

A comparative study on community's commitments to
the development of the local economy
-Perception of the Communities in Koka city, Shiga prefecture for Cultural Value-

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Key words: Community activity, perceptions of the local people, re-vitalization program, cultural heritage
JEL Code: R58

I. Introduction

1.1 Background

We can easily observe many difficulties and challenges of local economy because of rapid aging societies and limited tourism demands under the COVID-19, nowadays.

Our governments indicated the threats of aging society. Many local governments conducted questionnaire surveys to understand the people's perception for the threats of aging society.

We had a long history with Koka city, Shiga prefecture on re-vitalization program of the local economy by fully utilizing local treasures including a former imperial palace, Shigaraki-no-Miya. It was a unique history under Emperor Shomu (701–756), who declared the relocation of the capital to ward off the spread of disease, smallpox. In 2020, the local government decided to construct the historical heritage park to attract tourists from all over Japan. And the local government formulated a special committee together with local community and our university.

We conducted in-depth interview survey to understand the perspectives of people in Koka city to the planned park. In this study, we focus on the perceptions toward cultural value or pride for their hometown. We identified their strong commitments on re-vitalization program come from their historical and cultural backgrounds. Finally, we concluded that the never-ending local education, not only for school program but also historical festivals were essential.

1.2 Problem statements

We have identified several problems on cultural heritages caused by limited knowledge about the local history among the citizens and students. Firstly, "Japanese history" is not their compulsory subject in our national education system for high school students. And in Japan, their texts are quite general and lack of local history education. "multiple copies of textbooks written by academics and others were examined by central government" (JICA 2011)

Secondly, some local governments are conducting their historical treasure research, but some governments are not interested in their history. And they are under re-organization of local

government system, merger with neighboring towns. Koka city was established on October 1, 2004, from the merger of the former town of Koka, absorbing the towns of Konan, Minakuchi, Shigaraki and Tsuchiyama. This merger made them difficult to understand their history well.

Finally, after the World War II, we saw a rapid industrialization and people lost their concern on their old history. Fortunately, some traditional festivals such as “Fire festival”, “Drum dance festival” kept their pride to their hometown in Koka.

1.3 Motivations of the study

We had a long history of cooperation with Koka city in the field of local economic revitalization programs including historical sight map and questionnaire survey. Koka city is close to our campus and Shiga prefectural government is encouraging universities to work with local governments and communities. Occasionally, we have got small funds to work with the local government, called “Lake Biwa University Consortium”. And we identified several unique local treasures not only for physical but also cultural uniqueness, and social capital including community capacity to work for the town.

1.4 Research objectives

We identified the following facts via a series of discussions with stakeholders in Koka and related local cities. The objectives of this study are

- i) to identify the peoples’ perception to their local treasures,
- ii) to understand the challenges to promote “Shigaraki-no-Miya, Historic park of the old capital”
- iii) to understand the new roles of local universities to identify the real value of the local treasures.

And finally, we found that why the local government decided to work with other local cities. In this case study, we will examine the value of collaborations among Koka, Nagahama and Taito-ku, Tokyo. We found that the new role of the community and local universities as well.

II. Previous studies

2.1 Koka, Nagahama and Taito-ku, Tokyo

To identify the value of Koka’s historical treasure, we have examined related cities, Nagahama and Taito-Ku, Tokyo. Why should we have to compare these three cities? Because between Koka and Nagahama, we have joint re-vitalization program with us. These two cities have many similarities in terms of historical treasures and Nagahama is one of the top popular destination of the tourists in Shiga prefecture. The central district, called “Kurokabe Square”, attracted about two million visitors every year before the COVID-19. And between Nagahama and Taito-ku, Tokyo, they started mutual tourism promotion agreement in 2020. It includes mutual support agreement for natural disaster prevention including floods and earthquake. And we have arranged a joint committee to fully utilize historical values to activate their local

economy. The first face to face meeting will be hold on Saturday, 30 October 2021. And we are nominated as a facilitator of the collaboration.

2.2 Basic facts of Koka City

Koka is a part of Shiga prefecture. And the city has a long history, good access to big cities including Kyoto, Osaka and Nagoya and has famous tourists’ destinations such as Shigaraki, Miho Museum and Minakuchi castle. The area of Koka city is quite big because of merger of several cities and towns in early 2000.

Table-1: Basic facts of Koka city

	Koka city
Area (Km2)	481.69 Km2 (c.f. Tokyo Metropolitan area 627Km2)
Population	90,174 (1 November 2020)
Population density	187/Km2
Local train	Shigaraki railroad (14.7 km)
Express way	Shin Meishin Express way
Distance to urban	81.5 Km (to Nagoya) 38.7 Km (to Kyoto)
Tourism Ambassador	Ms. Hoshika Maekawa
Local specialty goods	Shigaraki yaki (1,300 years history)
Shukuba post stations (travelers’ rest town)	Tschiyama-juku and Minakuchi-juku (Tokai-do, road from Kyoto to Tokyo (Coastal road))

(Source: local government web site etc.,
adopted by author)

2.3 Basic facts of Nagahama City and Nagahama city

Taito-ku is completely different from other two local cities in terms of population density, accessibility to the big population and resources of tourists’ destinations. However, for tourism promotion, these three cities have similarities, especially they were all hub of the transportation of goods in Edo era.

Table-2: Basic facts of Taito-ku and Nagahama city

	Taito-ku	Nagahama City
Area (Km2)	10.11km2	681.02 Km2 (c.f. Tokyo Metropolitan area 627Km2)
Population	210,713 (1 June 2021)	116,940 (1 December 2020)
Population density	20,842/Km2	171/Km2
Local train	JR(Yamanote, Keihin-Tohoku,Joban), Shinkanse(Tohoku), Keisei,	Hokuriku railroad

Figure-1 Location of Koka



	Subway (Tokyo Metro, Hibiya, Oedo) etc. Total 16 stations	
Express way	Metropolitan Expressway	Meishin and Hokuriku Express way
Distance to urban	5 Km (Tokyo station to Senso-ji temple)	78Km (to Nagoya) 100Km (to Kyoto)
Tourism Ambassador	Total 22 in 2017 including Mr. Kinichi HAGIMOTO, Ms. Yumi ADACHI, Mr. Shiro ITO etc.	Total 6 in 2020 including Mr. Shota Shumputei, Mr. Yanagiman
Local specialty goods	Toy, Processed foods	Nagahama Chirimen (Silk Crepe) (300 years history)
Shukuba post stations (travelers' rest town)	Hub of the Water transportation in Edo era	Ngahama-Juku (Hokkoku-Kaido, road from Kyoto to Hokuriku) (Mountain road)

(Source: local government web sites, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2020 etc. adopted by the author.)

III. A Comparative Study

3.1 A Comparative Study on cultural perception between Koka, Nagahama and Taito-Ku

To understand the peoples' perception to their cultural value, we have conducted a comparative study between Koka, Nagahama, Shiga prefecture and Taito-Ku, Tokyo, Japan. Why should we compare these three cities? For Koka and Nagahama, we have a long history of collaboration for local re-vitalization program. And Nagahama and Taito-ku started their collaboration. Taito-ku is the smallest of Tokyo's wards in area, and third smallest in population. However, they are very proud of historical treasures like Nagahama. That is why they agreed to start a collaboration program.

Table-3: A comparison among Koka, Nagahama and Taito-Ku, Tokyo

	Koka City	Nagahama City	Taito-Ku
Local treasures	Ninja, Shigaraki pottery	Nagahama castle, Kurokabe Square, Chikubu-jima island	Senso-ji Temple, Hanayashiki, Skytree, National Museum, Ueno Zoo etc.
Tourism strategy	History and Culture		
Historical treasure	Old ruins of Shigaraki palace (745), Ninja home, etc.	Kurokabe Square and Hikiyama museum etc.	Senso-ji Temple Asakusa shrine known as Sanja-sama (Shrine of the Three gods) etc.
Food specialties	Medical herb	Fermented foods	"Mugitoro" (Barley rice with grated Japanese mountain yam on top).
Religion backgrounds	"Shugendo": Japanese mountain asceticism incorporating Shinto and Buddhism	Buddhism	Buddhism
Cultural interests of the citizen (Questionnaire)	51.5% N=1,127 (2018)	60.1% N=1,174 (2020)	50.2% N=648 (2017)

survey)			
Traditional Festival	Shigaraki Fire festival Ceramic festival	Hikiyama festival (with Child Kabuki stages) 400 years history	Tori-no-Ichi, an annual auspicious festival
Shopping Street	Minakuchi central shopping street etc.	Kurokabe square	Nakamise shopping arcade
Commercialism	Ohmi merchants, Hino merchants	Free market and open guilds	Hozuki ichi or Chinese Lantern Plant Market
Neighboring city	Hino town (Merchant city)	Hikone city (Castle city)	Bunkyo-ku, Chiyada-ku, Sumida-ku, Arakawa-ku
Type of their Business including Philosophy	Sanpo-Yoshi (Good for seller, buyer and society) Collaborations with Hino merchant (Ohmi merchant)	Self-respect and independence under the free trade policy, called “Rakuichi Rakuza” of Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI, Samurai (1537 to 1598) (Autonomy)	“Kabunakama”, <u>merchant guilds</u> in Edo period Japan, which developed out of the basic merchants' associations known as “nakama.” The kabunakama were entrusted by the shogunate to manage their respective trades.

(Source: Koka, Nagahama and Taito-ku HP and related web sites adopted by the author)

All the local governments here conducted questionnaire surveys on the community preparedness on cultural interests and prides of the citizen. And we found many significant findings as follows.

- i) They are all rich in historical treasures. However, the promotion of their value to the community and potential visitors are still their challenges.
- ii) Positive answers for “Cultural interests of the citizen”, more than half of the community were observed by their questionnaire survey. This may be caused by the local governments activities to preserve and enhance the value of the local treasures. For instance, Koka city published their original textbooks to educate their children.
- iii) Unique economic role of the regions as a big hub of the trades and transportations is one of the most important findings to understand the historical value and similarities of the region.

From this survey, we can understand the awareness and capacity of the communities can be increased.

IV. Findings

4.1 Findings from the literature survey and in-depth interviews

After the serious of interviews and workshops, we identified some useful findings as follows.

- (i) Historical heritages such as temples and shrines are not so attractive for young generation.
- (ii) We have realized geographical advantages of Koka city. It can be a hub of commerce.
- (iii) Under the risk of Covid-19, their interests for the international tourists were diminished.

And it is encouraging their collaborations.

- (iv) Uniqueness and value of these three cities comes from geographical advantages in Edo era, as a transportation hub in those days.

We conducted workshops three times with local government staffs, students, and community people. And finally, majority opinion of the community gradually changed from negative to positive toward the ideas of full utilization of historical treasures to the re-vitalization activities of the city.

V. Conclusions and further studies

5.1 Conclusions

During our study, we learned the roles of community for historical treasures. To activate our local economy, good managements of historical treasures, especially invisible treasures such as festivals and cultural traditions can be the most urgent matter in these regions. Some governors and community people are supporting historical treasures. But it is not perfect and still needs some improvement to activate people's awareness. Fortunately, all the private companies are trying to expand their CSR activities. However, they do not have strong commitment to the local history and economy. Consultations between private companies, community, local university, and local governments could assure better argument about their full utilization of their historical treasures.

5.2 Further studies

For the collaboration projects among these three cities, local people were not against the plan. To attract domestic travelers to Japanese local treasures, it must be a good model for other cities. However, the role of community opinion should be reviewed to have sustainable management plan of the collaboration. Occasionally, mutual help program in case of natural disaster started among them. We should examine the impact of disaster prevention collaboration on their historical treasures as well.

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