

## Tokyo 2020: a legacy or lethargy for tourism?

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### Abstract

Since 2013 when Tokyo won the bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games, tourism has been at the centre of the legacy the city hopes the Games can help build. To date however the countdown to 2020 has been mired in controversy. Not only have the international circumstances surrounding sport been particularly turbulent, but a series of high profile domestic blunders have cast a shadow over some of Tokyo's Olympic bid promises. Internationally, Tokyo has also been widely criticized for its lack of world-class facilities for visitors, its poor language human resources and its faith in the supposed superiority of Japan's hospitality ethos.

After detailing the international situation concerning the Olympics since 2013, this research paper discusses whether 3 key elements of Japan's tourism industry (accommodation, human resource language skills, and hospitality (*omotenashi*)) are ready to welcome the 40 million visitors targeted as part of the strategy for a tourism legacy for Tokyo 2020.

**Keywords:** *Olympic Games, legacy, inbound tourism, language skills, omotenashi, internationalization*

Cited as “a safe pair of hands” by president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Jacques Rogge, the announcement of Tokyo's as the host for the 2020 Olympic Games was ecstatically greeted by Japanese delegates present at the IOC Buenos Aires ceremony August in 2013. The nomination was welcomed equally enthusiastically by the Japanese public and the country's government, the latter holding it up as a tangible indication of Japan's global intentions and a strong pillar on which to support its plan for an economy based on inbound tourism. In the three years since the Buenos Aires announcement, it is the belief that the 2020 Games can play a role in Japan's inbound tourism industry that has endured. How realistic is this belief, and is Japan ready to accept the 40 million visitors it now targets as part of Tokyo's 2020 strategy? By examining key tangible and intangible factors relevant to tourism development and sporting mega-events (Guala and Turco, 2007) this research paper attempts to assess this question and in doing so indicate whether tourism lethargy or tourism legacy will be the result of Tokyo 2020.

## 1. Global mega event, global issues

Tokyo's bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games was based on a solid platform of cost effectiveness, honesty and - as Rogge's comments highlighted - reliability. Over the years successive Olympic Games have been accused of being over politicized (Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984), cost ineffective (Barcelona 1992, Athens 2004), or of having a poor record of legacy creation (Beijing, 2008), however in its bid Tokyo together with TOCOG (Tokyo Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games) promised 2020 will overcome the problems of its predecessors and produce a "new type" Olympic Games by offering a "low risk", "compact" mega-event (TOCOG, 2013) with a strong tourism legacy (Ritchie, 2000). However given the inevitable social, economic and political changes (Lee and Taylor, 2005) in the period between the bid winning and holding of the Olympics, how realistic are these promises? This paper will consider these key issues and look at the impact on the key strategic arm of Tokyo 2020, tourism. Now, three years into its role as the Games organizing committee, TOCOG has already had to deal with an unenviable list of sporting scandals, organizational mismanagement, and widespread criticism that have distracted its focus from any legacy goals.

Despite the initial euphoria that greeted the 2013 Buenos Aires IOC announcement, concerns were soon voiced from both inside and outside Japan relating to safety in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Outside Japan there was concern for the safety of the Daiichi nuclear plant while inside the country it was suggested that it was "immoral" for Japan to hold the Olympics whilst the disaster clean up was still ongoing (McNeil, 2013). Adding to this ethical dilemma of holding the Games, a Japan Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, White Paper (2014) indicated that Tokyo's infrastructure-including its sporting facilities-lacked the convenience and modernity worthy of an Olympic Games host city. TOCOG had in fact already identified some of the city's tangible inadequacies including the 1960s era *kokuritsukyogijo* (Olympic Stadium), and after its demolition accepted a bid for a new stadium from a UK based architectural firm for the hub of the "compact" games it promised. However, as criticism of the design and cost spread, the new stadium proposal was unceremoniously cancelled. The stadium issue has been largely resolved and design and construction work on the *second* newly proposed, (and, cheaper), locally designed stadium has already begun.

The stadium issue alone would not have been sufficient for Tokyo 2020 to attain the level of global controversy it has acquired outside the sporting world. Indeed the issue has been just one of a sequence of high profile concerns to plague Tokyo 2020's preparations since 2013. At the same time as the stadium issue was being discussed claims of "suspicious payments" of \$5m by TOCOG to a bank account in Singapore for "consultation services" were leveled (BBC, 2016a), tarnishing Tokyo's reputation of integrity. Although a Japanese panel has subsequently found no wrongdoing, the case is,

at the time of writing still under investigation. Although serious, the issues surrounding these payments have been eclipsed by unprecedented sporting revelations.

In the summer of 2015, the world of athletics – a key part of any successful Olympics – was thrown into turmoil by claims of widespread doping amongst leading athletes. Thus while the 2015 Beijing World Championships were in progress, athletics was forced to confront the question: Which athletes are “clean” (i.e. not doping), and which athletes are taking performance enhancing drugs? After lengthy investigations, Russian athletes were purged by the International Athletics Federation and a major rehabilitation of Russian athletics will be necessary if the country is to return to international competition in time for 2020. The doping scandal came soon after the globally broadcasted 2014 trial and homicide conviction of former South African ParaOlympic poster boy Oscar Pistorius. Athletics and the Olympics were being discussed in many circles other than sporting ones.

Then in 2015, world football was rocked to its foundations as its governing body, FIFA, tackled revelations of pervasive corruption, mismanagement and nepotism. As an indirect consequence, upcoming World Cup hosts Russia (2018), and Qatar (2022) may still their privileged status removed; and with the directorship of the organization being investigated for criminal charges, FIFA as an organization faces an unclear future.

While Russia’s actions were being questioned and the world of football was in crisis, Rio de Janeiro’s preparations for 2016 were in the media’s spotlight. The news from Rio was not good. IOC Vice president John Coates was a typical damning voice calling the city’s readiness the “worst ever” (Gibson, 2014), while severe pollution in Guanabara Bay led *the Washington Post* (Philips, 2015) to condemn the Brazilian hosts and suggest that organizers should move some events outside the city. Olympic tourists were also cautioned against visiting Brazil due to an outbreak of the Zika virus.

Normally it would have been possible for Tokyo to have swept aside these global news stories as an irrelevancy since, with the possible exception of the “suspicious payments”, none of them related directly to the management or conduct of the city’s Olympic bid or its preparations. Indeed Tokyo could have *used* such news to its advantage to further an “integrity” platform while providing evidence for the city’s “new” and “safe” direction for the 2020 Games. However, further revelations in Japan were to cast additional doubt on Tokyo’s competency to host the global tourism mega-event.

Soon after the UK designed stadium was cancelled in 2014 questions were asked about the provenance of the official Tokyo 2020 logo. The claims were serious: the Japanese design firm commissioned to create the emblem was accused of plagiarizing the work of a Belgian arts festival and rebranding it for Tokyo 2020. The Japanese media highlighted the story for several weeks, exposing TOCOG to additional criticism and further damaging Tokyo’s integrity platform. The alleged plagiarized logo was removed and a nationwide public competition held to design a new emblem which was finalized in 2016. As a result of the stadium and logo episodes the sports minister Hakubin

Shimomura resigned his position and, to appease voters' sensibilities, even returned part of his salary.

Finally, at the end of 2016 increasing concern was voiced over the rising costs of holding 2020 (currently calculated as ¥3 trillion). This has led to suggestions that Tokyo may need to seek budgetary assistance from other prefectures and/or locate some Olympic events outside the city: action that would severely compromise the key concept of a "compact" Games. TOCOG has responded by claiming that any relocation of events would be to places such as those damaged by the 2011 earthquake and that could benefit from an injection of Olympic funds.

Although apparently intangible to the success of Tokyo 2020, the global events described above have had a very tangible effect on the image of TOCOG, the Olympics themselves, and by association Tokyo's ability to be a successful host. It seems almost certain that there will be further episodes that could tarnish Tokyo's Olympic strategic preparations and question the pronouncement that Tokyo is a "safe pair of hands".

## 2. The irony of the Japanese inbound tourism boom

While Tokyo's preparations for 2020 have taken on a negative global narrative (e.g. BBC, 2016b; BBC, 2015; BBC, 2013) which we might expect would reduce the city's attractiveness as a place to visit, the great irony for Japanese tourism is that in the years since the Buenos Aires vote, inbound tourism has grown rapidly. Despite the dramatic decline in inbound tourist numbers to Japan in 2011 to just 6.8 million, a remarkable recovery helped record more than 10 million arrivals just two years later. International arrivals have subsequently grown more than three-fold in the 5 years since 2011 to stand at an expected 24 million in 2016. This unprecedented growth has forced the target-conscious Japanese government to increase its inbound tourism forecasts *twice* in the last 2 years with the 20 million target set in 2013 for 2020 raised to 30 million in 2015 and, and then again, to 40 million in 2016. At the same time there has been a shift in emphasis by the central government to attract foreign visitors to the hinterlands of Japan (*Kankohakusho*, 2016).

Based on the experience of previous Olympic host cities, notably Barcelona, Sydney, Athens, and Beijing, the high growth trajectory described above for Japan's previously sluggish inbound tourism is not to be unexpected since hosting the Olympics can act as a fillip for visits in the years before the Games (Getz, 2008; Lee and Taylor, 2005). Whether this momentum can be maintained in the years after 2020 is the key to a tourism legacy but evidence suggests this can be difficult to achieve (Boukas, Ziakas and Boustra, 2013; Guana and Turco, 2007; Ritchie, 2000). One counter-intuitive issue Tokyo needs to take into account is that evidence from Barcelona, Athens and London indicates a *fall* in visitor numbers can be expected in the Olympic year itself (Pyo et al, 1988). This is very much at odds with the discourse of conventional wisdom in Japan.

The dramatic growth in inbound tourism to Japan since 2011 and notably since 2013 has highlighted many issues for Japan as it aims to welcome more foreign visitors as part of its Olympic hosting strategy. Questions concerning Japan's tangible tourism infrastructure, and intangible tourism services have now come to the center of the Olympic debate. Even if Japan is ready to welcome the Olympic athletes with state of the art stadia, sporting facilities and spectators, is it really ready to welcome the targeted 40 million international visitors it seeks?

### 3. The issues and limitations of this essay

Tourism is an interdisciplinary field of study and consequently to fully assess the possible tourism legacy resulting from hosting the Olympic Games would require an exhaustive inquiry into all manner of official, public and academic documentation. As a "desk top" research drawing on sources readily available such a goal is not the purpose of the current essay. Instead, rather than attempt to consider all those elements that a legacy document might cover (see TOCOG, 2013) it is the intention here to take a more journalistic approach by discussing those areas of the Tokyo 2020 debate that can be found in the public domain: accommodation provision; *omotenashi*, Japan's hospitality doctrine; and English language in hospitality. In this way it is hoped the current paper can be accessible and relevant to a wide audience of professionals and academics alike.

### 4. 1964 and 2020, international tourism and Olympic tourism

Japan last hosted the Olympic Games in 1964 and at that time offered newly built infrastructure, purpose-built modern accommodation for athletes, and an apparently unique hospitality in *omotenashi*. In many respects preparations for 2020 have mirrored those of 1964 as Tokyo builds new sporting facilities, upgrades infrastructure and emphasizes its service culture. However, the circumstances of international travel and tourism and the legacy Tokyo hopes to fulfill in 2020 are very different to those of 50 years ago. In 1964 international travel outside Western Europe was relatively rare and inter-continental travel was for the privileged class alone. Nowadays however, transcontinental and inter-continental travel have become largely democratized, and inexpensive movement between continents is seen as a right for all. Accordingly preparations for the 2020 Olympics will need to take on a different form to those in 1964.

It is not only international or inter-continental tourism that have expanded beyond recognition in the last 50 years. With respect to sporting mega-events, international tourism for the purpose of *attending* such events is now a much sought-after part of that expansion (UKDCMS, 2013) with tourism a key tool for economic development. Such purpose for travel is nevertheless a relatively recent phenomenon

as the limited efforts to integrate the 2002 World Cup into an inbound tourism strategy show. Incredibly just 14 years ago the *kankou hakusho* (Japan's official government white paper) failed to make World Cup 2002 the most important strand of its official printed strategy (*kankou hakusho* 2000, 2001). Equally there was no explicit reference about how to use the event for "legacy".

Now however, as Prada (2016) has shown at Rio 2016, travel for the purpose of going to the Olympic Games *as a spectator* is a recognizable phenomenon in a host country's tourism statistics. It was similarly recognized in 2012 in London (UKDCMS, 2013) and suggests that if used strategically, the Olympic Games can boost tourist numbers and encourage the development of dedicated *tourist* (as well as Olympic) infrastructure, facilities and services. In turn this allows for a long-term legacy to endure (Ritchie, 2000).

#### 4a. Accommodation in Tokyo

Accommodation is a key tangible component to any country's tourist infrastructure. While Olympic competitors are housed in exclusive 'Athlete Villages', Olympic tourists have to choose from the existing hotel stock and endure any limitations it may present in terms of quality or quantity. Is Tokyo's hotel stock ready to accept the targeted number of tourists expected in 2020?

Looked at from outside Japan, Tokyo is popularly portrayed as a world-class, modern city with first class infrastructure and facilities. Evidence suggests however this may not be the case. According to the Nomura Institute (2015) after 20 years of economic stagnation, investment in Tokyo has been "neglected" and the need for the city's rebuilding is "urgent". Hotel stock in Tokyo is also suffering and several, independent reports reach similar conclusions: the quality of hotels in Tokyo is "average" and the number of bed-nights is "insufficient" for the number of visitors expected by 2020. These negative conclusions are supported by a 2014 report by Jones, Lang, and Lasalle (hereafter, JLL) that highlighted the need to boost Tokyo's currently available 98,000 bed-nights. The JLL report points to the planning and construction of new hotel stock amounting to 7,500 bed-nights but even the resulting available 105,500 bed-nights falls short of the 116,000 that London offered in 2012, and is considerably less than the 172,000 offered by Beijing in 2008. Even a more optimistic survey by the CBRE (2016), the world's largest commercial real estate services firm, which indicates a 20% increase in hotel stock in Tokyo by 2018, suggests the increase will be insufficient to transform Tokyo into a city that can handle 40 million visitors.

Not only is the quantity of hotel space available in Tokyo considered to be below par, but the *quality* of the hotel stock also falls below expectation. Research by Swiss Global Enterprise (2014) has indicated Tokyo needs to refurbish its hotel stock in order to raise the visitor experience to an international standard. This has already begun at hotels such as the high profile Hotel Okura where extensive renovations are taking place prior to 2020 (Japan Times, 2014) and nationwide, other

high-end hotels such as the Grand Prince Hotel Kyoto have followed the Hotel Okura's lead with similar initiatives (Sankei News, 2016). These improvements notwithstanding what remains unclear is whether such refurbishment is a form of gentrification - thus making hotel stock more exclusive - or whether it will increase the availability of accommodations suitable for general tourists after the Olympic visitors have gone home. The issue of gentrification has been exacerbated recently by the *hoteru sensou* ('hotel wars') between Japanese and foreign owned hotel chains such as *Four Seasons* that has led to greater supply of high-end hotel bed nights in Tokyo (Business Journal, 2014).

To counteract this apparent trend towards more luxury hotel accommodation, and probable price-gouging (i.e. charging a premium) during the Olympics, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and TOCOG have established a committee with hotel groups to ensure that room rate rises often associated with mega-tourism events like the Olympics are not seen in Tokyo. Citing the 250% mark up on accommodation in Beijing and London in 2008 and 2012 respectively, although JLL (2014) suggest that such market driven imperatives are "inevitable" the TMG/TOCOG collaboration suggests a more equitable solution is possible. At the same time, the informal accommodation sector characterized by the peer-to-peer on-line accommodation supply platform *Airbnb* may offer some help to those on modest travel budgets. Nevertheless, with fewer than 21,000 such accommodations available in Tokyo (Japan Times, 2015b) the scope for accommodating an additional 20 million visitors above current levels appears to be limited.

In spite of these arguments, some commentators have suggested that hotel stock may *in fact be* sufficient for 2020. This is because evidence indicates inbound visitor numbers tend to *fall* in Olympic host cities in the year of the Games. Both JLL (2014), and the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2013) show that in Beijing despite increased *spending* by tourists during the Olympics - possibly due to higher hotel tariffs - the *number* of visitors *declined by 7%* in 2008. By contrast, a similar 5% fall in the number of visitors to London during 2012 was accompanied by *lower* overall tourism receipts. If we factor in domestic visits, JLL show Beijing experienced a damaging 19% fall in hotel occupancy in 2008. This final figure should be of particular interest to Tokyo where the majority of bed-nights are taken by domestic leisure and business travel.

The relationship between inbound tourist numbers, the demand for hotel stock, and economic benefit during the Olympics is thus complex and not one that can be calculated in a simple linear manner. To this end, TOCOG is working together with the London Olympic Legacy Committee to better understand likely accommodation needs for Tokyo up to and after 2020 (*Kankohakusho*, 2013). Swiss Global Enterprise suggests even closer collaboration is preferable, recommending Tokyo "copy-paste" the London 2012 Olympic concept to the Tokyo 2020 strategic plan. Such action will be vital if Tokyo is to have tangible evidence of sufficient accommodation for all its visitors in 2020.



#### 4b. “Omotenashi” Japanese hospitality and service

As the previous section indicates the refurbishment and expansion of Japan’s hotel stock is vital if Japan is to develop its inbound tourism capability in readiness for 2020. This refurbishment should not only be for tangibles like bed-nights or hotel stock but should extend to an overhaul of intangible assets of service and hospitality, or as it is known in Japan, *omotenashi*.

Currently receiving renewed focus *omotenashi* is a Japanese form of hospitality in which the host goes out of his/her way (or as critics might argue *appears to go out of his/her way*) for the satisfaction of the guest. It is a no questions asked, indulgence of the guest by the host who provides service or hospitality in a ‘mother knows best’ manner. To the visitor to Japan *omotenashi* may indeed be something different or unique, but as the number of visitors to Japan rises and new demands are made of service culture it is important to ask is *omotenashi* what every visitor to Japan actually wants?

*Omotenashi* holds an elevated status in the world of hospitality and there is a strong belief in Japan that since it is inherently ‘a good thing’ it does, by definition, cater to the individual customer’s need. However it has also been suggested that the ‘we know what is good for you’ ethos of *omotenashi* can make it appear to be an arrogant approach to hospitality (Japan Times, 2015a). Critics claim protagonists of *omotenashi* unwittingly provide the service *they* want to give rather than listening to or understanding what the customer (tourist) really wants or expects. As tourism becomes more focused on offering customized hospitality (i.e. responding to the needs of the customer) the need for greater communication between the host and guest is vital (Smart, 2014). Such communication is also key to developing a positive host experience and help in creating an environment repeat visitors want to share (Guala and Turco, 2007). *Omotenashi* may therefore need to change.

*Omotenashi*’s arrogance can be seen to extend to cultural assets that lack interpretation (language or otherwise) for non-Japanese. In this sense *omotenashi* can be seen as insular, or even divisive (Japan Times, 2015a) since it does not open access to the visitor. *Omotenashi* has also been charged with deflecting tourists’ attention away from the lack of real tourist attractions in Japan. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics committee’s strategy of choosing 34 ‘selected’ females to provide so-called *omotenashi* to visiting dignitaries is a historical case in point; that two of the 34 females were the then Prime Minister’s daughters only serves to confirm *omotenashi*’s exclusivity (Yomiuri, 2016).

A second issue concerning service in Japan is its low productivity ratio. Writing for *Bloomberg*, Takahashi (2015) indicates that hospitality and the observance of ritual (i.e. *omotenashi*) is a key reason for Japan’s productivity being the lowest of all G-7 economies. *Omotenashi* offers a service at no monetary cost, and thus any expense is transferred such that it reduces productivity. For example, if staff stop work for two or three seconds to formally welcome customers by saying *irashaimase* over the course of a day the action will have an economic cost in terms of lost time and hence lower productivity. If Japan is to successfully welcome 40 million visitors in 2020 the issue of how to



monetize such loss will be necessary. This is a controversial and sensitive topic for Japan's pride in its gratuity-free society, however it is an issue that will need to be tackled if the service industry is to improve workforce productivity. The greater use of technology in the service industry may also help to modernize *omotenashi* but may not be a universal solution for the many small-scale operations that typify Japan's business environment.

Although *omotenashi* may be a curiosity for visitors and a USP to Japanese tourism marketing, as standards become more uniform, strict adherence to an *omotenashi* manual may put up barriers to the economic expansion and potential of tourism in Japan. Critical debate of *omotenashi* may not be welcomed in Japan, but it is a discussion that needs to be had if the country is to best consider how to serve non-Japanese for whom the foreign *omotenashi* may be incomprehensible or even undesirable.

#### 4c. Human resource language skills

One tangible skill all service industry employees serving international guests need is the ability to speak a foreign language. In Japan, although Chinese speaking tourists outnumber English speakers by more than 10 to 1, it is English not Chinese that is the international language of hospitality service. Thus if Japan is to create a tourism legacy, English language knowledge amongst hospitality employees is not an option but a necessity.

Even though the Japanese learn English for 6 years in school and often for at least one additional year at tertiary level, English-speaking skills in Japan are among the lowest in the developed world. Currently, Japan ranks 35 out of 70 nations on the English Proficiency Index (EF, 2016) and is placed in the lowest 20% of achievers for both the TOEIC and TOEFL tests of English (ETS, 2015). Repeated efforts to internationalize language education including: the introduction of government sponsored language assistants in secondary schools in the late 1980s; the expansion of international exchanges; and the growth of educational facilities to develop internationally minded service industry-focused human resources have met with limited success over the last 30 years. Moreover, in spite of the more widespread availability of international scholarships, students have largely shunned opportunities to study abroad. These circumstances have led to serious consequences for the hospitality industry in Japan in recent years as the need for language skills - in particular English - has reached a premium.

A study by Iwai (2010) into English language use and its training in the Japanese hotel industry demonstrates the general trend throughout hospitality in Japan: a lack of skilled personnel, a lack of training, and a lack of prioritizing foreign languages. The 2010 study found that although 84% of Japanese hotels claimed they *needed* English language training only 23% were actually *providing* any. Possibly due to cost imperatives, it was only the larger hotels that made provision for such training. Iwai also showed that hotels tend to lack initiative in promoting language training and rather than

improving the language skills of all employees through training, only give work requiring foreign language skills to a limited number of dedicated *existing* staff. As a footnote to the study's findings it is instructive to note that Iwai received a response rate to the research questionnaire of just 20%. This supports the notion that there is considerable apathy towards the development of employee language capabilities in Japanese hotels.

In addition to foreign language ability, cross-cultural competence is also highly desirable for employees in front-office tourism positions. The Olympics epitomize the spirit of cross-culturalism and present Japan with an excellent opportunity to reboot its efforts in developing this 'soft' but highly valuable skill. Efforts to improve cultural understanding have advanced rapidly in recent years with more inbound educational exchange tours to Japan. However, there is still an imbalance between inbound and outbound educational visits with few Japanese leaving Japan. By contrast there is a burgeoning number Japanese taking research trips abroad (Ota, 2014). These two developments provide an ideal opportunity for Japanese students to hone superior intercultural skills from which the hospitality industry can benefit in the future. These arguments notwithstanding, Japan today suffers from a chronic deficit of language and cultural experts in the hospitality industry (Smart, 2014).

The deficiency in language experts is demonstrated by the ubiquity of poorly translated signs and notices in tourist-related situations that offer inaccurate, confusing and sometimes bizarre translations. On the Tokyo underground, for example, passengers are confusingly informed that a "road" on a platform "narrows" when it should be signposted as "platform narrows"; in restaurants visitors are sometimes comically told that "beer on tap" (生ビール) is in fact "rare" beer (「珍しい」ビール); more worryingly as a sign in a Kansai International Airport restaurant proclaims, "take out is not available for sanitary reasons" as the translation for「食品衛生上テイクアウトはお断りしております」. This last example implying, by association, that *all* food in the restaurant is unsafe for consumption! Some English translations seem also to have been selected for their brevity. A bus in Kansai informs passengers "Fare is Prepaid" (i.e. 'Pay as you board') 「運賃前払い」 a notice that would most likely be incorrectly interpreted by a visitor to mean a ticket needs to be purchased before boarding but that it should be purchased somewhere *other* than on the bus itself.

The fact that such errors can be remedied simply by employing the services of a skilled expert, suggests the service industry in Japan lacks the appetite to take foreign languages seriously, and instead resorts to cosmetic, and often, wrong or misleading solutions. This gives the impression of a country that lacks professionalism or, worse, one that patronizes its English speaking visitors. After 25 years in Japan the author has much anecdotal evidence to show that such one line English translations are often carried informally, by non-professionals, and for no fee. As a result many of the results are of low quality and rather than offering a service (*omotenashi*) in the form of an accurate translation, Japan does its visitors a form of 'anti-service'. In order to avoid such problems Japan needs to make

such work more professional [i.e. as Takahashi (2015) suggests, monetize it] and pass any costs on to the guest. Japan is making some efforts to improve the situation in the last few years by increasing the number of language signs in English, Korean and Chinese to help direct the traveller. However the quality is still unpredictable. Japan now needs to make further efforts to ensure the accuracy and content of such translations, and in doing so ensure visitors receive the service they need and deserve.

Japan has limited time before 2020 to upgrade the language skills of its hospitality workforce and the quality of its tourism-focused translations. Many organizations still only pay lip service to the primacy of English in tourism and based on the evidence of signage do not usually employ the services of a professional to provide essential language services. Such a situation bears the hallmark of a country and industry that is complacent or ill prepared to welcome 40 million overseas visitors. In the globalized world of tourism, English is an expected skill rather than something additional or beneficial and will apply as much in the run up to, and period of, the Games as it will do to any tourism legacy after the Games have ended in summer 2020.

## 5. Discussion

In examining the way an Olympic host city might create a legacy, Ritchie (2000, p.20) observed that, “each Olympic Games reflects a unique set of circumstances. The characteristics of the host region and its people, the prevailing international situation, and the evolving nature of the event itself to produce a set of impacts which can be anticipated but which are difficult to predict accurately.” As the evidence in this essay has shown these impacts depend on tangible elements such as hotel infrastructure and less tangible elements including the host nation’s culture. Furthermore as Ritchie states the international situation is critical to creating an Olympic legacy, especially in how the host nation interprets and responds to any global events that might determine the success or otherwise of the Games.

The cooperation of the people of the host nation is a fundamental issue in determining the nature of any legacy from the Olympics (Guala and Turco, 2007). Hosting the Games places financial and cultural burden on the host city brings more scrutiny, but does provide increased city recognition and, often, increases in international visitor numbers. Despite there being some concern about the cost of the Olympic to Tokyo residents, among the public at large enthusiasm for the Games is very high. Tokyoites seem to be proud that their city will be the center of the world’s attention even if it is just for a few weeks. Although public enthusiasm may assure a successful Olympic Games it is unlikely to ensure a legacy to endure in the years after 2020 has been forgotten.

As already discussed here any Olympic legacy needs to take account of both the tangible elements such as infrastructure and the intangible ones such as culture. At the same time the need to embrace

internationalization is vital. Global consultancies [Jones, Lang, Lasalle (2014); Swiss Global Enterprise (2014); Nomura Research Institute (2015)] together with the Urban Land Institute (Smart, 2015) have criticized Tokyo for its neglected infrastructure and its poor “liveability” compared to true “World Cities” (JLL, 2014) such as Hong Kong, Singapore, London or New York. Instead, Tokyo is seen as a second tier “city of the world”; a place that has poor productivity, has been slow to become multicultural, lacks green space, lags behind in its gender equality and according to the CEO of General Electric Japan is “unattractive to international business” (see Smart, 2015). Furthermore, as Takeo Hirata Olympic advisor to the Japanese government indicates the Japanese people need to be seen as global citizens by the international community and to achieve this will require considerable changes to Japanese society. Finally, Tokyo is roundly condemned for its near blind faith in *omotenashi* to promote the 2020 legacy. Instead organizations such as the leading global public relations firm Weber Shandwick (in Smart, 2015) urge for a new hospitality mind set that promotes “communication and intangible encounters with Japanese people.”

Tokyo will face an uphill struggle to overcome these issues if tourism is to be a key part of the legacy. Infrastructure including hotel stock is receiving a facelift, but it is unclear whether the quantity or quality will suit international tourists’ needs. Language skills in the hospitality industry are severely lacking and the cornerstone of Japan’s hospitality, *omotenashi*, may need to change so that international visitors are better able to access the services they need. To this end monetization of service related activities may be necessary.

Visitor satisfaction is the key to encouraging repeat visits to a country - and hence a sustainable tourism legacy - but the enthusiasm of the local population to accept future visits is also vital. Will the Japanese public be able, and willing, to accept 40 million visitors, and if a tourism legacy is created the inevitably greater numbers after 2020? Improving language related tangible elements such as signage, language translations, and spoken English amongst hospitality practitioners is vital in this respect. With more and better communication between host and guest there will be greater mutual understanding and fewer frustrations or misunderstandings caused by poor or misleading translations. In this sense making language and cross-cultural training a priority would serve the needs of a tourism legacy better than a reliance on slogans focusing on 40 million visitors, or as Smart (2015) calls it “hospitality by numbers”. Improved tourist-specific communication with inbound visitors will also allow for more professionalization of hospitality, less wasted time and consequently better productivity. Time currently wasted to explain misworded English information can simply be transferred to time spent on other activities. It is a key benefit to both the tourist and the hospitality industry.

To solve these issues in the 3 years before the Olympics are held is complicated by the fact that Tokyo, unlike other recent Olympic cities such as Barcelona, Sydney or London, is relatively

inexperienced in welcoming foreign tourists. Tokyo thus needs to look at these tourist cities to see how an Olympic legacy might look. In particular it needs to consider how best to manage visitor numbers. As the case of Barcelona shows an increase in visitors is not necessarily *quid pro quo* a positive outcome. Citing the case of the Catalan city, Mount (2015) shows how the *over*-success of the 1992 Games has created overcrowding, segregation and the kind of inequalities Roshan-Samara and Watts (2013) indicate can be damaging to a city's identity. Importantly, in those cities where the Games produced successful tourism legacies Tokyo needs to examine how perception of the city has played a role in encouraging tourist visits after the Games (UKDCMS, 2013). To ensure such perception is positive Tokyo needs to improve the way it navigates any future international issues and problems such that the city image is not damaged.

## 6. A final word on legacy

The concept of legacy creation through a focus on a sector of the economy like tourism is by no means a recent strategy for Olympic host cities (Chalip, 2002). Since 1990 - when Sydney prepared its bid to host the 2000 Games - all Olympic cities have highlighted tourism as a key part of their respective legacy plans. As important a strategy as tourism is it cannot act alone to create such a legacy. As London 2012 showed legacy also needs to be seen in terms of the facilities and venues, infrastructure, and increased international recognition a host city acquires as a result of holding the Games (UKDCMS, 2013). Tokyo thus has the experience 7 previous Olympic cities from which to draw as it attempts to plan for 2020.

To date no Olympic host city has managed to create a clearly identifiable long-term tourism-based Olympic legacy (Ritchie, 2000). In this sense the decision to locate tourism at the center of the Tokyo 2020 plan was a bold one. On the plus side Japan has rich cultural and natural heritage, tangible evidence of which can be found in the burgeoning number of UNESCO World Heritage sites giving plenty of reasons for tourists to make a first, or repeat visit. Japan also has an excellent reputation for producing high quality infrastructure, so the tangible issues raised in this paper should not prove problematic. On the negative side however, Japan will need to overcome its apparent inertia or lethargy towards the less tangible but enduring issue of hospitality language development. Moreover it will need to re-evaluate its productivity levels while raising professionalism in the industry. This may require some changes to conventions concerning *omotenashi*, Japan's traditional service ethos. At the same time Tokyo will need to keep a close watch on the international situation to ensure the city puts its best face forward to the world, while making preparations to deflect any difficulties whether they be domestic or foreign in nature. The existence of any enduring tourism legacy will not be apparent until some years after the Games end, but if it is achieved, it will likely - in the hearts and minds of the

Japanese and Japan - place 2020 on the same pedestal as the one on which the 1964 Tokyo Olympics have resided for over 50 years.

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