

Vocational school and University

Great

“Cycle of happiness by Mensore(Welcome)”

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Ladies and Gentlemen, do you like Okinawa? I like this place very much.

What do you think about the attractiveness of Okinawa? Ocean, nature, streets, Okinawan, sightseeing spots, cuisine, slow pace of time, warm climate, relaxing feelings...

When I give more examples, there is much attractiveness in Okinawa. Indeed, among the tourists visiting Okinawa, about 80% of them have visited before. For tourism in Okinawa, continuous visitors play a very important role. However, for those who visit Okinawa for the first time, if they do not want to visit Okinawa again, it does not lead to any gain in the number of repeaters. In order to have more repeaters, not the ordinary sightseeing spots, but Okinawan's hospitality and the charm of each region is important. Nevertheless, if it is just a sightseeing tour, no matter how many times they visit, it is a repeat of the same thing every time. It should be a tour that includes communication with local residents and participation of events that are only held during the period they visit that is a trip of once in a lifetime. Besides, the stage is not artificial ones like a theme park, but a region full of the charms of Okinawa. Okinawa has the culture of Japan, and the fusion of foreign cultures, including those from China. It has a very rare and unique culture. Although it is a part of Japan, the culture of the Ryukyu Kingdom still remains, and it is a valuable resource that cannot be experienced if one does not come to Okinawa. If we make use of the culture and vitalize it, it is possible for us to protect local traditions, while tourists can experience the culture of Okinawa. From the fact that tourists come, I think we would find our own culture splendid and irreplaceable once again. This type of tourism is called “community-based tourism”, which has attracted much attention in recent years.

More specifically, it is to let the local residents and tourists enjoy and participate together in the local events or annual events. There are also big events such as Hurley and tug-of-war in Okinawa. When tourists visit places closed to local livelihoods, such as market and fishing, they can experience a completely different form of living. There are a lot of interesting cultures like “Eisa dance” and “Michi-june dance” that cannot be found in the other regions. I want more people to know that Okinawa is a "multi-resort" that allows cultural experiences with rich natural environment, and even water sports.

In addition, what I would like to propose further, is that while the culture and heritage of the past of course has to be preserved, we also make use of the modern trend to advertise tourism in Okinawa. For example, we can use the mobile applications to make a new marketing strategy for tourism. Recently, nearly everyone has owned a smartphone such as iPhone and various kinds of apps have been used. There is a unique approach that uses a mobile app. In Haeburu town, an app called "Haeburu Town Tourism Navi" is provided to the tourists. It is a navigation app that guides you to the heritage attractions in Haeburu town, and can be downloaded for free to your smartphone.

When you are near a certain spot that has been registered, the distance of it from the current position and its name will be displayed on the screen. Furthermore it will provide route guidance for driving and walking, so tourists may explore the Haeburu town by just using the app. In addition, stamp-collecting activity is held in Haeburu town. Visitors can get souvenir when participate and take a picture in a photo frame that has the character of the town. The app is full of attractiveness of Haeburu Town. It is a strategy that serves as a very good example of advertising our own region.

Moreover, in some of the other apps, there are many that can process the photos taken on your own and make it like as if it was taken a by photographer. And if a photo contest is organized by making use of the photo-editing app, when people see the photos, they may think, " I also wanna go to Okinawa!" It is also possible to publish the results of the contest by SNS such as Facebook. As there is an old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words", I think it is very effective to tell people the

goodness of Okinawa visually. I think it is important in Okinawa tourism in the future, that we discover the charms in each region, match them with the era, preserve them, and tell them to our guests with a positive attitude.

Lastly, I think it is of utmost importance that we Okinawans have the heart of hospitality saying "Thank you for coming to Okinawa". It is because the visitors have chosen Okinawa from a number of other destinations. Okinawans together with the visitors become lovers of Okinawa with the heart of "Mensore" (Welcome), and increase the number of fans!