

A Study on Post-Disaster Tourism Strategies in Osaka From the Perspective of City Public Diplomacy

LOU Minhao, WANG Junhong, LIU Yiyao

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

International metropolises are playing an increasingly important role in public diplomacy. As a result, the development model and practical path of City Public Diplomacy has become an important issue. This paper explores the relationship between urban tourism strategies and City Public Diplomacy by analyzing Osaka's post-disaster strategies for revitalizing the city's tourism industry over the past 10 years, from the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 to the impact of the New Crown epidemic. In 2011, a turning point in Japan's "tourism policy", Osaka launched its "Urban Charm Strategy" to strengthen the city's tourism infrastructure and cultural diffusion, with an emphasis on "diffusion power" in the world. In 2016, the "Urban Charm Strategy" focused on the "10 urban images" and the "power of presentation" of specific city images around the world. In 2021, the "Urban Charm Strategy" adapted to the development of the epidemic situation, pay attention to cross-cultural needs and integration, and attach importance to "attraction". The strategy of building the image of the attractive city is based on the tourism strategy, and the public diplomacy strategy in the city to construct the image of Osaka as a cultural city among the world cities.

Keywords: Osaka, tourism strategy, post-disaster, City Public Diplomacy

Introduction

As the process of globalization develops in depth and breadth, various countries and regions carry out extensive and diverse exchanges, among which City Public Diplomacy has received increasing attention. The United States proposes that public diplomacy is

a communication program initiated by the government, using radio and other means of information dissemination to understand, learn and influence the public opinion of other countries, reduce the misconceptions of the governments and people of other countries about the United States, and improve the image of the United States among foreign public and influence, thereby increasing the activities in the national interest of the United States. (U.S. Department of International Relations, 1987, p. 85)

In recent years, international metropolises have played an increasingly important role in the field of public diplomacy as a carrier of cross-cultural exchanges. Through the coordination and interaction of the city's

Fund: Research on Shanghai's urban cultural diplomacy strategy in the post-epidemic era and foreign experience for reference (XJ2022233); High-level university construction (10-22-305-396).

LOU Minhao, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China.

WANG Junhong, Ph.D. (Education), lecturer, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China. Corresponding Author.

LIU Yiyao, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China.

diplomatic resources, making full use of the platform of sister cities, and enhancing the awareness of public diplomacy, a diverse city image can be built, and then the reputation of the country it represents can be enhanced (Zhao, 2014). More and more scholars have begun to focus on the research of City Public Diplomacy strategies, and the development of diversified City Public Diplomacy has become a new type of diplomacy in the 21st century, which is an important way to shape a good national image and promote cultural export.

Urban diplomacy generally refers to diplomatic activities at the city level carried out by regional governments as the main body. Due to the late start of City Public Diplomacy in China, on the one hand, the traditional model of urban diplomacy faces challenges such as unbalanced development objects and unclear departmental responsibilities (Yang, 2015). On the other hand, City Public Diplomacy in the new era is accompanied by a multidimensional extension of the subject, target, connotation, approach, and function of diplomacy (Lai, 2015). China's City Public Diplomacy faces the challenge of rapid integration and innovation of traditional and modern City Public Diplomacy models. Currently, the practice of City Public Diplomacy in China mainly takes three forms: forming international friendship cities, participating in or holding cooperation forums, and cooperating with international organizations and international media, with an emphasis on publicizing to the people of other countries and establishing a good image of the city. Although the central government in China has consciously delegated relevant powers to localities, giving more freedom to City Public Diplomacy to meet the challenges of the new era (Zhao, 2014), it does not mean that local governments can be separated from the macro policies of the central government, but rather City Public Diplomacy based on national diplomatic strategies. For example, in the "One Belt, One Road" construction, cities can play their individual roles as support, guarantee, intermediary, think tank, and lubricant in the national strategy in a semi-official capacity (Chu & Yang, 2018). Moreover, the development of systematic and scientific communication strategies is indispensable for City Public Diplomacy in the new era. Especially under the influence of non-traditional security issues such as frequent natural disasters, energy crises, and rampant epidemics, City Public Diplomacy plays an increasingly important role in revitalizing cities that have experienced disasters and how to connect with the world and fully embody the concept of community of destiny.

City tourism is an important way to promote interpersonal communication, urban internationalization, and export of national culture, and it is also an important manifestation of the achievements of City Public Diplomacy. From the perspective of City Public Diplomacy, this paper takes Osaka (including Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City in this article) as an example, and explores the inner nature of City Public Diplomacy and urban tourism culture by examining Osaka's tourism innovation policies from the disaster to the revitalization process, and provides reference for the development of City Public Diplomacy in China.

"Tourism-Based Nation" Policy and City Public Diplomacy

Since the implementation of Japan's "Tourism-Based Nation" policy in 2003, the number of overseas visitors to Japan has generally been on the rise, except for the effects of the financial crisis in 2008 and the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 (Figure 1). In particular, the upward trend has been greater since 2011, and the number of visitors exceeded 30 million in 2019, nearly three times the number in 2011, reaching a record high since 2003. The policy of "Tourism-Based Nation" has played an important role in promoting international exchange and the development of public diplomacy in cities.

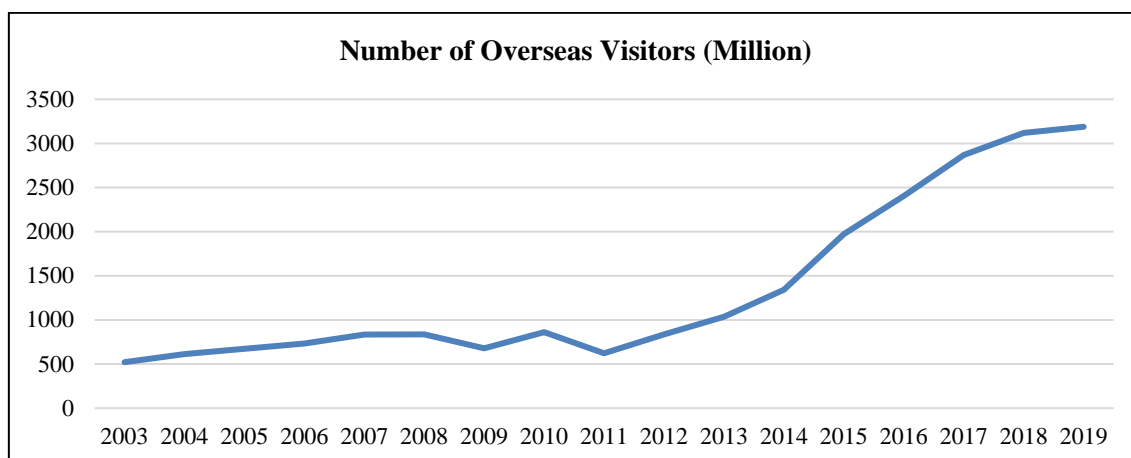


Figure 1. Number of visitors to Japan (2003-2019).

Source: Japan's Tourism Policy for With and After Corona-Japan Tourism.

The year 2011 was an important turning point for Japan's "Tourism-Based Nation" policy, as the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, and the resulting tsunami and nuclear leakage and other disasters caused a devastating blow to Japan's tourism industry. In the context of severe post-disaster reconstruction, Japan increased expenditure, strengthened cultural exchanges, and reduced taxes to boost domestic demand (Zhang & Zhu, 2020), and adjusted the development strategy of "Tourism-Based Nation". In 2012, Japan released the "Basic Plan for the Promotion of National Tourism Development (2012-2016)". As an important part of public diplomacy, Japan has re-established the image of major tourist cities through measures such as relaxing visas and systematically building tourism, thereby achieving post-disaster revitalization (Cai & Yu, 2019). Japan has built a more complete strategic framework for "Tourism-Based Nation" based on three strategic modules: supply development, organizational structure, and demand development. The strategy is characterized by a focus on local policies, the development of urban hardware and soft power, and the cultivation of skilled human resources, with the two strategic goals of developing inbound tourism and expanding domestic demand achieved through three policy reforms (Yang & Jiang, 2017). The focus of the previous "tourism-based nation-building" policy was to increase the absolute number of overseas tourists, but the results were limited due to the political situation, slow start-up of enterprises, xenophobia of the population, and high consumption levels. In the later period, the focus of the "Tourism Establishment" policy changed to focus more on developing domestic tourism, expanding domestic demand, and revitalizing disaster areas. On this basis, the Japanese government did not abandon the inbound tourism market and added several new measurement indicators to further improve the previous strategy (Dai, 2013). The focus on soft power in Japan's tourism policy actually incorporates constructivist ideas, which provides the most basic theoretical guidance for the use of public diplomacy in the field of tourism (Morozumi, 2020). With the policy of "Tourism-Based Nation" as a carrier, Japan's post-disaster urban tourism culture revitalization has provided Japan with more opportunities to promote local cultural innovation and cultural export, and City Public Diplomacy has achieved remarkable results.

Post-Disaster Tourism Strategy and City Public Diplomacy in Osaka

In 2012, Osaka proposed the "Osaka Urban Attractiveness Creation Strategy (2012-2015)" as a common strategy for prefectures and cities aiming to become a global creative city, based on the change in policy of "Tourism-Based Nation" and the basic concept of "private sector as the main focus, government as the support"

to create a charming city that will attract people, goods, and investment from around the world. This strategy is based on three basic principles: (1) to win the competition among the world's cities and build the foundation of the city's charm; (2) to develop effective activities that will move and excite people; (3) to respond to the goals and carry out strategic publicity, etc.

The tourism strategy of Osaka is closely related to the word “charm”, and its essence is to strengthen cultural construction, shape the city's image, enhance cultural confidence and cultural export, and achieve effective urban public diplomacy. The Japanese government used to use the term “diplomacy to citizens” to refer to “public diplomacy”, but it had since faded in order to avoid its semantic meaning being interpreted as brainwashing propaganda against citizens of other countries. The term “public diplomacy” is now written as “cultural diplomacy” in Japanese (Kazutaka, 2013), and Osaka's strategic policy in 2012 fully reflects the purpose and essence of public diplomacy in Japanese cities, which is cultural promotion. Osaka's post-disaster tourism strategy focuses on building a new structure to create charm, encounter charm, and spread charm from three aspects: infrastructure, events, and publicity. Among them, the creation of charm is manifested at two levels. One is creation at the individual level. It includes the renovation of infrastructure and the completion of new facilities, even the repair of the landscape, the establishment of new departments, and so on. The focus is on laying the foundation, and its object may be the scenic spots that directly generate charm, or it may only play a supporting role. The other, the focus is on innovative links between attractions. In the early days of Japan's policy of “Tourism-Based Nation”, it was mentioned that it was necessary to build a tourism circle and deepen the linkage effect between various scenic spots (Nagasawa, 2011). To create charm is to emphasize the importance of the overall connection of various regions, and to let the charm of the attractions together create an unforgettable urban image for tourists. Encountering the charm is a way to increase the contact between tourists and the charm of the city by holding events, exhibitions, and other activities. How to convey the charm to tourists, especially overseas tourists from another cultural environment? In order to eliminate their “rejection”, Osaka holds marathons, light festivals, and cycling days to provide visitors with a diverse and immersive experience of the city's charms. Finally, to spread the charm is to make tourists want to know the city through preferential policies, advertising, etc. Such policies are mostly indirect effects, reducing the sense of preaching of local cultural propaganda to tourists and increasing tourists' willingness to learn more about the city.

In the “Osaka Urban Charm Creation Strategy 2020—Accelerating the Development of Osaka as a Global Creative City and International Entertainment City” released in 2016, Osaka plans to achieve a “strong Osaka” that attracts human resources, products, and investments from within and outside of Japan, and to “showcase” its presence worldwide between 2016 and 2020. In addition, the city's image has been discussed as a means of enhancing the city's attractiveness, and 10 target city images have been proposed for tourism and urban charm, culture, sports, and internationalization (Osaka Urban Charm Creation Strategy 2020, 2016). According to data from the Japan Tourism Agency (Figure 2), a total of 17.93 million foreign tourists stayed in Osaka during 2019, ranking second in Japan after Tokyo with 29.35 million (Figure 2). Osaka also ranked second after Tokyo in the domestic tourism sector. Taking Chinese tourists as an example, 65.5% of Chinese tourists visiting Japan in 2019 will choose to visit Osaka Prefecture, far exceeding Tokyo and Kyoto Prefectures. Osaka's “Urban Charm Creation Strategy” has achieved remarkable results. Osaka's post-disaster tourism policy has boosted the goodwill of domestic and foreign tourists by showing the city's charm. This is also a successful case of City Public Diplomacy in promoting post-disaster tourism.

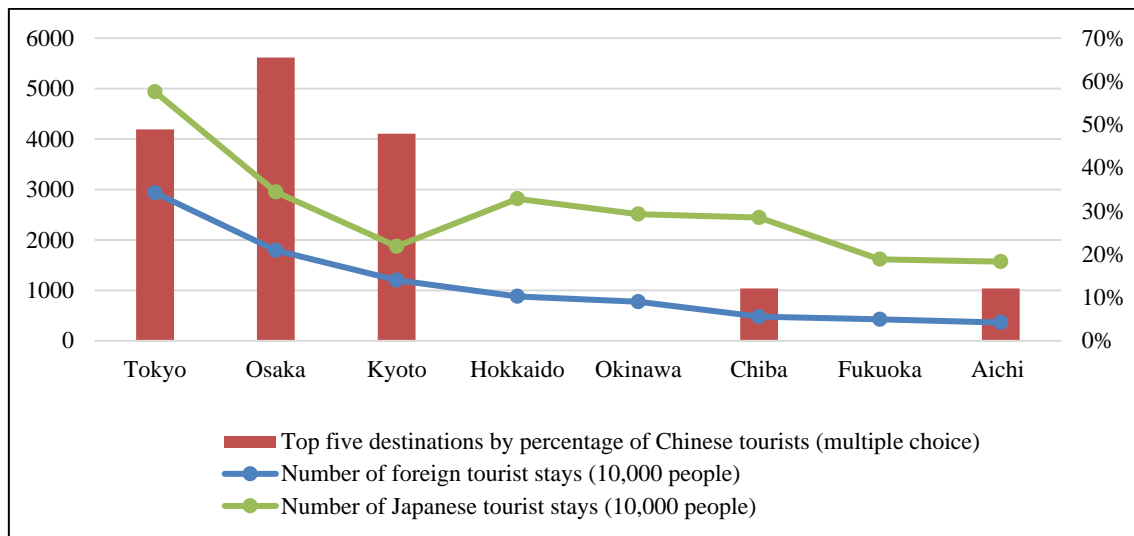


Figure 2. 2019 Japan Tourism Agency data ranking by prefecture.

Source: Japan's Tourism Policy for With and After Corona-Japan Tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has dealt a heavy blow to the tourism industry around the world. The Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) has called for reform of tourism policies in the post-epidemic era, urging companies to innovate their management capabilities, standardize their epidemic prevention policies, and develop new business models. In the face of local construction, it is calling for the development of tourism resources, the enhancement of regional attractiveness, and the development of a tourist-friendly environment to provide convenience to visitors. In response to the shortage of talents, encourage the development of domestic infectious disease specialists and translators, as well as online training for front-line personnel. As a common strategy for Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City, the “Osaka City Charm Creation Strategy (2021-2025)” launched in March 2021 once again put forward 10 goals around “constructing the image of the top ten cities”, and will plan the period from 2021 to 2025. The five-year period is divided into a “preparation period” and a “counter-offensive period”. During the period of sharp decline in inbound demand, preparations were made for the scenic spots that were unable to be repaired and developed because they were too tired to deal with tourists in the past, and during the period when the epidemic eased, attention was paid to publicity work, so that tourists can truly recognize the dividing point between the two periods. In this way, the post-pandemic urban revitalization can be achieved safely and efficiently.

Compared to the 2016 version, the 2021 version places “safety” at the top of the list of the “10 city statues”, which is an important change in the development of city tourism in the post-epidemic era. Ensuring the safety of cities, tourists, and enhancing the sense of security has become one of the key points in building a good city image, and it is also a new innovation point in the development of City Public Diplomacy (Table 1). The characteristic of Osaka's tourism policy is to preconceive the image of the city that it wants to present to tourists, and then to extend the specific policy details, which reflects the essence of the city's public diplomacy. Throughout the 10 urban image construction strategies, except for “MICE (exhibition)”, “sports”, and “education”, they are all deep constructions of subjective impressions. This is both an advantage and a challenge of Osaka's tourism policy. On the one hand, “goals” were formulated without too many restrictions on specific paths, which left more room for grassroots and non-governmental organizations to play freely. On the other hand, a high degree of liberalization implies a lack of regulation. Therefore, the degree between the overall direction

and specific policies needs to be carefully controlled. Under the macro-goal of urban public diplomacy, Osaka conducts cultural exchanges efficiently and constructs a deep and diverse cultural city image. City Public Diplomacy and tourism policy complement each other and play an important role.

Table 1

Comparison of the Image of 10 Target Cities in Osaka in 2016 and 2021

	2016	2021
1	World class City with pride	City of peace Ensure to provide passengers with a sense of security
2	Enjoy a safe and secure city of hospitality 24 hours a day	City of passion Shape a city that gives residents a sense of pride
3	Diversified human resources convergence city of tourism and MICE	City of inclusion Raise awareness abroad, understand the needs of foreign visitors and reduce their discomfort when interacting with foreign cultures
4	Diversified enjoyment A city of tours and stops	City of exhibition Build an integrated resort, a city of conventions (meetings, incentive travel, large conferences, exhibitions)
5	Proud of Osaka Cities with cultural power	City of culture Utilize existing local cultural resources and actively develop new forms of expression, so that tourists can identify with local culture
6	Accessible to all City of culture	City of art Open art exhibitions and strengthen the protection of local traditional art to convey the culture carried by local art to tourists
7	Asia's leading international professional sports city	City of sports Undertake international events, sign contracts with athletes and professional teams for publicity, and increase international popularity
8	A "city of enjoying sports" that creates health and life value	City of healthy Popularize local lifestyles and create a healthy and positive atmosphere, thereby indirectly improving tourists' favorability
9	"Global human resource development city" active in the world	City of education Transport all kinds of talents to ensure the talent demand of the tourism industry. Expand the scale of exchange students and attract overseas students to deeply experience local culture
10	A "city of diversity" nurturing innovation opportunities	City of diversity Care about the lives of foreigners living there, promote people-to-people exchanges, and develop urban diplomacy

Source: "Osaka Urban Charm Creation Strategy 2020" and "Osaka Urban Charm Creation Strategy (2021-2025)".

Conclusion

Osaka has used the domestic disaster as a point to adjust its "tourism policy" to promote post-disaster reconstruction in the city. The overall post-disaster reconstruction strategy of the city is aimed at improving cultural confidence and actively linking with the world. Through the "Urban Charm Strategy" and the comparison of the city's target image, it is found that the early stage focuses on the construction of local culture and strives to "attract". In the later period, in combination with the international situation, it will focus on the "integration" of attracted tourists. The core of Osaka's "Urban Charm Strategy" is urban public diplomacy, and the dynamic regulation of tourism policy between freedom, regulation, and disaster has contributed to the diversification of urban public diplomacy.

City Public Diplomacy has created a buffer zone between "public attitudes toward the state" and "state-to-state attitudes"—"public attitudes toward the city". Although this way of action prolongs its final effective period, it is easier to achieve cross-cultural communication. The combination of City Public Diplomacy and national

foreign policy can build cultural self-confidence, and the effect of cultural export is remarkable. However, City Public Diplomacy can only develop a locally appropriate culture if it has clearly defined its own position. For example, Shanghai's history determines its high degree of internationalization and the interweaving of Chinese and western cultures. Therefore, Shanghai's urban culture is more "inclusive" (Su & Zhu, 2016). The application of City Public Diplomacy to urban tourism is an innovation of tourism development path and an effective way to develop urban cultural self-confidence. In the post-epidemic era, Chinese cities should clarify their own city positioning and target image, implement the construction of tourism infrastructure internally, and strengthen the construction of soft power of tourism services. Externally, we need to focus on diversifying the promotional paths, increasing the number of in-depth experiential tourism activities, and making the charm of the city not only bright but also sustainable. Promote the development and innovation of City Public Diplomacy in the practice of urban public diplomacy.

References

- Cai, L., & Yu, D. Y. (2019). The model, effect and enlightenment of Japan's "tourism diplomacy" towards China. *Pacific Journal*, 27(3), 22-36.
- Chu, B., & Yang, J. Y. (2018). The power, function and mechanism of urban diplomacy from the perspective of "One Belt, One Road". *Qinghai Social Sciences*, 39(3), 47-53+87+2.
- Dai, Z. K. (2013). China's evaluation of Japan's tourism nation strategy: Considerations from political and economic perspectives. *Bulletin of Kobe Shukugawa Gakuin University*, (4), 73-85.
- Japan Tourism Agency. (2020). Japan's tourism policy for with and after Corona-Japan tourism. Retrieved from <https://www.nihon-kankou.or.jp/home/userfiles/files/20200914.pdf> (accessed on 2022.07.12)
- Kazutaka, H. (2013). Public diplomacy and a platform for the transmission of culture focusing on Japan and South Korea. *Kanagawa University Humanities Society*, (180), 1-24.
- Lai, F. (2015). The law of urban communication in the era of globalization: The perspective of public diplomacy. *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 44(3), 51-58.
- Morozumi, T. (2020). A study on the growth and development of Japan's "Tourist Diplomacy" (Doctoral dissertation, Jilin University, 2020).
- Nagasawa, A. (2011). Problems of Public Nature and Public Diplomacy in a Tourism-Oriented Nation [J]. *Journal of International Studies*, 24(2), 105-118.
- Osaka urban charm creation strategy 2020. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/attach/18716/00000000/strategy2020.pdf> (accessed on 2022.08.09)
- Su, P., & Zhu, X. G. (2016). Path selection of public diplomacy in an international metropolis in Shanghai. *Social Sciences*, 37(4), 13-29.
- U.S. Department of International Relations. (1987). *Dictionary of international relations terms*.
- Wang, K., & Zhao, H. Y. (2018). An analysis of the functional path of City Public Diplomacy: The case of Beijing. *Regional and Global Development*, 2(4), 55-72+156-157.
- Yang, Y. (2015). China's urban diplomacy from a global perspective. *Theoretical Horizon*, 22(8), 70-73+88.
- Yang, Q. F., & Jiang, L. (2017). Dynamic analysis of Japan's national tourism strategy and its enlightenment. *Research on Japanese Issues*, 31(3), 44-51.
- Zhao, K. J. (2014). Embedded diplomacy: A theoretical explanation of Chinese urban diplomacy. *World Economics and Politics*, 28(11), 135-154+160.
- Zhao, Q. Z. (2014). Public diplomacy and intercultural communication. *Shanghai Culture*, 28(6), 4-5.
- Zhang, C., & Zhu, K. (2020). Enlightenment of foreign post-disaster measures to the revitalization of tourism after the new crown epidemic. *Journal of Harbin Vocational & Technical College*, 31(3), 79-81.