

## Who Are the Tourists Motivated by the Korean Drama “IRIS”?

HAN, Jiho\* (韓 志昊)

DAI, Junko\*\* (臺 純子)

CHOI, Keumjin\*\*\* (崔 錦珍)

**Abstract:** フィルム・ツーリズムは、ロケ地への観光客集客の効果が注目され、デスティネーション・マーケティングの側面から多くの研究が行われてきた。しかし、ロケ地訪問をする観光客について詳細な分析をした研究はまだ少ないと言える。本研究は、2009年に秋田の各地でロケを行い、韓国人観光客だけでなく、日本人観光客の誘致にも貢献した韓国ドラマ『アイリス (IRIS)』を事例に、韓国人と日本人観光客の特徴や行動について明らかにする。

**Keywords:** IRIS, Korean drama, tourists, motivation

- I Introduction
- II Literature Review
- III Research Design
- IV Discussion
- V Further Research

### I Introduction

Korean TV dramas, movies, pop-music have become a strong motivation for inbound tourism in Korea. More and more foreign visitors are traveling to Korea to visit film locations and meet pop-singers at concerts and events. Furthermore, with the growth of Korean celebrities' fans in their number and different cultural backgrounds, and the advancement of their network power to share information, it is no surprising to find domestic and overseas fans at film locations during program production. Also Koreans outbound travelers are motivated to visit overseas film locations of Korean TV series and movies.

This study attempts to investigate the case of the Korean TV drama ‘IRIS,’<sup>1)</sup> which was filmed in Akita, Japan and contributed successfully to the tourism of the film location, to understand its influence on both Japanese domestic travelers and travelers from Korea. In many cases, Korean TV dramas contributed to attract Japanese travelers to visit Korea, however, ‘IRIS’ positioned itself as a distinctive case which impacted strongly on both Japanese and Korean tourism.

Among the many TV programs have been filmed in Japan, the TV series ‘IRIS’ was filmed in Akita prefecture, Japan and aired from October to December of 2009 in Korea. The influence of the Drama was phenomenal that many Koreans began to visit Akita from November 2009, before the airing has finished (see Figure1). While there are many factors for the significant success of the ‘IRIS’ in the audience rating and its influence on tourism, this study focuses on the understandings of both Japanese and Korean travelers who

\* 立教大学観光学部・准教授

\*\* 東京成徳大学人文学部観光学科・准教授

\*\*\* 九州国際大学国際関係学部・准教授

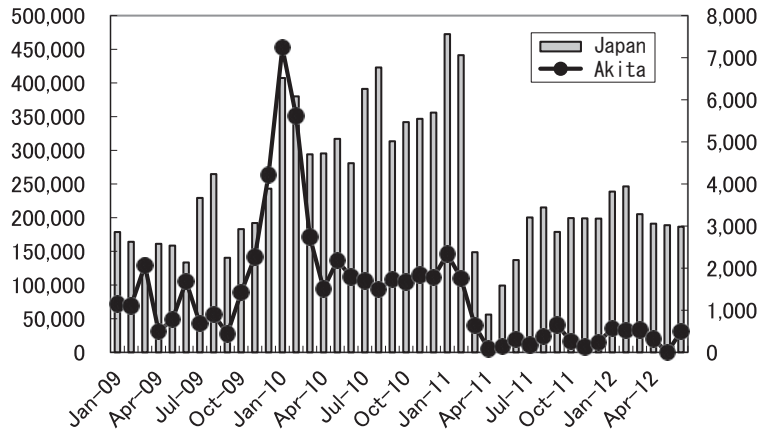


Figure 1 Korean Tourists Arrivals in Akita and Japan

have visited Akita motivated by ‘IRIS’ regarding their profiles and behavior.

This paper reports the results of in-depth interviews with travelers and individuals who were associated with the production process of ‘IRIS.’

## II Literature Review

Regarding the definition of ‘film tourism,’ two books (Beeton, 2005; Roesch, 2009) reviewed various versions and provided their own definitions as “visitation to sites where movies TV programmes have been filmed as well as to tours to production studios, including film-related theme parks” (Beeton, 2005, P.11) and “a specific pattern of tourism that drives visitors to see screened places during or after the production of a feature film or television production” (Roesch, 2009). For this research, the definition by Roesch (2009) is employed to explain the phenomenon of travel visits to film locations during and after the production of a TV drama. Also ‘film tourism’ and ‘film-induced tourism’ are considered as equivalents in this study.

Research on film tourism can be found since the beginning of 1990s, however, most of the studies examined the relationships of film locations and destination marketing (Alderman, Benjamin, & Schneider, 2012; Beeton, 2005; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; O’connor, Flanagan, & Gilbert, 2008; Tooke & Baker, 1996) and destination image and destination choice (Bolan & Williams, 2008; Busby, Ergul, & Eng, 2013; Hudson,

Wang, & Gil, 2011; Sellgren, 2011; Iwashita, 2008). But only a few studies have been conducted to find characteristics and behaviors of film tourists (Buchmann & Fisher, 2010; Frost, 2010; Kim, 2012). With the increasing worldwide attention to the strong growth of Korean pop culture, academic studies also have focused on the Korean pop culture’s influence on tourism (Han, & Lee, 2008; Kim, Agrusa, Chon, & Cho, 2008; Kim, Agrusa, Lee, & Chon, 2007; Kim, 2012; Lin & Huang, 2008).

## III Research Design

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, in-depth interview was adopted as a primary method of data collection to investigate the characteristics of Japanese and Korean travelers who have visited Akita motivated by ‘IRIS.’ In June 2012, a series of interviews were conducted with individuals who have involved in the process of production of ‘IRIS’ in Akita. The Akita Prefecture Department of Tourism, Akita Nairiku Jukan Railway, the president of Taenoyu, the president of Tsurunoyu, the manager of restaurant ORAE cooperated to provide information on their involvement with the filming production and their observation of both Japanese and Korean travelers. In 2013, five respondents who reside in Kanto area participated in face-to-face in-depth interviews and six respondents in Kyushu area did not travel to Akita but provided new findings on film tourism. Interviews with Korean travelers are to be

scheduled in the first half of year 2014 and the results will be reported in the further research.

#### IV Discussion

For the case of 'IRIS,' the significant influence as a motivation to travel occurred since the drama has satisfied the features to attract Korean viewers: attractive characters (actors); the love story; and the beautiful scenery (Kim et al., 2007). The strongest factor that contributed to motivate Korean viewers to visit Akita was the beautiful scenery of snow, which was not known to many Korean travelers. Korean travelers who have visited Akita soon after the exposure of Akita in snow on the earlier episodes showed instant reaction because they wanted to visit Akita while they could enjoy the scenery of snow they have seen on TV. While most of the Korean travelers to Akita used the tour package of the official travel agency, 'Hana tour' in Korea, there were also individual and group tourists who have stayed at Japanese traditional accommodations, 'Ryokan' in Akita. The major destinations in Japan are Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka to most foreign visitors and the pattern has long been continued in inbound tourism of Japan. 'IRIS' was a powerful media to inform Koreans of the new destination of Japan: in fact, there were rare cases among package tour participants to Akita whose visit was the first travel to Japan while the majority of Korean travelers began their visits from Tokyo and Osaka or Fukuoka. Since the snow season in Akita is off-peak period for domestic travelers', attracting Korean travelers during winter could contribute to the tourism in Akita positively. Although Korean travelers' visits could not continue because of the earthquake in 2011, Akita prefecture is now familiar

to potential Korean travelers.

While Korean travelers are mainly general travelers who were attracted to the scenery of Akita they have seen on the drama, Japanese domestic visitors to Akita were mostly the fans of the leading actor of the drama, 'Lee Byung-Hun.' A large number of the fans stayed in Akita during the three weeks while Lee was stationed to film the drama in Akita (see Table1). Most of them have never visited Akita before and they were not only from Tokyo or Osaka, the metropolitan cities, but also from various areas of Japan. The presence of fans gave strong impression to the individuals who have officially associated with the production who were not familiar with Korean TV dramas and Korean actors to expect positive impact by contributing to the production.

Some of the fans became friends to each other while they were staying in Akita and held memorial concerts twice at 'ORAE', the restaurant by the lake Tazawa where many fans spent time to share information during their stay in Akita

Although most definitions of film tourism describe the phenomenon as visiting places film has been filmed, now celebrity fans are active in visiting locations during the filming because it is getting more and more easier to network with other fans and share information about filming schedules and locations.

#### V Further Research

From the interviews with the fans of Korean TV dramas in Kyushu area, an interesting characteristic was found that even in the time of political tension between Japan and Korea, they don't worry about the situation and continue travels to Korea. They have strong net-

Table 1 Characteristics of Japanese and Korean Travelers to Akita motivated by 'IRIS'

Features	Japan	Korea
Visitors to Akita	Fans of the actor 'Lee Byung-Hun'	Those who have watched 'IRIS'
Beginning time of the visits	During the filming	Right after the episode filmed in Akita was aired in Korea
Travel Type	Individual & Group	Tour Package & Individual

(Prepared by the authors based on interview results)

works with Korean friends in Korea and they are well aware of how to travel safely around Korea and the real situation in Korea, which is quite different from the media reporting in Japan. However, Those who reside in Tokyo area tend to postpone their travels to Korea during the time of political tension between Japan and Korea, because their family worries them. It can be assumed that the geographical distance may have influenced on the psychological distance and more detailed analysis needs to be done on this relationship.

More comprehensive analysis is to be done with the results of interviews with Korean travelers during the year of 2014.

#### Acknowledgement

This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 24611020.

#### Notes

- 1) "Iris" is a Korean TV drama aired by KBS, filmed in 5 different cities in Akita prefecture, Japan for 3 weeks in March 2009. Twenty episodes were aired between October and December 2009 in Korea and earned 20% audience rating for the first episode and ended successfully with more than 40% rating for the final episode. Also it was aired on CS channel from March 2010 and on TBS from April 2010 in Japan.

#### References

- Alderman, D. H., Benjamin, S. K., & Schneider, P. P. (2012). Transforming mount airy into mayberry film-induced tourism as place-making. *Southeastern Geographer*, 52(2), 212–239.
- Beeton, S. (2005) *Film-induced Tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Bolan, P., & Williams, L. (2008). The role of image in service promotion: Focusing on the influence of film on consumer choice within tourism. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 32(4), 382–390.
- Buchmann, A., Moore, K., & Fisher, D. (2010). Experiencing FILM TOURISM: Authenticity & fellowship. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 229–248.
- Busby, G., Ergul, M., & Eng, J. (2013). Film tourism and the lead actor: An exploratory study of the influence on destination image and branding. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Research*, 24(3), 395–404.
- Frost, W. (2010). Life changing experiences: Film and tourists in the australian outback. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(3), 707–726.
- Han, H., & Lee, J. (2008). A study on the KBS TV drama winter sonata and its impact on korea's hallyu tourism development. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(2–3), 115–126.
- Hudson, S., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2006). Film tourism and destination marketing: The case of captain corelli's mandolin. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12(3), 256–268.
- Hudson, S., Wang, Y., & Gil, S. M. (2011). The influence of a film on destination image and the desire to travel: A cross-cultural comparison. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(2), 177–190.
- Iwashita, C. (2008). Roles of films and television dramas in international tourism: The case of japanese tourists to the UK. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(2–3), 139–151.
- Kim, S. S., Agrusa, J., Chon, K., & Cho, Y. (2008). The effects of korean pop culture on hong kong residents' perceptions of korea as a potential tourist destination. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(2–3), 163–183.
- Kim, S. S., Agrusa, J., Lee, H., & Chon, K. (2007). Effects of korean television dramas on the flow of japanese tourists. *Tourism Management*, 28(5), 1340–1353.
- Kim, S. (2012). The relationships of on-site film-tourism experiences, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: The case of asian audience's responses to a korean historical TV drama. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 29(6), 472–484.
- Lin, Y., & Huang, J. (2008). Analyzing the use of TV miniseries for korea tourism marketing. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(2–3), 223–227.
- O'Connor, N., Flanagan, S., & Gilbert, D. (2008). The integration of film-induced tourism and destination branding in yorkshire, UK. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(5), 423–437.
- Roesch, S. (2009). *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Sellgrem, E. (2011). *Film-induced tourism: the effect films have on destination image formation, motivation and travel behavior*. Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG.

