19 crisis can be useful for the long term and could stay in the post-covid era too. Covid-19 should be seen as a transformative power and novel thinking is needed to explore the development related to this crisis, however tourism studies “theoretically provide minimal space for advancing the understanding of crisis management and potentiating the

pandemic's ability" (Abbas et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is seeking to shed light on the ongoing changes and future implications.

2.2. From overtourism to empty Kyoto

The increasing number of inbound tourists in Japan was a relatively new trend, as it started to grow with new tourism-oriented policies from 2013, and the visitor arrivals have tripled in the next five years, reaching 31 million in 2018 and with the vision of 60 million arrivals in 2030, however during the pandemic the visitor numbers were falling to almost zero (Nguyen, 2020). Kyoto as the ancient capital of Japan is a tourism city, targeted also by domestic and inbound tourists, and it was the 3rd visited city by foreign travellers in 2019 (Data Analysis on Japanese Inbound Tourism Trends, 2020). Before Kyoto city had many problems with overtourism and crowded touristic areas, but after February 2020, a so called "Empty Kyoto" campaign started, showing the once busy areas without any people around in order to lure some domestic travelers. As Kyoto was also preparing for the increased number of inbound tourists during the Olympics, the travel ban left Kyoto with many new, empty hotels, freshly renovated traditional houses and private lodgings, and left without customers the local guides, foreign tourism professionals, therefore Kyoto provides a suitable context to observe the adaptation and strategy of the industry.

2.3. New ways of travelling: interactive digital tourism

During the covid-19 crises, people changed their private and professional lives and digital communication channels became more accessible. Video conferences became widely adopted among businesses, office workers, students, previous business travellers (Gössling et al., 2020), the first time, the G20 Leaders meeting was organized not by person, but online (European Council, 2020). Overall, the digitalization and digital knowledge improved and it spread through private and professional use, and also found its way to tourism. Digital tourism contains all of the digital support which enhances the travel as websites, on-line booking engines, e-books etc. (Benyon et al., 2013). However, it is not a new field, but during the pandemic digital tourism tools became widely accepted (Akhtar et al., 2021), and three main categories were defined: virtual reality tourism, virtual tourism, and augmented reality. Among them virtual tourism - tourists visiting online (pre-captured way) destinations - seems to be a viable solution and it could stay for long term, getting a space in mass tourism. The developments in technology made it easier for users to explore destinations without actual physical travel. The authors did a systematic literature analysis and found that digital technologies in tourism became an academic field with few, but increased numbers of publications. However the findings are beneficial, there are no listed publications about other forms of virtual tourism, such as travel live streaming or online streaming from a destination, virtual travel live experience etc. Travel live stream also existed before, and "can be viewed as a product where the boundaries of tourism experience are negotiated and challenged to establish a new genre of interactive digital tourism." (Deng, 2021). Despite being increasingly adopted by the tourism industry, particularly in Asian destinations (e.g., China, South Korea, and Japan), academic research has paid little attention to live streaming in relation to tourism. Others argue (Tussyadiah et al., 2018) that virtual reality in tourism offers more meaningful content and it is also opening new understandings and intentions for destination tourism, as the virtual environment enhances the satisfaction of tourists and they measured a positive attitude change related to the destination, which could lead to higher level of visitation. From risk-perception perspective, joining an online tour became part of risk avoidance strategies, and online tourism is the safest way to "travel" (Lee & Chen, 2021). Overall, it seems to be difficult to keep up with the changes, new platforms and contents of digital tourism, therefore this study is seeking to deepen the understanding of these new forms and the growing interactions and virtual visitations to Japan.

3. Data collection and research method

General list about tourist guides or on-line tours is not existent in Japan or Kyoto, therefore a previously collected database by the author (Szabo, 2021) was used, which contains 300 foreign tourism professionals, who were involved in tour guiding, managing/owning accommodations, organizing tourism events etc. Kyoto based foreign tourism professionals were actively monitored from 2020 February, along with the activity of tourism centers and Japanese guides. The collected data was obtained by three channels: Observation and participation was used between 2020 February and 2022 June, as the author actively joined on-line tourism activities, such as virtual tours, live streams, live streamed events not only conducted by the selected interviewees, but other foreign and Japanese professionals and also organizations. Secondly the author also joined new forming online groups during this time period in order to observe and collect feedback from the digital tourists and to see the interactions between them and foreign tourism professionals. The general information about their activities and transformations in the industry was obtained by these channels. To ensure that not only general but also more insightful information is obtained, the third data source is in-depth interviews with foreign professionals. As the multiple case study offers advantage related to examining interferences and variables, but it also involves the danger of selection bias (Bennett, 2007), building on these observations, three interviewees were selected based on the following factors: popularity (has a broader audience), frequency (continuously doing the activity, not limited only to events or limited for a few times), generating income (not only free tours, but offering paid services) and offering their services for international audience too (using English and other languages, not limiting the entry based on the geographical location). The sampling strategy was also based on choosing interviewees who represent different categories and also to maximize diversity. Narrative analysis was applied to explore the personal stories and the author's own data was also used, as the author is also involved in these activities. In summary, these case studies are not only based on in-depth interviews, but observations, active participation and the author's own online activity.

Table 1: List of the cases

Occupation	Origin	Education	Activity	Main language during tours
Miss A Tour guide	Israel (Ukraine)	Phd, Kyoto university, JP	Live tours	Hebrew, English
Mr. B Tour guide, hotel owner	Singapore	MA, Waseda university, JP	Live tours App development Regional development	English
Mr. C. Garden consultant, tour guide	USA	MA, Colorado University, US	Online experiences, online trainings	English
Ms. D Tour guide, accommodation owner (author)	Hungary	MA, Doshisha, JP	Live tours	Hungarian, English

4. Transformations in tourism sector of Kyoto related to covid-19

4.1. Overview of the transformations in the tourism sector of Kyoto

Among G7 countries, Japan kept the borders closed for the longest time as individual inbound travel for tourism purposes was denied for more than 2 years, until 2022. October. In general, the first half year of this period was the “big silence” in terms of inbound travel: not much communication happened on social media sites or official channels related to travel, as individuals and organizations were waiting for the pandemic and regulations to change. But after this period, when the actors realized that it is not a short-term change, different strategies and crisis management emerged in the inbound tourism sector of Japan. There was no official, organized strategy on how to respond, so every organization and individuals decided it for themselves. It was possible to see different thinking and behavior in the on-line space, as some choose to stay in silence: Visit Kyoto is the official tourism page of Kyoto city with half million followers on Facebook, which was really active on social media sites before covid, but it became silent after the 2020 spring and shifted from average 2 posts/week to 1 post/month.

Others like Shiga tourism center kept their original activity during covid, while Nara city chose a different strategy and shifted to a more active on-line present through regular tea ceremony experiences, on-line live walks, Japanese lessons and quizzes about Nara. Companies also started to experience with online solutions: main leader travel agencies such as JTB and HIS, started to offer free on-line tours, but those were mainly targeting domestic audiences and only temporary were accessible for international audiences.

Table 2. Categories of activities

Taking a break	Self improvement	Restructuring	Online presence
Activities in other fields (teaching, part time activities, webshop etc.)	Pursuing education (degree, on-line courses)	Accommodations (pause, long term rent, finding new function, periodically continue)	Strengthening the online presence
Sabbatical break	Writing, publishing	Guides (pause, on-line experiences, live streaming)	Social media presence and online community building

4.2. Activities foreign tourism professionals are conducting during the inbound travel restrictions

The data about the general activities was obtained by various interactions in online groups and during online activities (tours, events) during the inbound travel ban time period. It shows the different paths what foreign tourism professionals chose during the pandemic period.

The first category is about temporarily changing their activity and trying out new fields of work and income: for some it is a necessity, for others it is an opportunity to try out their previously planned ideas. Typically this includes teaching foreign languages (mainly English), finding a temporary part time job, starting a webshop (typically exporting Japanese goods to overseas). The second subcategory, sabbatical means that they are not sure what to do and using this time period to figure out their future plans, change of

career or other activities.

The second category is self-improvement, which involves stepping up in the educational field, such as going to university, joining online courses and using the time to brush up individual skills. The other subcategory is writing and publishing, which shares the same time-constraint limitation, and they used the opportunity to write a book or publishing articles, building up their own blog etc.

The third category contains professionals, who wish to restructure their businesses and create a strategy for survival. It includes accommodation owners who refurbish their short time rental for long term rent or using it for other purposes and tour guides, who are creating on-line experiences and live streaming services.

The fourth category related to increased activities in the online field such as building up their social media presence and partaking in online communities.

4.3. The growing areas in inbound tourism sector of Kyoto

4.3.1. New communities

In November 2020, a new informal organization started to grow online, collecting foreigner residents, who are involved in tourism on a professional level, like employees of tourism centers, ryokans, tour operators, tours guides, etc. The online group has more than 270 members from all over Japan, and continuously sharing information such as surveys, job offers, cooperation possibilities etc., resolving the mission of the founder related to building a community and supporting each other. But why wasn't this community alive before the pandemic, whereas there were much more projects and options to work together than during the travel ban? Before the pandemic professionals were not much in need to contact each other, in a sense they were competitors and typically they had limited connections with their peers. However, covid disrupted their business and economic survival, so the group started as a platform for information sharing and introducing themselves, and during the time it became the base of many co-operations between the members, which would have been impossible in the pre-covid scene.

4.3.2. Live streams, virtual tours, on-line events

Live streams, virtual tours and live streamed events became popular during the pandemic, offering a variety of alternative ways to visit Japan. These options existed on a limited range pre-pandemic, but companies and individuals started to offer them more frequently in the last period. A before completely closed and private world is also opened up: the first live stream of a geisha dinner entertainment in English also happened during this period, organized by a foreign-born tourism professional. Similar happened with tea ceremonies, sake tastings, ikebana experiences: they were available only as an in-person experience, the travellers had to be physically present. Offering these in an on-line space opened up the opportunity to a more wide audience and offered a semi-present feeling. The importance of this is not just the fact that you don't have to travel to experience it, but the ever-increasing degree of interconnectedness. A few years ago, it would have been impossible to connect and communicate in this way, spreading Japanese concepts more widely and increasing international common understanding.

Table 3. Differences between a virtual tour and live stream

	Virtual tour	Live stream

Timing	Pre-recorded videos Audio (narration) is happening in real time	Audio and video happening in real time
Tool	Zoom or other hosting platform	FB, Youtube, Tik-tok
Communication	Visual: not interactive (pre-recorded) Audio: interactive, questions and answers With locals: no option to communicate with locals Between tourists: they have the option to see each other, but no other information (no profiles)	Visual: happening live and interactive Audio: interactive, questions and answers With locals: option to communicate with locals Between tourists: they communicate in writing, only seeing each other profiles
Long-term option	Typically they don't meet again after the tour, but it is possible to join again	They have the chance to meet next time too
Editing	The content is edited	The content is not edited, happening real time
Location of the guide	At a computer in any location	Live at the visited location

Ms A. completely changed her lifestyle because of her live streaming activity. Whenever she goes around in Kyoto or inside Japan, she is always taking the time to do a 30 minutes-1 hours live streaming, almost every day. She not only introduces tourist sites, but the normal, everyday life, because this is what is the main interest of her online tourists. She casually walks around in different areas of the city, but also holds on-line lessons about the geisha culture of Kyoto. As the place of the live stream is continuously changing, she shortly prepares before the live streams, but mainly interacting with her viewers and answering their questions about various topics - mainly not tourism related, but garbage collection, prices, cleaning of the streets, everyday customs etc. Ms. D. applies the same approach, however the tours are more planned and it is possible to know the time and place beforehand, so a bigger audience can gather at the same time. Offering virtual tours works differently: Mr. C. prepared a few topics like zen gardens as virtual tours and offered the same content every time to different, small groups. He is using his own recorded videos and pictures, adding narration during the tour. As he was a highly rated tour guide pre-pandemic, he is using the same logic and after a session of explanation, starts to interact with the guests and motivates them to ask questions. He has also inquiries from companies to lead team building activities, so in this context the digital tourists are taken to a “field trip” together.

Table 4. Summary of the activities

Origin	Business model	Activity	On-line presence	Community	Interactions
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Ms. A. Israel	Open, free tours Collecting tips	Live streaming Educational webinars	Social media	Manages her own group and building up community	Frequent and long term between tourists and guide-tourists
Mr. B. Singapore	Paid events, fixed date tours	Virtual tour	Tour and guide sites	Have a social media presence, but not community building	Limited during the tour with follow up
Mr. C. USA	Paid events, fixed date tours Private tours	Virtual tour	Tour and guide sites Youtube	Have a social media presence, but not community building	Limited during the tour with follow up
Ms. D Hungary	Open, free tours Monthly subscriptions Private tours	Live streaming	Social media	Manages her own group and building up community	Frequent and long term between tourists and guide-tourists

4.3.3. New on-line tourists

During the stay-at-home regulations, many companies and people shifted their personal and working life on-line and adapted (relatively) new technologies like video calls, on-line conferences, friendly meetings in chat applications, tv shows shifted to broadcast over the internet etc. Many people who were not familiar with these solutions before, started to use them to overcome the difficulties of the pandemic. This led to higher digital competencies among people who were not daily users before, like elderly and people whose work or personal life was not necessary based on on-line activity. The consequence of this in the tourism sector is that a previously non-existent audience joined into the virtual space and started to consume different on-line contents. Based on the impressions of interviewees, their audience contains people who can't travel other ways (because of health, money or time issues), families who want to share experiences, even if the family members live apart from each other, often in different countries, therefore under travel restrictions, this was the only way to meet and share experiences. And not only families, but also friends and acquaintances joined these live broadcasts, and friendships and acquaintanceships were often formed between participants as a result of the repeated shared experience. In the case of Mr. D., another segment of virtual travelers emerged: companies that used virtual tours for team-building activities. The interviewees all said that they bring together people of completely different ages, social backgrounds, educational backgrounds, countries and mother tongues through their online activities.

4.4. The core motivation behind the adaptation process

These people would have had the opportunity to do well in other areas during the pandemic, but they decided to stick to tourism and to transform their activities in this area. Apart from the financial needs, what was their motivation? Their answers can be categorized as follows: a) as personal mission: "I am more of a teacher than a tour guide", "I want to heal through my walks", "I feel I have a mission to teach Japanese

culture”, “I can be an English teacher anytime, but I wanted to use my knowledge other way”, b) a responsibility towards local community: “I wanted to support the local Japanese community”, “Empty Kyoto felt really sad”, “I wanted to raise awareness towards less-known places, so Kyoto will be not so overcrowded like before.” and c) “being the bridge”: “I am a bridge between cultures”, “I enjoy to connect concepts together from different cultures”, “I try to interpret complex ideas in a simple way”, “I would like them (the tourists) to adapt good things from Japanese people, like cleaning the streets”, “I don’t want them to see me, I am just the mediator, I want them to see what I want to show about Japan.”

So the common point among these foreign-born individuals, originally from different countries, social background, native language is this core motivation, which starts with a personal mission, responsibility towards local community and it peaks in the mediator role, which they are aware of and using different expressions to explain their “bridging role”.

4.4.1. Bridging capital on different levels

4.4.1.1. Tourists and tourists

Guides are meeting tourists in-person and nowadays on-line too. In this research the focus is on the digital tourists, where the tourist groups are homogenous. In the case of the Ms. A., the common point is the language (Hebrew), not the physical location and the same is with the Hungarian guide, where Hungarians living in different countries are also joining the tours. Both of them are conducting tours in English for international audiences, but the interest is not so high because of many factors: different time zones make it difficult to join for live streams at the same time, and the atmosphere is not so intimate without the common reference. These online tourists typically don't know each other, but because the same people could join many times, they can get to know each other, and both guides received messages related to forming friendships through this activity. Both of them started a group on social media to connect these digital tourists with each other through the common interest, boosting the communication and community forming among them and also expanding the social network of the guides. This is working differently for Mr. B. and Mr. C, because both of them offer one-time or short time on-line experiences, which are virtual tours or team building activities for companies. Therefore, they help to form connections inside those groups, but do not contribute to longer or deeper understanding between them.

4.4.1.2. Tourist and guide

Tourism is often seen as an upper, superficial layer of globalization, offering insight but often not immersion. The role of tourist guides in mass tourism is often limited to organizing and providing historical information, but there is a growing trend worldwide to move away from this. Even before the pandemic, there was a move towards private or small group experiences and immersion, greater involvement in local life, including sustainability issues.

The role of guides is changing in the online space. Since the traveler cannot see everything around them, the guide chooses the slice of reality they want to show (either live or through a virtual tour). As a consequence, the guide's narrative is also becoming more valuable, and is not limited to classic tourist information. For each of the interviewees, a good part of the questions and interactions relate to the guide himself, the everyday events of the world around them, their own personal experiences and interpretation of what is happening around them. No matter how many people join a tour, the voice and person of the guide are just as close to everyone, and what they see through the camera becomes a shared experience for the viewers, because everybody is seeing the same slice of the reality during live streams.

Virtual passengers cannot look away or look around, they only see what the tour guide shows them, which is why they encounter the different faces of Kyoto through the interpretation of the guides. For those who have never had such an experience, the importance of this cannot be stressed enough: the guide has never had such a strong influence on what tourists focus their attention on, and they are given a narrative world filtered through the guide’s personality, knowledge and stories. At the same time, when asked, participants feel "as if I had walked there", "as if I had been there", the experience is authentic and genuine

for them. This feedback is particularly evident during live broadcasts, the pre-recorded nature of virtual tours gives participants less of this experience.

4.4.1.3. Guide and local community

Apart from a person walking the streets of Kyoto with a camera and a microphone, speaking in a foreign language, what do local people experience from these online tours? Ms. A considers it of the utmost importance to be able to support the local community both financially and relationally. During her walks, she regularly shops at local temples and stores, and raffles off prizes to participants. Ms. D not only conducts walks, but regularly invites Japanese participants or interviews them and pays them for their participation in the spirit of supporting their lost income due to the disappearance of tourism.

Virtual tours do not have such a direct impact on the local community, as the tour guide is not present in person. However, in the case of Mr. B., the effect is indirect, as he reinvests a percentage of his income back into the local community.

These guides have an ongoing impact on shaping the image of Japan in the minds of the participants, and help to connect people who would otherwise not find each other. They support the creation of economic links (linking foreign tea traders with Japanese tea planters, helping Japanese knives to be exported abroad, etc.) and cultural links (developing Japanese-Swedish Ikebana relations, linking craftsmen to each other, etc.)

In summary, the growing areas consist of new types of tourists, new communities among tourism professionals, growing publications and virtual events, supported by the strengthened digital activity by tourism professionals, who are mindfully aware of their role in the process and have strong mission as their core motivation to conduct this activity. The transformative power of this crisis caused more interdependence between tourists and guides through online occasions and also strengthened on-line community activity.

5. Conclusions

During digital tourism activity, people are getting into situations where they interact with other persons, who they never met before or normally wouldn't have the chance to meet, as they differ in country of residence, native language, educational background, class, religion etc.

As can be seen from the above sections, the tourism sector has not only experienced negative losses, but also forward-looking, community-shaping changes, which are not often analyzed in academic research. In this new kind of tourism, the growing role and continuing role of tour guides in shaping the image of Japan can be easily observed, which has an impact on the interest and willingness to travel of tourists. All participants reported that some of them had not previously been interested in Japan, but that this had changed as a result of the live tours and the visual experience, and many were planning to make a real trip to Japan. Therefore, this type of activity among those who are able to travel is not a trigger, but a precursor or motivation to travel. Digital tourism does not work against face-to-face tourism, but rather channels and thematically narrows the interest of travelers. The newly established and strengthened online communities have become important platforms for cooperation and support for joint, united action, thus promoting the long-term sustainability of the profession and good practice.

The legitimate question is whether this on-line tourism will disappear or decrease with the lifting of travel restrictions. From an economic point of view, it is the cheapest way for tourists to travel, and the pool of people who want to travel to Japan is much larger than those who can afford to, so it is likely that these opportunities will continue to exist in the future. All of the interviewees want to continue their activities when there are no longer travel restrictions.

Even before the pandemic, Kyoto had seen the rise of a foreign professional class in tourism, and those who gained a larger follower base during the travel restrictions can expect greater demand in the future. In this way, not only do they benefit through their own self-generated desire to travel, but also the local community where tourists spend and consume - a revenue stream in Japanese tourism that was generated by foreign professionals during the pandemic. The phenomena described earlier are not only temporary and transitory, but also provide new ways of doing tourism in a global world.

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