

New Horizon for Northeast Asian Tourism: Increasing Inbound Flows through Trilateral Cooperation

Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS)

Moderator	Akima UMEZAWA Deputy Secretary-General, TCS
Presenter	KIM Jin Hwal Director, Overseas Marketing, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)
	Eiichiro OISHI Director, Overseas Promotion Division, Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)
	LI Baorong Director, Seoul Branch, China National Tourism Administration (CNTA)
	LEE Gye Hee Professor, Tourism Department, Kyunghee University
	Bradley BRENNAN Professor, Business Department, Inha University
Rapporteur	Hyemin KIM Socio-Cultural Affairs Officer, TCS

- Speakers introduced the current state of inbound tourism in China, Japan and Korea. In Korea, the percentage of inbound tourists from North America and Europe is less than 10 percent. Similarly, most visitors from China and Japan are from within the region. Through tourism cooperation, the three countries are exploring potential marketing tools for increasing the number of visitors who come to China, Japan and Korea from outside East Asia.
- The session reviewed policies for inbound tourism in China, Japan and Korea. For example, the Japanese government will strengthen the content of tourism products and expand “Low Cost Carriers (LCC)” and cruise routes to meet the goal of attracting 30 million visitors to the country by 2020.
- During the session, the main purpose for inbound tourists’ visits to China, Japan and Korea was described. In the case of Japan, for instance, most visitors from neighboring countries made the trip for shopping, while the objective of long-haul visits were mainly for experiencing culture and

history. For Korea, world cultural heritages and K-pop culture were a few of the major sources of attraction.

- The impact of tourism on general society and the region as well as its significance as a high value-added industry were mentioned. The tourism industry is a driving force of the creative economy, as it contributes to economic development, creates jobs, generates added value and enhances the quality of life for the general public.
- The session suggested the possibility of attracting a large body of inbound tourists from North America and Europe in alignment with large-scale international events like the forthcoming Winter Olympics, Rugby World Cup and Kansai World Masters Games.
- Developing a unique and distinguishable brand of regional tourism and improving visa and transportation systems are significant issues for facilitating trilateral cooperation in tourism among China, Japan and Korea.
- Unlike in the instances of regional tourism cooperation in Europe, Central America and the U.S.-



Akima UMEZAWA

KIM Jin Hwal

Eiichiro OISHI

LI Baorong

LEE Gye Hee

Bradley BRENNAN

Canada, cooperation among China, Japan and Korea has challenges such as different languages and physical separation by the ocean that needs to be overcome through developing innovative strategies.

- Visit East Asia Campaign, a follow-up measure of the 7th Trilateral Tourism Ministers Meeting, was discussed as a measure to increase multi-

destination visits to China, Japan and Korea.

- China-Japan-Korea trilateral cooperation in tourism is difficult to achieve within a short time-frame, and consistent efforts are called for.

Policy Implications

- *Visit East Asia Campaign* has much potential to increase inbound tourism to China, Japan and Korea by creating a synergy effect. Specifically, trilateral cooperation in tourism through regional block-marketing would reduce the burden on the budgets for all three countries.
- Promotion of theme-oriented tourism products would help attract inbound tourists from North America and Europe. One example of such theme-oriented tourism would be education and youth tourism which has a growing pool of consumers and may serve as a niche market in the three countries.
- There are on-going efforts among CNTA, JNTO and KTO overseas branches to strengthen trilateral cooperation in the tourism industry (e.g. signing of MOUs between National Tourism Organization overseas branches, joint promotion activities, and operation of FAM tours).
- The session suggested selecting representative tourism products from China, Japan and Korea for co-promotion and con-

ducting a survey on customer demand. Other ideas such as creating a pre-paid card system that can be used in all three countries were also brought out. In addition, it was noted that tourism cooperation among local cities is called for.

- Information acquired online and via first-hand trip reviews in social media during the initial stages of planning trips has become critical for travelers, and this is closely connected to developing successful marketing strategies. In this light, conducting data mining research can help determine where customer demand lies in the context of East Asian tourism industry.
- The session proposed developing common cruise routes among the three countries to overcome the obstacle of geographic separation by oceans.
- Developing a mechanism to enable communication between CNTA, JNTO and KTO overseas branches and headquarters would help enhance cooperation and avoid overlaps.
- There is a need to develop technical plans and strategies for trilateral cooperation in tourism among China, Japan and Korea, through existing mechanisms and at the Trilateral Tourism Ministers Meeting.