

Original Article

Open Innovation of Ski Tourism in Japan: Take the Yuzawa Area of Niigata Prefecture as an Example.

¹Cheng Chiachi

¹Asistant Professor, Tokyo University of Science, 1-3 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-8601, Japan.

Received Date: 17 May 2024

Revised Date: 27 May 2024

Accepted Date: 30 May 2024

Published Date: 13 June 2024

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the development of snow resorts in Japan with an open and innovative mind in the Yuzawa area of Niigata Prefecture, Japan. In addition to analyzing the history and policies of the development of ski resorts in the Yuzawa area, we also interviewed representatives of local hotels, ski instructors, and tourists. The study found that faced with the 90-year bubble economy and the sharp decline in the ski population, the Yuzawa area of Niigata Prefecture has developed tourism products such as skiing and various snow activities in addition to local natural and social resources. It is also equipped with a translation system and international ski instructors to attract foreign tourists. In addition, it also combines Japan Railways, package itineraries, etc., and holds Snow Festivals to attract non-skiers. Therefore, this case can be described as one of the successful cases of using innovation to establish a new ski resort area.

Keywords: Open Innovation, Ski Tourism, Sport Tourism, Internal incentives, Japan Skiing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Japan's snow resources are abundant, and almost all the area has snow opportunities. According to the information, in 2022, there are 385 snow resorts, and only 12 of the 47 prefectures do not have snow resorts. In addition, it is also known by foreign tourists as a unique JAPOW experience once in a lifetime.

Regarding the history of skiing in Japan, it was introduced from Austria in 1911 for the purpose of training the army; in 1937, skiing was civilian (the first peak ski season), and in 1947, the first cable car was built for military purposes, and in 1948 the first civilian cable car was built at Kusatsu International Ski Resort.

In the 1960s, the peak of the ski population began to emerge due to the beginning of the word leisure. In 1961, the Might Night Bus Ski Tour was released.

The Sapporo Winter Olympics Games were held in 1972. All Japan airlines launched Hokkaido ski set itineraries, and in 1974, Japan Airlines launched ski tourism with air tickets. In 1982, the entire expressway was opened to traffic; in 1983, the ski equipment home service was launched; in 1987, the "Take Me to the Ski" movie led to a boom; in 1993, the ski population peaked at 18.9 million, the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, and the subsequent collapse of the ski population due to the bubble economy. This project will examine how the Yuzawa area of Niigata Prefecture is using an open-minded and innovative mindset to overcome.

II. THE THEORY OF OPEN INNOVATION

In 2009, The Institute for Manufacturing (IFM) of the University of Cambridge proposed the concept of "open innovation process", which defines open innovation as: through the flow of targeted knowledge between organizations, promote internal and external cooperation and integration, and accelerate the speed of innovation. The main purpose is to find new technologies, acquire new capabilities, and find new ideas. The process of introducing open innovation includes four items: "culture building", "program building", "assessment of required skills", and "internal incentives", which are described as follows (Mortara, Napp, Slacik, and Minshall, 2009): Culture Building: The proposal for an open innovation process is to influence the existing organizational culture through explicit stimuli from outside the organization to achieve innovative effects (Mortara, Napp, Slacik, and Minshall, 2009). Taking the development of tourism in Japan as an example, Osamu Yamashita (2011) pointed out that the development of community tourism in Japan stems from the Japanese government's positioning of tourism as a symbol of promoting international peace and national stability. Therefore, in 2006, the Japanese government revised the "Basic Law on Tourism" enacted in 1963. It renamed it the "Basic Law for the Promotion of Tourism as a Country", clearly positioning tourism as the main axis of Japan's top policy in the 21st century. It has been implemented since January 1, 2007. Therefore, for Japan, community tourism development can realize a rich national life and is one of the best



ways to enhance its international status. Japan's overall tourism development has also begun to establish its tourism culture under the policies formulated by the government.

A) Establishment of Procedures

The Open Innovation Facilitation Group needs to have basic technical knowledge and applied thinking, as well as a deep understanding of the organization, and can promote internal and external co-development, establish formal or informal relationships, and further gather intelligence (Mortara, Napp, Slacik, and Minshall, 2009). In 2007, the Japanese government formulated the basic policy of the "Basic Plan for the Promotion of Tourism as a Nation" in order to promote tourism as a nation, which includes creating attractive and competitive tourist spots, strengthening the international competitiveness of the tourism industry, training tourism talents, boosting international tourism, and accelerating the development of the tourism environment. In addition, the Japanese government has further proposed the concept of "one region, one tourism", which is not only the policy of the central government but also hopes to make residents proud of their places of residence and create sightseeing spots that are attractive to foreign tourists, so regional tourism has become Japan's policy of international competitiveness and charm. Therefore, the formation of tourism circles mentioned in the tourism community construction practice plan must be based on each region and combined with local hardware and software facilities (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2010). It can be seen that in addition to deciding to establish a tourism nation, the Japanese government has also taken the goal of creating its own characteristics in each region to achieve the ultimate goal of establishing a tourism nation.

B) The Assessment of Required Skills

The assessment of required skill, including WFGM (want-find-get-manage), is: 1. Want: Explain what is expected and how to innovate. 2. Find: Find and understand technology and partners. 3. Get: Negotiate the content of the contract with an external partner. 4. Manage: Manage relationships through cooperation. The Tourism Community Building Practice Program is based on local characteristics as the basis of tourism strategy and combines local resources with talents of various specialties. Its purpose is to increase the number of tourists on and off the island, revitalize the local economy, improve the living environment, and respond to the tourism needs of the public. The main policies are the following nine points: Establishment of a system for attracting foreign tourists: Promoting and holding international conferences and events for foreign tourists Tourist information that meets the needs of foreign tourists, such as inviting and attracting foreign visitors to visit, providing correspondence with foreign Chinese, guide documents, and various indicators. Utilize regional resources: Local units must combine local resources to create a response to travellers' needs and Unique charm. 3. Protection and improvement of tourism resources: protection of natural and human resources, construction and maintenance of landscapes, etc. 4. Provision and promotion of tourism information: Publicize tourism information through the Internet, posters, and brochures. To the big The media or travel agencies provide tourism information, propose sightseeing products, travel centers or tours to travel agencies The setting of the customer service center, etc. 5. Talent development and professional competence in the field of tourism: knowledge improvement of tourism operators, training of tour guides, and training of all local personnel. 6. Improvement of the tourist reception system: full use of Universal Design, Make the device easy for everyone to use. At the same time, improve the quality of accommodation services and improve the transportation system. 7. Promotion of wide-area tourism: It is not only a prefecture, city or region that promotes tourism but from top to bottom. Collaborate with each other to promote tourism. 8. Cultivation of tourism groups: Cultivate and establish local tourism associations or relevant people's organizations to assist in the development of tourism. 9. Collection of tourism statistics and formulation of tourism plans: The most important thing in the implementation of policies is the arrival of tourists. The number of customers, therefore, must conduct research, collect data, and revise and formulate a future view according to the advantages and disadvantages Light Policy.

C) Internal Incentives

Open innovation is based on employees' ideas of identification with the team, encouraging the ability to think about organizational needs and integrate resources (Mortara, Napp, Slacik, and Minshall, 2009). With the declining population, an aging society, and a declining economy, it is all the more important for Japan to continue to build a nation and make effective use of human resources and tourism resources in Japan, which is facing a severe economic environment. Japan's goal in the 21st century is to revitalize the local economy, create jobs, and enhance international understanding through tourism. In order to realize a prosperous and prosperous national life, in addition to establishing a nationwide tourism policy and a subjective plan based on the basic concept of respecting and utilizing local creativity, we will also promote tourism from home and abroad by developing local communities that are vibrant and memorable for local residents and sustainable management (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, 2010).

III. RESEARCH METHODS

Documents analysis and interview methods were used in this study. The document analysis focuses on the history and policies of ski tourism development in the Yuzawa area.

Niigata Prefecture's Yuzawa is one of the biggest and most accessible ski resorts from Tokyo. In less than two hours, you can get from Tokyo Station to the hills. Some resorts in Yuzawa are open from mid-November to late May, and the area is renowned for its deep powder and lengthy season. Around Yuzawa, there are more than a dozen ski resorts with one to more than twenty lifts. Some are closer to the town center than others, but public transportation can get you to them all. Yuzawa is renowned for its onsen, or hot springs, which may be found in hotels, shinkansen stations, public bath houses, and ski areas.

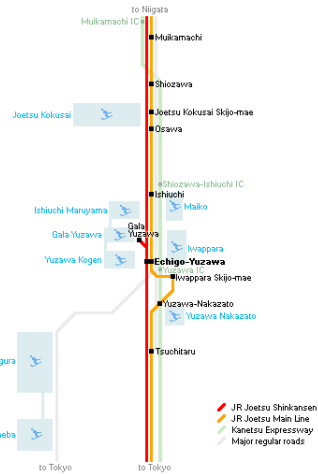


Figure 1: Ski Resorts in the Yuzawa area.

<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e7690.html>

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

As open innovation drives the development of emerging markets, the development model needs to integrate basic knowledge and applied thinking of industrial technology, have a deep understanding of the organization, and promote internal and external co-development and formal or informal relationships (Mortara, Napp, Slacik, and Minshall, 2009). The following are analyzed from four aspects: the establishment of culture, the establishment of procedures, the evaluation of required skills, and internal motivation:

A) Establishment of Culture - Maintenance and Strengthening of The Existing Tourism Industry

In the process of tourism making use of local resources, the establishment of culture starts from the obvious aspects, which in turn affects the overall tourism development atmosphere. There are 20 local ski resorts in Yuzawa, and the local set lift ticket is available so that tourists can experience skiing at different ski resorts. At the same time, in order to attract foreign tourists who want to experience skiing in Tokyo, the Shinkansen and Set Lift Ticket packages have been launched.

B) Establishment of Procedures: by Understanding the Needs of Tourists, Innovative Products

Due to the decline in the domestic ski population, experiential skiing was launched for the Asian market. Specifically, they trained foreign instructors, introduced a simultaneous translation system, and provided multilingual language ski rental services.

C) Assessment of Required Skills - Construction and Development of Emerging Markets

In recent years, the number of skiers has gradually decreased, but many foreign tourists want to see the snow, so snow activities such as banana boats, snowmobiling, and snow camping have been developed in addition to skiing. At the same time, we also hold a snow festival with our proud features. For example, the Tokamachi Snow Festival. Tokamachi, a city in the hilly heart of Niigata Prefecture, has one of the highest rates of snow in Japan; the accumulation of snow often reaches two meters or higher. This rural area has been experiencing a population decline trend, which is partially due to the hardships brought on by the heavy snowfall. In order to offset the negative effects of the high precipitation, the Tokamachi Snow Festival honors the plentiful snowfall, providing entertainment for locals and tourists alike.

Internal incentives: Cultivate emerging industries and create community tourism value

In 1991, the GALA Yuzawa Snow Resort was combined with the operation of the resort by JR employees, and the JR SkiSki program was launched in 1999; the theme song and theme advertisement were formulated every year, and posters were put up at each JR station to create a publicity effect.

V. CONCLUSION

After Japan exhaled the slogan of "one region, one characteristic", has become even more important. Yuzawa, located in the heavy snow area, is facing a bubble economy but plans to promote heavy snow and other fields to the whole of Japan and neighboring countries. As the domestic ski population declined, we began to try to expand our tentacles internationally, combining JR passes and translation systems to attract foreign skiers. Snow festivals and various snow experiences are held at the same time so that tourists who are not good at skiing can enjoy their time in the snow. From the point of view of open innovation, as shown in the figure below, the boasting of heavy snow, hot spring resources, and guesthouse resources, as well as its proximity to Tokyo and JR stations, form unique products unique to the JR partnership. At the same time, with the success of the international publicity strategy, foreign tourists are successfully attracted. Therefore, using existing resources, aiming for international tourists, and collaborating with Japan Railways, this is one of Japan's most attractive ski resorts.

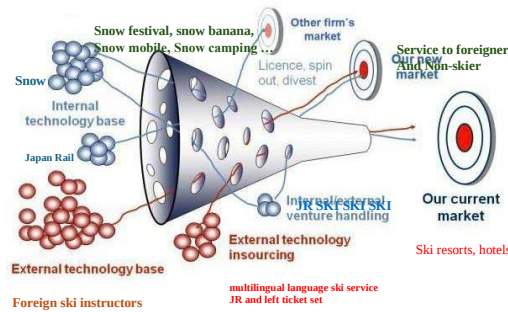


Figure 2: Innovation of ski tourism in Yuzawa

Made by author, refer from Michaël Haddad(2015) *Technology scouting: on the trail of hidden innovators*.

VI. REFERENCES

- [1] Baktygulov, S., & Raeva, D. (2010). Creating value for all: Community-based tourism. GIM Case Study No. B058. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.
- [2] Butler, R. W. (1980). The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources. *The Canadian Geographer*, 24(1), 5-12.
- [3] Gidron, Benjamin, Kramer, Ralph and Salamon, Lester, eds. 1992. *Government and the Third Sector: Emerging Relationships in Welfare States*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- [4] Chesbrough, H. (2003). *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- [5] Chesbrough, H. (2006). Open innovation: a new paradigm for understanding industrial innovation. H. Chesbrough, W. Vanhaverbeke, J. West (Eds.), *Open Innovation: Researching a New Paradigm*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2006), pp. 1-12
- [6] Mortara L., Napp J. J., Slacik L., and Minshall T. (2009). *How to Implement Open Innovation*, Cambridge University Press.
- [7] Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (April 2010, Japan). *Basic Plan for Promoting a Tourism-Oriented Nation*. October 3, 2016: <http://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/kankorikkoku/kihonhou.html>