

Meiji Institute for Global Affairs

MIGA COLUMN GLOBAL DIAGNOSIS

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Short Curriculum Vitae) Seiji Hagiwara

Joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in 1980 after graduating from the Faculty of the Americas, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tokyo. Graduated from a master's (MPA) course at Princeton University (where he acquired a master's degree), then served as Director of the APEC Division, Director for Policy Planning in the Minister's Secretariat, and Director of the Information Policy Division in the Commerce and Information Policy Bureau, before resigning from MITI in 1998 at his own request to become a candidate in the mayoral election in Okayama City. Elected Mayor of Okayama City the next year, then elected as a member of the Lower House in 2005. Since 2010 has served as a Professor at Teikyo Heisei University and Professor of Scholastics at Hosei University. Joined MIGA as Visiting Researcher in 2013, before taking up his current post in 2014. Elected and currently serves as Mayor of Mimasaka City since March, 2014.

Trump is everywhere!

Rapidly increasing inbound tourism in the city of Mimasaka: Comprehensive strategy for local revitalization in the city of Mimasaka posts the target of attraction of at least 10,000 inbound tourists (who stay there at least one night) per year. The original plan was formulated in January 2015. In fiscal 2013, such tourists numbered 3,007. In fiscal 2014, they numbered 4,179. At present, the corresponding total announced for fiscal 2015 is 7,822, indicating a steep increase. The number of inbound tourists in Japan as a whole has topped 19 million and is approaching the prevailing target of 20 million. The trend for Mimasaka could be regarded as in line with this national increase.

On the other hand, Mimasaka could even be viewed as leading the rest of the country, seeing that, although it accounts for only one six-thousandth of Japan's entire population, a projection of its attraction of tourists to nationwide proportions translates into a figure of about 47 million. I will leave the interpretation of these numbers up to the reader.

Unbalanced composition: The breakdown of the number of tourists by country of origin exhibits some clear characteristics. In fiscal 2015, China accounted for the single greatest share of the total number of inbound tourists, but occupied only 2 percent in the case of Mimasaka. The share of all tourists who came to Mimasaka occupied by those from the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was also much lower than the national average. In contrast, high shares came from Taiwan and especially Hong Kong whose share was particularly large. Shopping ranks high as a purpose for travel among visitors from China and South Korea, and their lower shares of tourism in Mimasaka, which does not even have any particular duty-free stores, may result from their seeing no reason to go there.

	China	South Korea	Taiwan	Hong Kong	Other countries/regions
Nationwide	24%	18%	20%	7%	31%
City of Mimasaka	2%	8%	28%	53%	9%

Marketing strategy based: Fact-finding interviews with the managers of hotels and Japanese-style inns found that the marketing strategy was a factor behind the unbalanced breakdown by country of origin. They said that guests from Taiwan do not feel anything odd about walking around the area in a yukata (unlined kimono), and that those from Hong Kong resembled Westerners in their tastes. For such reasons, they are actively selling Mimasaka to the markets of Taiwan and Hong Kong. As for future marketing, they said they were going to target Thailand and Vietnam. On the other hand, they were not going to conduct marketing campaigns aimed at other countries and regions.

Culture and cultural affinity: This situation is a reflection of cultural affinity (or lack of the same) between the managers of hotels and inns in our district and their guests (the majority being Japanese, and the remainder occupied by foreign nationals). Both the managers and their guests should be viewed as understanding that acceptance of behavior in hotels and inns which is not alienating to either side is a factor determining the value of those hotels and inns.

Important implications for international relations: Donald Trump, who is running for President of the United States, has made statements of a strongly exclusionistic nature against Islam and Mexico. Meanwhile, exclusionism is one of the factors behind the British decision to leave the European Union. It would not be fitting for our negative view of these phenomena to lead to a denial of the very importance of cultural affinity per se in international relations. If Japan is to be respected for its soft power in the rest of the world, we should see that our culture, will be perceived as non-invasive with respect to other cultures and as evoking affinity by those other cultures, while preserving its distinctiveness. In addition, it may be noted that affinity (or lack of the same) cannot be avoided in the national life. As such, we ought to realize that the exercise of ingenuity for proper expression of it is going to become important.

Elegant expression: it is the policy of managers of hotels and inns in our region not to refuse service to any visitors who come, but also not to actively sell the district. Viewed from an international perspective, this does not appear to be an impermissible attitude. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) recognizes application for membership under certain conditions. There is no dominant international feeling that this is not permissible. In the world of the 21st century, mutual contact among different cultures is deepening. This is bound to be accompanied by new discoveries about the degree of cultural affinity and corresponding changes in the mode of interaction. I see a need for outlooks in discussion of international relations based on recognition of these realities.