

Vocational school and University

Excellent

“Let’s promote towards Chinese businessmen to Okinawa”

3<sup>rd</sup> Year, Okinawa International University by Baihou Ko

This is my fourth year that I have come to Okinawa. As I have lived in Okinawa longer, I have become to like Okinawa more. I admire Okinawa from my heart as a resident, not as a foreigner, and wish that the Okinawan tourism industry develops. Although Okinawa is recognized as an island of the U.S. bases, it has recently been regarded as a tourist resort. The most attractiveness of Okinawa tourism is “the blue ocean” and “the blue sky”. Especially, the ocean in Okinawa that is surrounded by coral reefs is considered as one of the best beautiful oceans in the world. Summer is the best season that many young people and families come to enjoy scuba diving and other marine sports in Okinawa. Okinawa is the only place in Japan where it has subtropical maritime climate all year round so it is warm weather that we can see the shiny green and flowers even in winter.

According to Cabinet Office, Government of Japan in 2011, Okinawa Prefecture aims to attract a million tourists from abroad in the fiscal year 2016 through Visit Okinawa Plan. However, the proportion of the international visitors accounted for five and a half percent of all visitors to Okinawa (about three hundred thousand visitors from overseas in the fiscal year 2011) and it is the task to increase the numbers of visitors for Okinawa. They also emphasized on some points through the strategy of the key international regions (Taiwan, Korea, China, and Hong Kong) for Okinawa, that was established by the government in the fiscal year 2009, that they needed some promotions at each key region and new project to get international visitors from a new market with the U.S., and also need to prepare for receiving independent tourists from China.

In 2011, the Japanese government decided to issue multiple entry visas for Chinese tourists visiting Okinawa Prefecture so that not only the wealthy-class people, but also the middle-class citizens are able to travel to Japan independently.

In March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, Ie Tan, who is a Chinese blogger, published on the Chinese blog site, “It will become common for Chinese businessmen to earn three hundred thousand Chinese Yuan as a monthly salary.”

He has predicted that the businessmen’s salaries in the middle classes will increase the same level as Japan within twenty to thirty years in the future. In fact, the businessmen’s salaries rose by thirty percent due to the effect of a rapid increase of the salaries in China last year. When viewed in the long-term perspective, the tourist industry in Okinawa will contribute to the economic aspects if they try to attract Chinese businessmen to Okinawa.

On the other hand, Okinawa is not widely known as a tourist destination to the Chinese citizens whereas Chinese mainland citizens are well advertised towards

Taiwan and Hong Kong. In fact, Okinawa is relatively unknown compared with other tourist destinations in Japan. Firstly, they need to publicize the tourist information of Okinawa by using the Internet and the social media such as the SNS site and Facebook, which are popular with Chinese businessmen, because they frequently find information using the Internet. As the average Chinese monthly wage grows, many people of today are under some sort of stress through complicated human relationships or fatigue from a competitive society. If they find the opportunity to be able to live the slow life in Okinawa with the images of Okinawa such as ‘the blue sky’, ‘the blue ocean’ and ‘healing islands’, the number of Chinese businessmen could increase.

Secondly, Okinawa may need to emphasize on an advertising campaign, such as promotion with Chinese actors and singers as a poster boy/girl for the campaign, to attract foreign tourists. In fact, there was a successful case that attracted Chinese tourists to Japan a sightseeing tour organized in northeast Japan for four nights through a promotion campaign with Hu Bing. There was huge response to the promotion that the capacity of a hundred sixty tickets was already sold out in a week. Furthermore, one dinner show in Sendai was very successful with a great cheer from the audience of Chinese females. Therefore, Okinawa may succeed in attracting more Chinese visitors if they try to promote well-known Chinese actors and singers through advertisements in the TV and the Internet of China, and also publicize the tourist information by Chinese in the Okinawa tourist information sites.

Thirdly, the airline companies in Japan may need to offer a direct flight to international airports such as Wuhan, Amoy and Tsingtao as well as the major international airports in Beijing and Shanghai in order to increase Chinese visitors. It will be more convenient for Chinese travelers who have limited time for their holidays if direct flights were available, as it would increase the leisure time of their visit. Although there are still some problems about the international flights from Okinawa to abroad, the issues have been solved dramatically compared to last year. For example, China Eastern Airlines have increased the number of flights per week from four to seven this year and a tie-up tour also has been promoted by the airlines. The sales of the Royal Caribbean cruise in July 2012 also rose so that it may be expected to continue to increase in the future if the tour is promoted to secondary international airports as well.

Fourthly, it could be better if Okinawa promotes a special service to Chinese tourists. For example, South African Airways offers a cabin attendant who can speak Chinese at the direct flight to Beijing in order to offer better service to them. Singapore Airlines also provides the entertainment systems with the instruction manuals by Chinese for the Chinese passengers. ANA (All Nippon Airways) has established a Chinese homepage and offers the online booking for them to attract Chinese businessmen who use the Internet frequently. The local residents of Okinawa also need to get ready for receiving visitors from China. If there is a Chinese menu at restaurants in Kokusai-Dori (street), Chinese travelers can choose their favorite dishes. Furthermore, the bus timetables and information which are translated into Chinese, and banking systems such as ATM and foreign currency exchange are also required to improve urgently.

Finally, Okinawa may need to take positive action to attract and promote the islands as a movie filming location. For instance, the movies' titles like "Ryukyu Kingdom" or "The healing islands Okinawa" and the story, which are related to Okinawa, is dramatized as a serial drama and may also bring economic benefits. In fact, there is a success case that the long-running TV series "Ryoma Den (the legend of Ryoma)" contributed to attracting tourists to the region where it shot the scenes as well as his hometown. Furthermore, if Okinawa promotes sports events for cultural tourism to overseas through nature in Okinawa, Chinese businessmen who like watching sports will increase.

Okinawa has relaxing and beautiful natural scenery as well as a unique culture and the warmth of the residents may achieve the Visit Okinawa Plan if they try to promote tourism to the key regions in Asia and prepare to receive Chinese businessmen who are predicted to grow in the tourist market.