



2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Improving seasonality - levelling per-month tourist number

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Kyoto City

Country: Japan

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Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

- ☒ Culture & Communities
- ☐ Environment & Climate
- ☐ Nature & Ecotourism
- ☐ Islands & Seaside
- ☐ Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
- ☐ Post COVID -19 recovery
- ☐ One of the 17 SDGs* *(if yes, which one)* Click or tap to choose

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices [here](#)



DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Kyoto City has beautiful nature, a long history of over 1200 years, temples and shrines, as well as cultural traditions including tea ceremony, flower arrangement, Noh theater, and Kyogen, which attract many domestic and international tourists. However, one of the problems was that there was a significant difference in the number of tourists in each month. In particular, many tourists visited especially during the autumn color season. In 2003, the month with the highest number of tourists was 3.6 times higher than the month with the lowest number (e.g., November: 6.66 million; February: 1.86 million). It was the most significant difference the city ever had.

In particular, traffic congestion around popular tourist sites during peak months had a significant impact on the local residents' lives. It was necessary to narrow the gap of the number of tourists between the busiest and the slowest seasons in order to ease these problems, and to achieve stable management for tourism-related businesses.

Methods, steps and tools applied

In order to close the gap, Kyoto City made a significant investment in developing and promoting attractions and activities for the off-season, especially in summer and winter. Specifically, in the winter of 2003, the city began a "Hanatoro" project, which adorned nighttime streets with "lights" (more than 2,000 lanterns) and "flowers" (flower arrangements). In the winter of 2009, the Kyoto Restaurant Winter Special was developed, in which long-established restaurants offer menu items at special prices during the off-season. Furthermore, Kyoto City put more efforts on attracting international tourists, who follow a seasonality pattern different from domestic tourists, by providing information to more overseas representatives to increase media coverage in foreign countries. At the same time, the city improved the facilities for international visitors, such as multilingual signages and duty-free shops. As a result of the above efforts in cooperation with local communities and private sectors, the number of tourists levelled in the peak months and increased in the off-peak months, thus reducing the gap in tourist numbers between seasons.

Key success factors

In order to attract new visitors in off-seasons (summer and winter), it was essential to encourage the understanding and cooperation of local stakeholders. In case of the "Hanatouro" project, the project purpose was shared among the local residents, private businesses, and entities including temples and shrines. Collaboration was made successfully - local residents helped installing the lanterns in the streets and temples and shrines allowed nighttime visits. As a result, the event has now grown to attract about two million visitors every year.

Furthermore, as a result of efforts to improve foreign tourists' satisfaction, such as offering language supports and increasing the number of shops accepting credit cards, the city has gradually risen in the ranking of the best tourist destinations of some of the leading international travel magazines. In 2014 and 2015, Kyoto City was selected as the world's best city to visit by the readers of Travel and Leisure Magazine, which increased the city's recognition and branding as a tourism destination worldwide.



Lessons learned

Since attracting visitors to the off-season would create a new activity in a previously quiet period, it was necessary to promote an understanding of the residents in the area. The city held frequent meetings with the residents' associations and tried to gain their approval by taking various safety measures regarding congestion and traffic problems.

Furthermore, as the importance of word-of-mouth communication such as SNS and review sites increases, in 2010 the city started to conduct an annual questionnaire survey of 4,000 Japanese and 1,600 foreign tourists to ascertain the level of their satisfaction. In line with this, the city continuously works to understand and resolve any kind of dissatisfaction. As a result, the level of foreign tourists' satisfaction remains nearly 100%, which leads to a further increase in the city's global reputation.

Results, achievements and recognitions

Kyoto City has taken numerous measures to reduce the gap in the number of tourists by month and to improve tourist satisfaction. As a result, the gap in the tourist number between the highest and the lowest seasons reduced from 3.6 times (2003) to 1.3 times (2019), while the city's total tourism consumption increased from 479.4 billion yen in 2003 to 1,236.7 billion yen in 2019.

As for levelling in the number of tourists during the peak months, the longest traffic congestion in an Arashiyama area in the autumn season decreased from 2.7 km in 2001 to 0.4 km in 2019. The occupancy rate of major hotels in Kyoto City remained relatively good even in the off-season before COVID-19 outbreak, which was 80.1% in February 2019. By improving the difference in the number of tourists between the busy season and the off-season, the city was able to ease congestion and stabilize the management of tourism-related businesses.

Additional references

- The number of tourists in Kyoto City (comparison between 2003 and 2019)
- Trends in Travel Spending
- Trends in the number of foreign guests and satisfaction level
- Examples of Inbound Tourism Initiatives
- Travel + Leisure rankings

*Please refer to the attached documents.

