

# 京都府下の地方都市観光における ソーシャルメディア活用の事例研究

Using Social Media for Small Town Tourism in Kyoto Countryside

Eric Charles Hawkinson

## 要旨

この研究では、日本の田舎での国外からの観光旅行を増やすことを目的として、京都府北部での観光振興の長所と弱点を見いだすためにパフォーマンス分析を使用した。そして、この解決策と「ジョブエイド」を提案した。本研究によって、日本の田舎観光では、旅行者に対して新しい技術による情報提供がなされていないことが分かった。本研究で提案した「ジョブエイド」は、海外旅行をする者が旅行を計画するための情報を手に入れるために、普及しはじめたソーシャルメディアを用いた新しいマーケティング戦略に焦点を当てている。

キーワード: ソーシャルメディア、国際観光、丹後、京都府、トラベル 2.0

## Abstract:

Seeking to answer the challenge to increase international tourism in rural Japan, this study employs a performance analysis to find strengths and weaknesses of those promoting tourism in northern Kyoto prefecture and then offers solutions and job enhancement aids. The study finds little to no use of new information technologies that today's travelers are using. The main focus of the job aid is on new marketing strategies in social media which is becoming prominent for international travel planning.

Keywords: Travel 2.0, Social Media, International Tourism, Tango, Kyoto Prefecture

## 1. Introduction

In 2003 Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan set the goal of ten million visitors per year from overseas. Efforts from this 'Visit Japan Campaign' showed steady growth for eight consecutive years and in 2008 there was an estimated 8.3 million inbound tourists. In March of 2011 Japan was devastated by a triple disaster, an earthquake leading to a tsunami and a subsequent nuclear power plant meltdown. Continuing concerns about safety and fear of aftershocks has taken all the gains in foreign visits in one swift event. Many government agencies are looking for ways to re-cooperate international travel to Japan. One focus is Eco-tourism in rural areas and officials in small towns are getting increasing pressure to reach out to potential international guests. A tourism board in a small town which has traditionally focused on attracting domestic travel is now being asked to take a step further and appeal to foreign travelers. These areas do have a lot of offer in rich cultural tradition and unique beautiful landscapes but they don't have a lot of international exposure.

This analysis will attempt to determine the barriers rural Japan is having attracting more foreign travelers. The main focus will be on city officials, non-profit tourism organization members, and local business promotion managers. The differences in their strategies, their successes, and failures will be discussed and their behaviors will be compared to find what is working, what is not, and what could be missing in their quest to boost local economies with increased international tourism. The outcome of the analysis will be used identify which barriers can be effected positively and from the data offer some suggestions for possible job aids for local promoters.

## 2. Choosing the Audience

When looking to increase tourism there are two immediate potential audiences to consider. The promoter and the traveler are two groups with completely different sets of motivations. Policy is pushing promoters to test their skills to overcome environmental barriers. On the other side travelers are not asked for special skills when traveling. There are behaviors, skills, and knowledge that could be measured in travelers; it is ultimately the job of the promoter to change those behaviors or educate the travelers and 'appeal' to them. This analysis will focus on the performance of tourism promoters in one rural area of Japan.

### 3. Performance Problem or Rollout: Expanding the Audience

Initial interviews were made with 3 city tourism board officials. It was clear early on that the officials were not actively engaging in international promotion. Only two of them were able to site some current on-going tasks geared to foreign promotion. Even then the most they were doing at the time was translating travel pamphlets and guide books into English, Korean, and Chinese. Not one of them could name a popular website foreign tourists might go to for information about visiting the area. This could be seen as a rollout rather a performance problem. It was reported by two of the three first interviewees that a local hotel seems to be the most successful in bringing in international travelers. From that point it was decided that local business promoters would also be included in the analysis to help provide some optimal performance standards.

Every participant was sent an initial email containing a short questionnaire. Each respondent was called for a follow-up interview.

Table.1. Interviewees

Job Category	Number of Interviews
City Officials (Board of Tourism)	3
Tourism Association Members (NPOs)	2
Business Promoters	3

### 4. Gap Analysis

An interesting thing happened when the participants were asked to identify a person or group in the area having relative success at attracting foreign guests. The city official sited a local tourism organization, when members of that organization were asked the same question they pointed to the largest hotel in the area. A manager at that hotel said that no one is having any success. The sample size is quite small so based on responses on various behaviors and skills that might make a good promoter for international tourism we will consider the most common responses (actual) and the most desirable responses (optimal). The perception of the participants seemed to be correct as the hotel managers showed the most desirable behaviors so their responses were used as a guide for optimal performance.

Table.2. Gap Analysis

Question / Behavior / Skill	Actual (common response)	Optimal
Information dissemination tools	Leaflets for visitors	Internet presence in multiple languages and multiple sites.
Setting Goals	No quotas set for foreign quests	Clear goals set and evaluation system established
Self-Improvement	Tourist Information Desk has complaint and feedback forms to be filled out by travelers.	Customer feedback is collected with multiple mediums and used to improve facilities and service
Training Programs	No customer service training	Annual customer service and cultural awareness training

Promoters need to be proficient in getting noticed by potential guests. That means maximum exposure is a good thing. Cities and NPOs are printing leaflets and brochures for visitors in several languages. Unfortunately they are only getting into the hands of travelers that make it to their town from the city. Only the hotel promoters were active in using the internet in multiple languages. Another notable difference between the hotels and tourism information center is the feedback system. The hotel looks to travel websites for customer ratings and comments. The information desk has a feedback form in Japanese and a suggestion box on the wall.

## 5. Barriers, Causes, and Drivers

A short break down of barriers between actual and optimal to see what can and cannot be affected positively.

Table.3. Performance Barriers

Type	Barrier, cause, driver
Environment	Safety Concerns not addressed Public transportation not easily understood Budgetary issues limit expenditures on tourism
Incentives	Inadequate feedback system*
Motivation	No clear goal/quota set for foreign guests
Skills and Knowledge	Bi-lingual skills Customer service skills specific to international guests Internet promotional strategies and services unknown

\*- Multiple category item

## 6. Solution Suggestions

The environmental problems affect the travelers directly. A press release about safety records might help concerns. More train and bus schedules, guide posts, and road signs in multiple languages would help but it doesn't directly improve the performance of the promoters.

There were several skills and knowledge deficiencies that were admitted by all participants. Customer service and language training is needed in all of the organizations. A proper training needs assessment will provide appropriate training needs. One skill was not evenly apparent and that is the use of internet promotional opportunities. Training on these tools would be very helpful. Perhaps a simple guide for proper use of a social networking site will be useful. Only one organization had a clear goal for the annual number of visitors and that number doesn't differentiate between foreign and domestic travelers. An explanation of the importance of a goal and suggestions of what number to set might be welcome.

Feedback systems are usually considered incentive tools but in this case it also relates to skills and environment. The feedback doesn't have to reflect the promoter directly but perhaps the location, the food, the transportation, or even the weather. How promoters are able to collect and use this feedback to improve quality for future visitors is a skill and one that should be mastered for long term improvement.

## 7. Using Social Media to Promote Rural Tourism – Job Performance Aid

Two job aids present themselves to help overcome the barriers in performance gaps.

- A guide to posting events and attractions on a social networking or travel website. Because there is also a language skills barrier involved here a list of translation tools and services can be provided along with the guide.

- A universal multi-language feedback form. If a traveler finds that the same feedback form is available at all attractions and businesses it might increase customer feedback. It might also provide more useful feedback. The form could also be available online so travelers can submit feedback for places and services where they didn't find a form.

These job aids only address two of the four skills gaps discovered in this analysis but customer service and language skills will be less improved with a job aid than training. Training and job aids are ideal to address all performance gaps. The job aids support performance but perhaps more importantly using them will cultivate language and customer service skills needed for long term success and ultimately make training more productive when it comes.

## 7.1 Introduction – A Performance Issue to Resolve

Businesses and tourist attractions in rural Japan are being encouraged to reach out to more foreign visitors. This comes in the face of record breaking declines in international tourism nationwide mainly due to safety concerns from the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent tsunami and nuclear meltdown in March 2011. To confront this challenge an analysis was made on the performance of local promoters in rural areas of Kyoto prefecture. Business operators and tour operators were surveyed to find what barriers are preventing them from attracting foreign patrons. That analysis revealed several problems preventing international tourism.

- Safety concerns are not being adequately addressed
- Language barriers
- Lack of proper internationally-orientated promotional knowledge

These problems combine to create a larger underlying issue and that is not enough information is getting from the promoter to potential travelers. For example, the main advertising medium for many public parks and smaller private businesses in the area surveyed is to distribute leaflets through a network of government and non-profit groups. There is little chance of these materials ever getting into the hands of someone in an inner-city, and even less chance of getting noticed by someone living outside of Japan. In an attempt to reach people and 'convert' them to using new social media channels I created a leaflet of my own to distribute through the traditional channels (Appendix B). For the purposes of this performance aid we are looking to resolve the following problem:

- Information about tourist attractions in rural Japan is not adequately getting to potential foreign travelers.

## 7.2 Defining Goals and Objectives

There are countless tools on the internet which can be brought to bear to disseminate information to would-be travelers. Using social media can be a great way to address the problem. The goal is now simplified.

- Business owners and tourism promoters actively and effectively use social media to market their attractions and products.

A goal analysis can bring about some concrete and specific objectives. First thinking about what behaviors are involved in actively and effectively using social media and what behaviors can be anti-productive.

Table.4. Desired Social Media Behaviors

<b>Active Social Media Users Will...</b>	<b>Effective Social Media Users Will...</b>	<b>Anti-productive behavior includes...</b>
Find and follow like-minded groups of users	Offer good content and not advertisements	Posting information rather than promoting interaction
Participate in discussions about topics related to your business	Can act as an expert on subjects related to your business or interest	Providing content only relevant to you rather than the community as a whole
Use and connect several social media outlets	Capture relevant data about potential customers	
	Get people to like, know, and trust you or your business	

In the world of web 2.0 it has become important for users to be able to contribute and express their own ideas as everyone is now creating content. From the above examples we can see that it is important to facilitate two-way communication rather than just simply disseminating information about your product or service. With this in mind, here are four objectives that the job aid will support.

Provided the job aid, the promoter can

- list the most common social media outlets for international tourists
- identify online communities to interact with that will expand their “web presence”
- post pictures and other media on Facebook and Flickr
- list the most common sites used for travel planning by international travelers

### 7.3 Choosing design and delivery – Dealing with Audience Knowledge Gaps

I conducted a simple audience analysis on three pilot testers who agreed to use a prototype version of an online wiki I was developing on social media. One member was a retired man that mentioned he doesn't use his computer very often. A hotel owner who also participated was on the other side of the spectrum showing me two cell phones and a slate tablet PC on her person. The job aid needs to have some flexibility.

On the other hand using a simple online job aid can be a good transition into other sites like Twitter or Facebook. The internet savvy of the audience is quite varied and therefore steps should be taken to help bring some people up to a level where users are able to utilize an online

job aid. The audience is divided into three groups so the job aid can be designed to be utilizable from the onset.

1. Users with little experience with computers
2. Users with computer knowledge but no experience with (international) social media
3. People who already use social media and want to use it to better their businesses

Each of these user groups can enter the “workflow’ or ‘stage’ appropriate to their needs so that time spent using the job aid is optimized.

It is important to note that Japan, being a very tech savvy country is relative late comer into social sites common to the rest of the world. For instance, Japan has 100 million internet users and recent number only has about 5 million facebook users. That percentage is dwarfed by the United States at 150 million facebook users and almost half the population(Appendix C). So it is a matter of introducing the right social media and why it is relevant over how to use it in many cases.

The job aid is broken into three stages and the user can freely start at the stage that they feel best fits their needs. The first stage is also available in print form to help bridge some knowledge gaps among the targeted user group.

#### 7.4 Usability Trails

Because the job aid is divided into three stages, initial pilot testing was done with one member of each user group. Later tests will involve pilot testers that enter as group one or two users who are transitioning into later stages of the job aid.

Table.5. Usability Trails

<b>Group 1</b> User Testing Feedback	Who: Local Business Owner The tester mentioned reading a lot of unfamiliar katakana <sup>1</sup> vocabulary. There was a noticeable amount of hesitation to immediately go to the site while I was present.
<b>Group 2</b> User Testing Feedback	Who: City Tourism Official The test navigated through and read a few articles in the knowledge base (KB). When the tester clicked on a link that navigated them out of the KB and into Twitter, they immediately started registering.
<b>Group 3</b> User Testing Feedback	Who: Hotel Manager The tester read some of the articles about best practices concerning the usage of social media.

It was unclear in the initial testing that the job aid was going to help the audience perform the

<sup>1</sup> katakana – a Japanese alphabet used when importing loan words from other languages



objectives. It was clear the group two user could create a Twitter account, but further testing is needed to see if the user could connect with potential customers by 'following' them. The same is true for the group three tester, it will take several follow-ups to see if the information helped them find more online outlets. Results from the pilot test were present in level one evaluation in the form of favorable reactions and the group two user ventured into new online territory which could be considered level two evaluation. But longer term testing is needed to determine if this job aid supports the objectives concerning the ability to make online relationships.

#### 7.5 Implementing Changes from Pilot Testing

Observing group two and three users navigate around the KB revealed a random or eye-catching behavior. A basic workflow was created to help users have a guide to the natural flow and steps the information should follow. This will be especially helpful to group 1 and two users because it will give them a path to gaining web presence with little prior knowledge of social media. The roadmap was designed to incorporate the website itself as it will gather data from users via Facebook and Flickr to be used in collecting data to further the study. The hotel manager in the pilot test used her smartphone to access the site. I took note of this and added QR codes to the roadmap so people could link to the appropriate stages in the workflow simply by snapping a picture of the corresponding code.

The job aid has three main sections. An introduction to social media, a roadmap for beginning social media marketing, and a wiki to support effective use of social media outlets. Group 1 users start from the road map but most likely from a printed document using their cell phone. Group 2 users will use the roadmap on the website. Group 3 can freely cherry pick information from the wiki to support their efforts.

STEP 1 Basics

<http://foreverkyoto.com/jp/socialmedia>

 **Foreverkyoto** でソーシャルメディアのベーシックスを学ぼう 



STEP 2 - Facebook

 フェースブックで登録して会社のページを作りましょう 


STEP 3 - Flickr

 フリッカーで登録して写真をアップしよう 

STEP 4 - Tripadvisor

 トリップアドバイザーで登録して同じぐらい会社を比べてみよう 

STEP 5 - ForeverKyoto

 **ForeverKyoto** にフェースブックでログインして会社のことを世界に紹介しよう

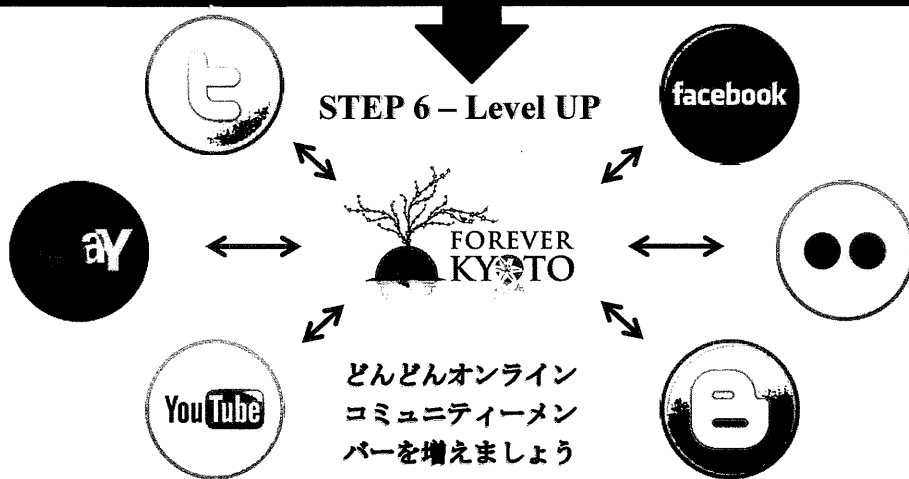


Figure.1. Social Media Marketing Roadmap

#### 7.6 How this Job Aid Fits into the Entire Solution System

The umbrella goal of the job aid was to help promoters attract more international tourists. Mastering social media is an important step. Other barriers will also be reduced during this practice, such as language learning and cultural awareness, as promoters interact with international travelers on the internet. ForeverKyoto.com will serve to collect data from promoters during this process to guide the next phase of the project which could include a customer service or language training program.