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***Challenges in Intercultural Communication and
Understanding in Inbound Tourism in Beppu, Japan***

by

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Certification Page

I hereby declare that I have written this master thesis myself. Therefore I have not used any other sources of information than those cited.

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1. Introduction

a) Summary of the Main Arguments/Abstract

Due to shrinking secondary industries in Japan, the Ministry for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) came up with a plan to make the country a “tourism nation” and also began to heavily promote inbound tourism since the late 1990s, since due to an aging and in the long run shrinking population domestic tourism is expected to decrease. The city of Beppu has also embraced the policy trend towards inbound tourism and has seen an increase in foreign visitors in recent years. Since intercultural communication and understanding are crucial factors for inbound tourism, this study tries to explore challenges in this regard in inbound tourism to Beppu that are to be overcome in order for the town to become a major inbound tourism destination in Japan.

In chapter 1. the shift of Japanese international tourism policy from a strong outbound tourism focus to a strong inbound tourism focus will be discussed, since it forms the basis of recent inbound tourism promoting policies in Beppu City and is one of the factors behind the substantial increase in inbound tourists in Beppu and in Japan as a whole in recent years. After the introduction of the policy framework the issues in this thesis are based upon, the history, development and current nature of Beppu tourism will be summarized, including recent challenges for tourism in the city. In chapter 2. the scholarship that this study is inspired by and partly based upon will be introduced. Theories of communication, culture and intercultural communication as well as the current state of research in the fields of intercultural communication and understanding

in international tourism in general, and in Japanese inbound tourism and hot spring tourism in particular will be summarized.

Chapter 3. touches upon the objective and methodology of this research. This study is inspired by an epistemological stance close to social constructionism and utilizes a largely qualitative methodology, whereas the main research instrument is qualitative guideline-based interviews. Topics to be talked about in these interviews are derived from the literature discussed in chapter 2. which is condensed in five hypotheses that provide the major input for the interview guidelines.

In the course of this research five interviews were conducted with local tourism staff in Beppu and five interviews with inbound tourists in Beppu. In addition, 45 questionnaires were completed that widen the research base for the side of inbound tourists. The main challenge for intercultural communication in the inbound tourism context for Beppu hosts seems to be the lack of personal verbal communication skills, in particular foreign language skills. The main challenge for the guest side of intercultural communication in Beppu inbound tourism seems to be negative images about Japan in their home countries that are created by unfavorable media-transmitted communication.

b) The Shift of Japanese International Tourism Policy and the Goal of Increasing Inbound Tourism to Japan

Japans National Tourism Policy has undergone a significant shift since the 1990s. Until around the mid-1990s the Japanese international tourism policy was very focused on the promotion of outbound tourism by Japanese travelers. This policy focus was motivated by the strong Japanese economy driven especially by the secondary industries that have been the driving force for the Japanese economic wonder and the bubble economy in the second half of the last century. This strong national economy lead to striking international trade imbalances with the country's largest trading partners (e.g. US and countries of the EU) and consequently to some tensions with these that could be lessened by increasing numbers of Japanese outbound tourists travelling to these countries.

Therefore the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) launched a program in 1987 with the goal of reaching 10 million outbound tourists per year by the end of 1991. Given the still widespread economic enthusiasm that put Japanese workers in a position where they were able to spend a higher percentage of disposable income on tourism and take a higher amount of their paid leave entitlement, the goal was already reached in 1990. Japan also became the country with the highest deficit of travel balance in the world (Hall, 1997). Whereas on the policy level there have been a number of programs to encourage Japanese workers to take their full vacation-entitlement for leisurely travel and to facilitate outbound travel, the most important factor in the rise of Japanese outbound tourism has probably been the strong Yen,

making Japan “the world’s largest net exporter of tourist dollars” (Carlile, 1996, p. 1) until 1994.

In this period of Japanese economic prosperity inbound tourism and inbound tourism promoting policies only played a minor role. Inbound tourism was rather viewed in the role to promote education and intercultural understanding as well as cultural and business exchanges between Japan and other Asian and non-Asian countries. It didn’t have a significant foreign exchange function though and was not viewed as a major industry by the MLIT. Moreover, inbound tourism policies in that period mainly focused on business and convention travel in order to make Japan’s superior secondary industries known to the world. (Hall, 1997) In fact, in 1997, even after the “Welcome Plan 21” was already launched, Hall still wrote: “Unlike many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan does not rely on the revenue to be gained through inbound tourism. There will be no ‘Visit Japan’ year.” (Hall, 1997, p. 28)

However, only a few years later there was not only a “‘Visit Japan’ year”, but a full-blown “Visit Japan Campaign” (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport [MLIT], 2003) that by now already lasts more than a decade and was followed up by even more ambitious inbound tourism policy measures as will be discussed below. What development has changed the international tourism policy focus in Japan so drastically? Since the “bursting of the bubble” in Japan the producing sector has declined significantly. This is due to the growing competition in many industries from other newly industrialized Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan, which by now produce similar quality to an even cheaper price compared with Japanese producers. This development has left a significant hole of uncertainty in the Japanese economy and

has induced a search for alternative industries that could be more internationally competitive in a longer time-frame (Uzama, 2009; Hori, n.y.).

The first larger policy package for inbound tourism was the “Welcome Plan 21” announced in 1996 that consisted of a number of measures to attract more inbound tourists. Low-interest loans and tax breaks were decided for tourism facilities and some hotels in designated development areas. Furthermore, for the first time a concept of theme areas for international tourism and tourism routes in each of these areas that take multiple days to explore was announced. These areas should be created through government and private sector cooperation on the local level. Moreover, the installation of a “Welcome Card” for tourism-relevant discounts was decided. Lastly, and also for the first time the Japanese government decided to target specific markets for inbound tourism. Major airport development plans for Kanto, Kansai and Chubu area were all announced in 1996.

In 1997 an inbound tourism promotion law was passed and in 1999 42 specific international tourism model districts were mapped out. The focus on tourism model districts further came along with a new focus on regional development and revitalization, since many of these districts are areas with little other industries that rely heavily on or see particular chances in economic redevelopment through tourism (Hall, 1997).

Since 2000 tourism has attracted larger attention as a solution to address the economic depression in Japan and was defined as a trunk industry in the 21st century in the 2001 White Paper of the MLIT (MLIT, 2001). While at that time the ultimate goal to balance Japan's inbound and outbound tourism (at that time inbound tourists still numbered only about a third of outbound tourists) has already been formulated, this goal was split into

smaller scaled, but more specific and timed objectives thereafter. In 2002 “The Inbound Tourism Initiative of Japan” (MLIT, 2002, p. 41) was formulated as the first somewhat integrated inbound tourism policy that went beyond formulating loose, largely unrelated goals. The Inbound Tourism Initiative fostered the cooperation of all tourism related industries and the collaboration between the public and private sector with a new triangular focus on the smooth cooperation between central government, local government bodies and relevant private sector actors to achieve its goal of 8 million inbound travelers per year by the end of 2007.

This goal was to be achieved using four main strategies: 1. the promotion of inbound tourism through the Visit Japan Campaign (to be launched a year later in 2003), the development of flexible tourism products to suit individual needs, and the simplification of visa-processing and addition of more visa-applicable countries. 2. The improvement of the foreign visitor reception structure by improvement and enlargement of airports, seaports and local access and by pilot projects with multifunctional IC cards to pay for public transport and in registered businesses, e.g. convenience stores. 3. The sophistication of the tourism industry by developing tour offerings geared to international visitors and strengthening private sector coalitions in the industry. 4. Promotional measures to be undertaken in a united manner by all related government ministries as well as a strategic board that connects national government, local governments and the private sector.

In addition, in 2002 special measures such as increased public transit operation and enhanced security measures were taken for the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2002 that was co-hosted by Japan and South Korea (MLIT, 2002). However, despite widespread optimism in the government bodies and a general positive influence on inbound tourism

of the Soccer World Cup 2002, it also brought to light some communication and service problems such as the lack of multiple language information in peripheral centers and a lack of affordable accommodation in major cities (Soshiroda, 2005).

In 2003 the great role tourism can play in national and international development enjoyed even bigger attention. Tourism was accredited to “add color to people’s lives” (MLIT, 2003, p. 35), stimulate the national economy, promote exchanges between people, revitalize communities, promote local industries, create jobs, promote friendship among nations and contribute to world peace (MLIT, 2003). These extraordinary “powers” that were ascribed to tourism then also led for the first time to the vision of a “tourism nation” that could be achieved through “nation-building that provides a good living habitat and a good place to visit” (MLIT, 2003, p. 35). In the same year the “Japan Tourism Action Plan” (MLIT, 2003, p. 35) was formulated that specified some “actions” the “Visit Japan Campaign” (MLIT, 2003, p. 35) should take.

One such action was to invite ambassadors to the Prime Minister’s office and organize symposiums on Japanese tourism to promote the Visit Japan Campaign. Other new measures the Tourism Action Plan proposed was to promote Japanese tourism when high Japanese politicians visit other countries and other countries’ politicians visit Japan. It was also planned to shoot a promotion video with Prime Minister Koizumi and set up a website for the Visit Japan Campaign in multiple languages. The new inbound tourist goal set by the Tourism Action Plan was 10 million annual inbound tourists until 2010 (this mark was actually realized in 2013). Another new development in 2003 was that the Minister of the MLIT was officially declared to be the Minister in charge of tourism matters for the first time (the word “tourism” was later added to the ministry name). The concept of a beautiful country was not highly specified yet in 2003, but already included

the goal to achieve a higher percentage of underground power cables in big cities, following European examples and New York (MLIT, 2003).

In 2005 Australia, Canada, Thailand and Singapore were added to the original 2003 focus inbound markets of South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the US and the 2004 focus inbound markets Germany, France and Great Britain. These focus markets were only further supplemented in 2006 by India, Russia and Malaysia (Hori, n.y.). Further, the “Tourism Renaissance subsidy system” and the improvement of the interpreter guide system were announced in 2005. In order to specify the concept of a beautiful country the “Three Laws on Landscape and Greenery” were passed and the “Scenic Byway Japan” project was started (MLIT, 2005).

The 2007 White Paper on Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism announced the foundation of the National Tourism Agency responsible for tourism administration and included the “Master Plan for the Promotion of a Tourism-based country”. This master plan reinforced the goal of 10 million inbound tourists annually until 2010, but also set new goals such as the increase of international conferences to be held in Japan by at least 50% until 2011 that would make Japan Asia’s most important country for conferences (MLIT, 2007). In 2009 the National Tourism Agency installed the “Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner Award” to acknowledge organizations and people making great efforts for tourism development and promotion. In July of the same year, the “MICE Promotion Action Plan” (MICE – meetings, incentives, conventions, conferences, exhibitions) was formulated, once again showing Japans efforts to become the leading business and conference travel destination in Asia. 2009 also saw for the first time a written recognition of new forms of tourism like eco-tourism, green tourism,

cultural tourism, industrial tourism, sports tourism and medical tourism in an official Japanese policy statement (MLIT, 2009).

Even though 2011 saw a breakdown in inbound tourism in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, meaning that in that year the policy focus of the MLIT shifted to the reconstruction of the settlements destroyed by the disaster, this situation changed quite quickly. In the 2012 White Paper of the ministry, the plan of the Tourism Nation came to recognition as a means to facilitate restoration from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Even though the previous inbound tourist goal of 10 million per year until 2010 couldn't be reached and 2011 saw a decline in inbound visitor numbers, the new even more ambitious goal of 18 million inbound travelers by the end of 2016 was set. In all regards Japan's tourism policy paper 2012 can be regarded as the most sophisticated and detailed so far, mapping more international tourism development regions than ever and setting specific measures to achieve all tourism policy goals that have been formulated in the past decade (MLIT, 2012).

c) History and Development of Beppu Tourism

The city of Beppu is a famous hot spring resort in Oita Prefecture on the East coast of Kyushu Island. It is situated in a scenic location in the center of Beppu Bay with the volcanic range of Mt. Tsurumi, Mt. Uchi and Mt. Garan as a backdrop which also forms the base of Beppu's hot spring resource. Beppu City is the place with the highest amount of hot springs in Japan and the second highest amount in the world,

Yellowstone National Park in the USA being the only place featuring more hot springs than Beppu. It is also one of the 10 most popular hot spring resorts in Japan among Japanese tourists and attracts around 11-12 million visitors every year (Dolkar, 2005; Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Han & Yotsumoto, 2010; Wen, 2008).

The saga “Iyonokuni Fudoki” written in the 8th century tells the story of the discovery of Beppu Hot Spring. According to the legend two gods visited the “iyonokuni” – the “ancient country” around Beppu a long, long time ago. When one of the two gods got sick, the other pulled a pipe from the seabed of Beppu Bay and cured him with the hot waters coming out from the bay. The hot spring of Beppu was discovered (Wen, 2008).

Talking in more scientific, historical terms the hot springs (jap.: onsen) around what is now Beppu City were probably used since at least the year 895, when King Daigoteno is reported to have come to Shibaseki Onsen, one of the eight hot spring districts of Beppu municipality nowadays, for hot spring treatment. Later, Samurai Otomo Yoriyasu built sanatoriums in Beppu, Hamawaki and Kannawa districts to cure wounded soldiers during the Mongolian invasions in the Kamakura period (1192-1333) (Wen, 2008).

During the Edo period, when, with few exemptions, only the ruling class was allowed to travel, Beppu earned a reputation as exclusive hot spring resort for the privileged with a few thousand people staying and enjoying the hot springs and natural surroundings around Beppu Bay. During that time Hamawaki Hot Spring was the center of attention. The port town of Hamawaki combined high quality hot spring bathing with some shrines available for pilgrimage, the largest of them being Asami Shrine (Dolkar, 2005).

Later, in the 20th century, Hamawaki also gained popularity due to its red light district so that the area had to struggle to keep the tourist inflow when a prostitution prohibition law was passed in Japan (Wen, 2008). Recently, “Yutopia Hamawaki” was built in the district in an effort to redevelop hot spring tourism as one of the first spa complexes in Japan built after the model of the German “Kurhaus” offering additional treatments in addition to mere hot spring water enjoyment (Dolkar, 2005; personal observation).

In the Meiji era, when travel barriers for the main part of the Japanese population were lifted, Beppu continued to grow as a hot spring resort, benefiting from the attractive value of its scenic location on Beppu Bay with the mountain backdrop of Mount Tsurumi, Mount Uchi and Mount Garan, and its abundant resources of hot spring waters suitable for bathing that were further discovered and developed during the Meiji period. Generally speaking the main pillars for tourism development at that time were hot springs, roads leading to the hot springs and accommodation facilities, and water to dilute and cool down the hot springs that were in many cases too hot and/or too acidic for direct utilization for a bath. In 1871 Beppu’s first harbor was built at what is now called Kitahama district as one of the first tourist ports in all over Japan, offering connections to Osaka, Hiroshima and Shikoku (Dolkar, 2005). Moreover, the JR Nippon Main Line railway and Beppu Station were constructed in the Meiji era, significantly increasing accessibility to Beppu and its hot springs (Wen, 2008).

Another major step of the development of tourism in Beppu was taken by Aburaya Kumahachi who arrived in Beppu in 1911, and is now referred to as “the father of Beppu tourism” due to his efforts in tourism development. He is also commemorated by a statue built in 2007 at Beppu station. After studying hospitality in America for three years he was looking for a striving tourism destination in Japan to make use of the skills

he had learned. He finally arrived in Beppu in 1911 and established Kamenoi Hotel (which is to this day still one of the largest hotels in Beppu) together with his wife; with a high hospitality standard contributing to a good reputation of hospitality in Beppu. He also founded Kamenoi bus company, which since 1928 operated the first tourist bus tours all over Japan, bringing tourists staying in the downtown area to the Beppu Hells (jap. jigoku meguri) in Kannawa for the first time. To this day Kamenoi bus is still the main bus company in Beppu operating between the main tourist districts Beppu downtown, Kannawa and Myoban, even though the focus of the company nowadays is regular buses rather than tour buses (Dolkar, 2005; Wen, 2008; personal observation).

In addition to his own businesses, Aburaya Kumahachi also fostered the improvement and prosperity of the destination Beppu as a whole. I.e., he urged a number of acquainted journalists in Osaka to publish about Beppu and also got an architect from Osaka to plan a landing bridge for Beppu tourist port to make the arrival of tourists from Kansai, Hiroshima and Shikoku more convenient (Dolkar, 2005).

Another important step in administrative terms for the development of Beppu tourism was the merging of the several hot spring villages (Beppu, Hamawaki, Kannawa, Myoban etc.) to Beppu City before the Second World War (Wen, 2008). Without this integration of the whole area between Beppu Bay and Mount Yufu into one municipality tourism development might have taken on a quite different shape after the Second World War. We might have found a situation of a number of small onsen resorts of approximately the size of Yufuin or smaller competing among each other rather than the massive “hot spring capital of Japan” that Beppu City is today. Also thanks to the enthusiasm brought in by Aburaya Kumahachi annual tourist numbers in Beppu reached 500000 at the end of the Meiji period, and among these visitors were also famous

personalities such as Charlie Chaplin and French ambassador Paul Claudel (Dolkar, 2005; Wen, 2008).

After World War II Japan needed some time to recover and both domestic and international tourism decreased from pre-world war levels. However, Beppu was in a somewhat special position that helped the town to recover from the war faster than other places. An American army base called Camp Chikamauga (Wen, 2008) was installed in what is now Beppu Park, and both the hot springs as well as the red light establishments in downtown Beppu were patronized by the American soldiers, who were exhausted from the war and far away from their wives and families. Some scholars even say that the onsen saved Beppu from being bombed in the first place (personal communication with Cooper, 2013).

As the Japanese industry prospered in the economic wonder of Japan and the bubble period, the so-called “construction state Japan” in which major construction companies had good relations with and high influence on politicians more or less all over the country left its tracks in Beppu too. Many large hotel complexes were built (including an increase in business hotels), and provided suitable lodging for company trips and group tours as the new popular modes of travel in the Japanese industrial society. In the Showa period around 1965 annual tourist numbers to Beppu reached 13 million which is with some variation still the figure of visitors to the town till this day (10-13 million yearly) (Wen, 2008).

Nowadays Beppu doesn't only have the highest number of bathing hot springs anywhere in Japan, but it also offers tourists a variety of different types of baths

(Taguchi, Itoi, & Yusa, 1996) featuring ten of the eleven types of hot springs identified worldwide. Of course, the most common types of onsen are regular indoor baths (jap. “uchi-yu”) and outdoor baths (jap. “rotenburo”), but there are also some steam baths (jap. “mushi-yu”) and sand baths (jap. “sunayu”), the most famous being the “Beppu Kaihin Sunayu” at Rokushouen Beach where you can be buried in hot sand while enjoying the view on Beppu Bay. Furthermore, there is a mud bath in Myoban area called “Myoban Onsen Hoyoland” that is famous for its highly acidic and strong smelling mud. There are also three hidden hot springs to be used as konyoku mixed baths in the mountains above Myoban. Unfortunately one has been closed down by the local police after a murder happened there several years ago.

Very famous in Beppu is also the custom of cooking food in hot spring water, whereby eggs are the most popular hot spring food. There are even some hot spring restaurants, of which the most well-known is “Jigoku Mushi Koubou Kannawa” where in addition to ordering a pre-cooked meal you can also rent a cooking place and cook your own hot spring food which is a very popular activity among tourists as well as locals (personal observation). Another usage of hot spring water that is quite unique to Beppu is the production of the cosmetic product “yunohana” (eng. hot water flower) which refers to a sulfuric powder with health benefits that is produced in small thatched huts in Myoban Onsen (Wen, 2008).

The most important tourism assets in Beppu involving its hot spring resource, however, might well be the “Jigoku Meguri” and “Beppu Hatto” (Taguchi, Itoi, & Yusa, 1996). Jigoku Meguri can best be translated with „hell tour“ and refers to the eight “Beppu Hells” first discovered as tourism assets by Aburaya Kumahachi (Dolkar, 2005). The Beppu Hells that visitors can see today are small gardens with different themes built

around boiling or nearly boiling hot spring ponds of different waters which are too hot for bathing, but can be watched as tourism attractions. Six of these are in the Kannawa Onsen area and two in Shibaseki Onsen area, of which one also features a geyser, the only geyser in Beppu. Each of these jigoku gardens can be entered for 400 Yen and a pass for all of them can be purchased at 2000 Yen. Touring these unique hot spring gardens has long been one of the most popular tourist activities in Beppu City (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2009; personal observation).

Beppu Hatto can best be translated as “Beppu eight baths” and refers to the eight main hot spring areas in Beppu City categorized by the Beppu Tourism Association Corporation roughly as of the former villages that were merged into Beppu City in the first half of the last century (Wen, 2008). These are Beppu Onsen, Hamawaki Onsen, Kannawa Onsen, Myoban Onsen, Kankaiji Onsen, Horita Onsen, Shibaseki Onsen and Kamegawa Onsen. All of these hot spring areas have their own special type of water (though with some mixture), some alkaline and some acidic, some with lower and some with higher mineral content, some hot and some warm, so that taking a hot spring bath in different parts of the city in very different hot spring waters can be an interesting experience.

People taking 88 different hot springs in the Beppu area (in total over 120 hot springs for bathing in Beppu are registered in “Beppu Hatto” (NPO Hojin Hatto Onpaku, 2013)) can be awarded the title of “Beppu Hatto Onsen Meijin” (eng.: “Beppu Eight Baths Hot Spring Master”) by Beppu City Hall that comes with a special “meijin” towel to prove the status. It can be said that this opportunity of taking totally different hot spring waters in the same hot spring resort town is quite unique and cannot be found in any other hot spring resort throughout Japan (NPO Hojin Hatto Onpaku, 2013). While tourists don’t

usually stay long enough to bathe at so many different hot springs, the stamping of hot spring stamps into the “Spaport” (a passport-like pamphlet provided at 100 Yen to complete the way to the onsen master) is a clever marketing tool to keep locals interested in and enthusiastic about their hot spring resource.

Besides onsen the tourists in Beppu can enrich their travel experience at a variety of delicious restaurants and pubs. They can also enjoy the aquarium “Umitamago”, the natural monkey park at Mt. Takasaki, the bamboo museum, fragrance museum or art gallery, the African Safari, the gondola to Mt. Tsurumi and the hiking trails in the area or one of three theme parks close to town (“Rakutenchi”, “Kijima Kogen” and “Harmonyland”).

However, despite these abundant tourism assets, the City of Beppu has recently faced some challenges, not necessarily in keeping the high number of tourists, but in keeping the high revenue earned from them as in the bubble period. The above description of tourism attractions and assets in Beppu has shown that there is way more to the destination than hot spring bathing, if a close assessment is made. However, Beppu’s image as a tourism destination is still largely focused on onsen and the city is not yet an integrated attractive destination as such. Given this situation and considering the fact that about 60% of visitors are coming from Fukuoka (personal communication with Cooper, 2013), these visitors can easily come to Beppu, enjoy a hot spring, have a meal and go home to Fukuoka on the same day-off using the highway connecting Fukuoka to Oita City, the highway bus or the Sonic express train, if they think of Beppu as being “just onsen”. That kind of day-tripper tourism, however, leaves them little opportunity

to spend money in the town, since in general most tourist money is still earned in the accommodation sector.

Thus, for the destination to be as successful as in the 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century tourists should have a reason to stay overnight. Therefore the city hall started a new campaign last year promoting the “Entertainment City Beppu” in both English and Japanese using popular anime characters stylized to fit Beppu tourism, in order to give the town another brand apart from hot spring tourism. This campaign still fails to point out all the “entertainment options” Beppu as a whole destination has to offer though, and thus stays mostly visually appealing without changing awareness for the city’s various attractions, and the value of the destination as a whole. A “welcome card”-like system providing public transit on Oita Kotsu and Kamenoi buses and at the same time information on and discounts for the city’s various attractions available at train stations, accommodations and major attractions as can be found in many major cities around the world might change this situation. For such an integrative marketing, however, the numerous stakeholders in Beppu tourism are still not cooperating enough.

Moreover, challenges also arise for Beppu due to general structural changes in tourism and tourism behavior. Tourism has become more individual and Japanese tourism which has long been famous for its group tourists is no exception from this development anymore. The Beppu tourism model developed in the second half of the last century, however, is still largely carved for group tourists, featuring large-scale hotels and hot springs, amusement facilities most suitable for male company trips and little personal atmosphere, esp. in the downtown area.

Furthermore, Beppu failed to recognize that what nowadays hot spring tourists are looking for are no superlatives like the biggest amount of water or largest number of different types of waters and hot spring baths, but rather a tranquil, rural “furusato” (jap. for a person’s home village) setting in which the springs are located allowing the stressed-out urban population to recuperate. The neighboring town of Yufuin has recognized these changes. Tourism stakeholders in Yufuin have successfully created a brand image of a traditional, naturally rich mountain town by working together as a destination in strictly limiting high-rise buildings and focusing in the accommodation sector on small upmarket ryokan (jap. style inns) suitable for fancy family or couple outings. That way Yufuin has earned a reputation as a truly relaxing hot spring resort, receiving about 4 million visitors annually (Kajiwara, 1997) (which is in fact a much higher visitor-resident proportion than Beppu achieves) and ranking in surveys as one of the most popular hot spring resorts in Japan, above Beppu (Han & Yotsumoto, 2010).

In Beppu, though, mass tourism developments have gone quite far in the second half of the last century, so that it is questionable whether Beppu is still in the position to create a rural, tranquil hot spring brand image. Even though Japanese usually refer to a town of the size of Beppu as countryside, it is not “countryside enough” to be an attractive hot spring resort in the sense of “furusato”. Moreover, in this type of rural tourism, Yufuin already is a very strong competitor. Therefore Beppu might be better off not trying to compete with Yufuin, but rather making an effort to earn a reputation as a cultural tourism destination making use of the multipurpose halls in BCon Plaza and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) or as a marine tourism destination by improving the beaches, seaside promenades and yacht harbors along Beppu Bay.

In 2005 Beppu was selected as an area suitable for a “Tourism Renaissance Subsidy”, and northern Oita Prefecture has been selected as an area for a practical plan to create a tourism destination by the JNTO (MLIT, 2005). In addition, in 2008 Beppu has once again attracted particular policy attention as part of the “New Eastern Kyushu Tourism Region”, one of 16 areas designated for intense tourist area development (MLIT, 2008). These inclusions in national tourism policy have given a mission for the destination Beppu and motivated Beppu City Hall to make some efforts to foster inbound tourism development, considerably more than other destinations in Oita Prefecture and Kyushu. At Beppu Station and Ekimae Street international tourist offices with English and in many cases also Korean and Chinese speaking staff were established. A considerable increase in promotional material, brochures and explanatory signs in English, Korean and Chinese can also be noticed. Last but not least, the English language campaign “Entertainment City Beppu” connecting Beppu to the Anime culture, which is famous around the world and a main motivation for many foreigners to come to Japan or even to study Japanese, can be viewed as inbound tourism promoting too.

In addition to playing its part in reaching the national government goal of creating a tourism nation Japan (MLIT, 2003) it is also promising for the city of Beppu in particular to create a policy focus towards inbound tourism for a number of reasons:

1. Differing from other major Japanese tourist hubs like Tokyo or Osaka, Beppu is a resort town built on hot spring tourism. As a resort town Beppu is highly dependent on the prosperity of its tourism industry, because it lacks other significant industry sectors. In such a situation it would be very beneficial for the city to diversify its tourism marketing towards inbound tourists to escape the local economic vulnerability that the strong seasonality effects of Japanese

domestic tourism and the dependence on Japanese national economic prosperity create.

2. Even though the Beppu-Oita region does not provide as many traffic connections as Kanto and Kansai, it is situated in a quite strategic location for Korea as the largest present inbound tourism market and China as the largest emerging inbound tourism market to Japan. The City of Beppu is connected by train, highway and bus to Fukuoka airport and Fukuoka seaport which act as major gateways to other Asian countries and by bus to Oita Airport which also provides a direct connection to Seoul (Han & Yotsumoto, 2010). Han & Yotsumoto (2010) and Arai (2011) further show that the Kyushu region already is a major destination of Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong tourists to Japan.
3. As a traditional hot spring resort with historical significance Beppu still possesses some scope to create an offering of unique Japanese culture (onsen bathing) to inbound visitors, if the city can preserve still existing traditional architectural structures, rebuild already destroyed buildings with historical value and market onsen as unique Japanese cultural experience not only to Asian, but also to European and American tourists. Examples from Europe (e.g. Budapest, Bath, Baden Baden) show that a successful hot spring destination doesn't necessarily have to be combined with rural tranquility, but can also be embedded in cultural tourism and architectural appreciation.

Given the potential benefits of an increase in inbound tourists to Beppu and the likelihood of such a development under the circumstances of continuous Abenomics

and favorable Japanese visa politics, it deems necessary to have a close look at challenges in intercultural communication that might hinder the development of inbound tourism in this particular case, since successful intercultural communication can be deemed crucial for the prosperity of inbound tourism in a given destination. Challenges of intercultural communication and understanding in Beppu inbound tourism can be challenges of this kind in Japanese inbound tourism in general that may apply in Beppu as well as issues that are specific to the city of Beppu or to hot spring tourism.

2. Literature Review

a) Communication, Culture and Intercultural Communication

The terms “communication” and “culture”, the basic concepts on which this thesis is based upon, are widely used in both science and everyday life so that there exist numerous definitions for both of them. In order to clarify the use of these terms in this text, both should be defined for the context of this study utilizing the scholarship of relevant authors in the fields of cultural and communication studies in the following paragraphs. In addition, the specific nature of intercultural communication will be touched upon.

The English word “communication” is derived from the Latin “communicatio” which literally means “message, connection” (Bentele, Brosius, & Jarren, 2006; Jordan & Hübner, 2006). The Latin verb “communicare” is close to the noun “communication”, since both words share the same word root. “communicare” means “doing together with, participating, sharing” (Beck, 2007; Jordan & Hübner, 2006). Nowadays communication is mostly understood as a transfer of some sense, meaning or information from A to B (Beck, 2007; Bentele, Brosius, & Jarren, 2006; Burkart, 2002; Burkart & Hömberg, 2007; Lamnek, 2005; Mast, 2004; Yousefi, 2014; Zaremba, 2010). Thereby communication is reception centered which means, only if B has received the information, communication has occurred (Zaremba, 2010). Given the wide use of the word communication in different sciences, A and B don’t necessarily have to be human beings. They can also be animals or computers for instance (Beck, 2007; Burkart, 2002). However, since this thesis is based in the humanities, communication should be understood as a message transfer between at least two humans.

It is crucial to note that a “message” is not necessarily (only) verbal. Received messages containing language are called verbal communication. However, non-verbal factors in personal communication such as gestures, mimics, tone of voice, speed of speech and the like complement verbal messages and sometimes even stand for themselves as means of communication. In that case the communicative situation is called non-verbal communication. However, not all modes of communication contain of this non-verbal component (Beck, 2007; Burkart, 2002; Mast, 2004; Zaremba, 2010). An E-Mail which is an example for communication with the use of a transmitting medium or intermediary (in contrast to direct, personal communication) has no facial expression. When discussing communicative settings in a particular context, it is important to keep these

differences in mind – that communication can be verbal and/or non-verbal and direct or transmitted through a medium – to know which alternative situations could be imagined or not imagined for a certain message. Thus communication studies investigate all elements of a communication process which are sender, message, receiver, medium/transmitter and impact (Bentele, Brosius, & Jarren, 2006).

There is disagreement on the question, if “communication” can also be understood as “understanding” or contains the component of “understanding”. Whereas Bentele, Brosius and Jarren (2006) note that the term is used synonymous to “understanding” as the successful ends of communication by a number of authors, they also note that such an idea of the communication process that it generally or almost certainly creates understanding is rather questionable, since the prerequisite for this assumption is that sender and receiver always attach the same meaning to the transmitted message which is quite unlikely. Zaremba (2010) also warns to not confuse these two terms. Therefore this thesis uses both terms, “communication” and “understanding”, in order to clarify the differences between these two verbs which are expected to be particularly striking in the context of intercultural interactions. Thus, “communication” should be understood as the process of a message transfer from A to B and “understanding” should be defined in the context of this study as a state in which A and B attach the same meaning to the transferred and received message.

Peil (2011) notes the close relationship between communication and culture as she writes “There is no communication without culture and no culture without communication” (Peil, 2011, p. 60). In her eyes communication is not (only) a transfer of information, but a form of symbolic action and social custom through which sense and meaning are produced, circulated and exchanged. Communication is a means

through which culture is disseminated and rendered effective and actual. Therefore culture is both mediator of and mediated by communication as a long communicative process in a given society that slowly changes and adjusts itself (Peil, 2011). If the concepts of communication and culture are so strongly linked and interdependent, one can already assume that communicative processes between different cultures pose special challenges.

However, before the special characteristics of intercultural communication will be explained in further detail, the term “culture” which is no less broad and confusing than “communication” should receive some attention. If the meaning is taken from the Latin word “cultura” (Eng. “cultivation”) which “culture” derives from the characteristic of “culture” as opposite to “nature” is evident. In that sense “culture” for the Romans was everything that humans did with and in the nature that shaped the nature differently from its original state before human life. Thus, this original meaning of “culture” is close to what we rather know today as “civilization” (Broszinsky-Schwabe, 2011).

However, in the contemporary use of the term which has been significantly widened in the 20th century there is more to culture than civilization or arts. For Reisinger and Crotts culture is “collective thought and values” (Reisinger & Crotts, 2010, p. 1). Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007, p. 1499) define culture in line with Linton (1945, p. 21) as “the configuration of learned behavior and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society”. These definitions have rather behavioral and cognitive components, different from the mainly material component that the original Latin word consists of. Yousefi (2014) subsumes values, norms, identity, beliefs, world view and language under the concept of “culture”. In addition, he poses that cultural conditioning creates what we call “home” and that we

take this “home” with us wherever we go. This notion can be expected to be especially important in intercultural communication in international tourism. Yousefi also notes the process character of culture, as culture is a life reality constantly being shaped by humans’ actions.

Broszinsky-Schwabe (2011) approaches culture with the definition that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created during the world conference MONDIACULT (1982). That defines culture as “...the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 1982). She further states Ferraro’s definition of culture as “everything that people have, think and do as members of a society” (Ferraro, 2004, p. 24).

At first, this might seem as the broadest and least specific definition of the term “culture”. However, coming from this general definition Ferraro continues to name three main component categories that culture consists of and under which many other components written above can be subsumed. These are 1. material objects 2. ideas, values and attitudes and 3. behavioral patterns (Ferraro, 2004). Since most cultural exchanges and challenges in inbound tourism can be expected to occur in the realm of category 2. and 3. (, since inbound tourists don’t bring large material objects such as buildings with them when they travel,) the definition and categorization of Ferraro should be used for this study.

Upon defining the terms “communication” and “culture”, we can easily understand the term intercultural communication as communication between individuals or groups of people with different cultures (Broszinsky-Schwabe, 2011). Modes and rules of communication are dependent on a specific context, in which the communication occurs which is made up of the place, time and occasion in which it takes place, as well as the social status and number of people involved, and, as already shown above, the cultural setting (Broszinsky-Schwabe, 2011).

Two significantly different cultures involved can cause imbalances and challenges to communication. This is due to the fact that perception and interpretation of messages firstly occur in the context of the own culture which can lead to misunderstanding when communicating with a person with a different culture. Moreover, the communicating parties often notice codes that don't appear in their own culture which creates firstly a challenge to interpretation in general and secondly a feeling of strangeness that negatively impacts the communicative setting. Thereby not only language, but also paralinguistic and nonverbal symbols are sources of misunderstandings. To overcome these barriers certain intercultural competence is crucial. This means not only knowledge of other languages and styles of communication, but also the ability to consciously reflect on the own culture and to overcome anxieties involved in the intercultural interaction (Broszinsky-Schwabe, 2011). Yousefi (2014) thus calls it a mission of intercultural communication that avoids violence to let intercultural actions be inspired by transcultural thought and to understand cultures as open and dynamic systems rather than closed containers.

b) Intercultural Communication and Understanding in International Tourism

To this day the literature body on interpersonal host-guest communication in tourism going beyond the surface of the common tourist-vs-host dichotomy is not extraordinarily large. Moreover, existing literature mostly stays more descriptive rather than being explanatory. The research conducted in this field so far mainly stays in the realm of stating factors that make host-guest communication a special mode of communication, distinct from everyday social communication. In addition, some factors influencing the communicative situation between hosts and guests are stated (Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007; Woosnam & Norman, 2010).

The existing scholarship, however, does not make many qualitative statements so far about which factor influences which type of communication in what situation in what way and what is crucial for the host-guest communication to be successful, in what type of tourism. Even more scarce is the research base on host-guest communication specifically in an international tourism context. While some studies touching this issue have been conducted for specific countries (Ratz, 2009 & 2011; Uriely & Reichel, 2000; Uzama, 2009), research on the nature of host-guest communication in international tourism in general is even more seldom (Yu & Lee, 2014).

A concept that is used by some scholars to explain success or failure of host-guest interactions is the concept of emotional solidarity. Generally spoken this concept incorporates the idea that, if people share similar activities and beliefs and interact with each other, a feeling of solidarity can arise which is a feeling of emotional closeness or togetherness (“we together” instead of “me versus you”) (Woosnam & Norman, 2010, p.

367). The origin of the context of emotional solidarity can be traced back to Durkheim ([1915]1995) who observed religious practices of groups of native people in remote Australia (Woosnam & Norman, 2010). He found that the common beliefs of religious values and the common religious actions undertaken by the group of native people together help to bind the group together and solve negative issues and tensions in the particular society (Woosnam & Norman, 2010).

In regards to tourism this concept means that residents can feel closeness and develop emotional solidarity by interacting with tourists, and vice-versa. This idea is similar to Trauer and Ryan's (2005) thoughts that the intimacy within a place is basically created by the social interactions with the locals of that place (Woosnam & Norman, 2010). In that sense the quality of the tourist service and the communication that service involves as being personal (in contrast to commodified) has a significant influence on the development of emotional solidarity between residents and tourists and thus also on the feeling of security of the visitors within the tourist setting. However, social interactions that involve direct, personal communication are not the only way emotional solidarity can be achieved. In addition, emotional solidarity can also evolve through shared beliefs and/or shared behavior and common actions (that, again, result in physical proximity, if the common actions are undertaken in the same destination) of the two groups in question (Woosnam & Norman, 2010).

Regarding tourism, i.e. a shared belief could be the preference for tranquility and backwardness in natural surroundings over metropolitan life that both residents and tourists share in a mountain resort. Another shared belief could be the idea of trying to follow a healthy lifestyle and a preservative approach to health care in a hot spring or marine resort. Similar to shared beliefs, shared behavior between tourists and residents

can also be plentiful. In marine tourism destinations for example, shared behavior can involve walking along the beach, swimming or other water sports (sailing, surfing, yachting) that both, residents and tourists, enjoy. In a hot spring resort a common shared behavior between tourists and residents that does not only result in physical proximity, but actually provides opportunities for personal communication as well, is probably hot spring bathing. The highest scope for shared behavior between tourists and locals has probably urban tourism. Common actions in urban tourism involve shopping, dining, visiting museums, concerts and festivals, partying in local night clubs, etc.

Another factor often discussed as being crucial for smooth communication between hosts and guests specifically in an international context is language. Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007) who compared different cultural distance measures and investigated their consistency with each other posed that the cultural differences a tourist experiences can result in intercultural misunderstandings and leave her with a feeling of stress, anxiety and uncertainty which finally creates dissatisfaction with the travel experience.

One of the measures Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007) investigated and found consistent with other cultural distance measures was linguistic distance. Linguistic distance is usually based on ancestor languages and thus uses the genetic classification of languages which imposes grammatical similarity or difference. For instance, if you want to measure the linguistic difference to English (which is the language for which most linguistic distance studies have been conducted so far) you can use a hierarchical language tree, looking at how many branches are between English and the language of the target country. In case of multiple languages in a country the weighted average of all these languages is used. The high consistency of this index in many cases even over a national culture index underlines the importance of language in the process of

intercultural communication. Also in the realm of tourism, same or similar languages spoken can create an easier and safer feeling of tourists when communicating with hosts which finally results in a higher satisfaction with the tourism experience.

In 2000 Uriely and Reichel also conducted research that is of some interest to this study. For the case of short-term work in seasonal farm or city service work settings in Israel they discussed how different approaches to and different attitudes about the short-term work experience can result in different attitudes towards the hosts in Israel.

While Uriely and Reichel (2000) actually didn't investigate common modes of tourism in this study, but wrote about different types of international working tourists, interestingly enough they found that those with a more tourist-like approach to their stay in Israel, who regard their work there as part of their travel experience, have a higher scope to develop positive attitudes towards their hosts. That is due to the observation that this type of working tourist with a tourist instead of instrumental (economic) approach is more eager to closely interact with her hosts and develop personal ties with them. These personal ties created by personal, meaningful communication with hosts are valued as an important, memorable part in the social tourism experience and thus lead to an overall higher satisfaction of the working tourists with their stay and the destination of their stay in Israel. Hence, in this study Uriely and Reichel (2000) support the argument that "the positive results of the host-guest contact are determined by their motivation to interact with each other" (Uriely & Reichel, 2000, p. 272).

Perhaps the most excessive study on the pillars of intercultural interaction between international tourists and local residents/hosts has been done by Yu and Lee (2014). First, they thoroughly evaluate the existing literature body on intercultural contact in

tourism and host-guest relationships and also take into account the scholarship of Woosnam & Norman (2010), Ng, Lee & Soutar (2007) and Uriely & Reichel (2000). From this research base they distract the topic of impacts of intercultural interactions esp. on tourist experience and even make qualitative statements about which aspects of communication and interaction have positive and which have negative impacts on the tourist experience. In that they go further into qualitatively analyzing the special intercultural communicative situation in an international tourism context in contrast to merely stating certain aspects of this situation – the point at which most other scholars have stopped so far.

Yu and Lee (2014) recognize that “cultural experience [which is to a considerable degree determined by (note by the author)], the interactions between tourists and locals, makes tourism appealing and valuable.” (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 226) This notion is in part reflected in the study of Nguyen, who surveyed 87 international students from three different Japanese universities. Even these international student tourists, who spend a longer time in the country than other tourists, value travel as the best source to learn Japanese culture (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Sources for Learning Japanese Culture Valued by International Students (n=87)
(Nguyen, 2006, p. 69)

On a scale of 1-5 (1: not important – 5: very important)

Sources	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
University	87	3.74	1.234
Part-time job	82	3.55	1.467
The media (books, TV, Internet)	86	3.94	.962
Home stays/Exchange events	85	3.82	1.167
Traveling	87	4.01	1.017
Japanese friends at school	87	3.86	1.143
Japanese neighbors and acquaintances	86	3.57	1.270

At least, interactions with local residents can act “as an element to overcome negative critical incidents likely to take place in the course of travel” (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 234). In the best case tourists can make friends with locals, enhancing their travel experience and attitude towards the destination by adding another social dimension to their tourism experience. In fact, both tourists as well as residents can benefit from closer social contacts and more meaningful communication in the tourist setting. Whereas international tourists are oftentimes seeking to overcome commercial tourism environments and wish to be more included in the local community to add meaning to their stay there, locals can use communicative opportunities to learn to better understand the culture of the tourist and overcome prejudices related to the tourists’ countries of origin.

Upon acknowledging the importance of in-depth intercultural communication and stating its plentiful possible positive impacts, Yu and Lee (2014) don't stop there, but also develop a theoretical framework of four main pillars that are responsible for the success of intercultural interaction between international tourists and hosts. These are trust (if the tourist can trust the local residents), hospitality (in this case, hospitality by local residents respectively, not tourism staff, since according to Yu and Lee (2014) hospitality by tourism staff is taken for granted anyway), same languages spoken and a sense of equality that a tourist can feel when being treated fairly by the locals from a subjective point of view.

Finally Yu and Lee (2014) post that “cultural contacts and interactions will be more important variables for deciding the quality of tourism in the future as the contemporary pattern of international tourism activities shifts to emphasizing on-site experiences and contacts with host local-residents.” (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 236) Therefore according to them the conscious acknowledgement and active consideration and integration of the dimension of intercultural interaction in international tourism will be required in the future. Specifically that means the development of new specified products meeting cultural needs and emphasizing meaningful interactions and experiences with locals as well as the training of tourism employees to give them the necessary skills to cope with cultural differences and needs in an international tourism context delicately and effectively.

c) Issues in Intercultural Communication and Understanding in Japanese Inbound Tourism

A number of studies have also been conducted regarding issues of intercultural communication and understanding in Japanese inbound tourism in particular. Uzama (2009) investigated the challenges for and shortcomings of Japan on the way to achieve the JNTO goal of equaling the number of inbound and outbound tourists. He still noticed in many cities a, what he calls “nihonjin dake” (eng. “Japanese only”) (Uzama, 2009, p. 359) or “gaijin dame” (eng. “foreigners are bad/prohibited”) (Uzama, 2009, p. 359), syndrome referring to the fact that in a number of restaurants even in big cities in Kanto and Kansai who are afraid of language and cultural problems when serving foreigners, there are still “nihonjin dake” signs deterring foreigners.

Uzama (2009) thus states that welcoming foreigners with policies such as the Visit Japan Campaign is not enough, when the actual population of the country is not used to communicating and dealing with foreign guests, and not ready or willing to do so. In his eyes “promoting Japan to the world, only for tourists to visit and to be met with hostility, staring and avoidance by locals is not encouraging.” (Uzama, 2009, p. 359) In order for inbound tourism policies to become truly fruitful it is crucial to involve local communities in the policy development process, carefully communicating and showing up possible benefits of inbound tourism to residents. Only if locals know and understand the benefits of the type of tourism development in question, will they start to actively welcome new tourists and these tourists will enjoy hospitality (Uzama, 2009, p. 359).

Uzama (2009) mentions two other possibilities how to communicate Japanese tourism better to foreigners. Firstly, not only English speaking tourism staff, interpretive guides and promotional materials, but also promotional material and informative brochures written in other languages, in particular the languages of the new emerging inbound tourism markets (Korean, Chinese), would help visitors from these target markets considerably. Secondly, strong and popular images of Japan such as electronics, cars or Japanese comic culture, should be included more in tourism marketing concepts to capture the attention of possible foreign tourists.

Han's and Yotsumoto's (2010) investigations give some support to the notion of a lack of hospitality towards foreign tourists on the micro level as of Uzama (2009). They cited a 2009 survey of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications according to which still 69.7% of hotel owners, 71% of ryokan owners and 76.9% of other accommodation owners (including minshuku, small Japanese-style pensions) do not want to accept foreign travelers. Han and Yotusmoto also named several reasons for this attitude, namely a language barrier with inbound visitors, the perception that the facility would not suit foreigners, anxiety to deal with problems when inbound tourists stay over, insecurities regarding payment methods (since Japan is still a very cash-based society so that many establishments don't accept credit cards at all or only Visa and JCB cards (personal observation)), and a general preference for domestic travelers.

Whereas the worries of Japanese accommodation owners should be taken seriously, the fact that the problems causing these worries apparently haven't been tackled yet obviously causes challenges in achieving the goals of the Visit Japan Campaign. Thus, as Uzama (2009) also mentioned, such a large-scale inbound tourism campaign cannot be planned on the level of the Japanese national government only, but has to be

carefully planned in cooperation with and communicated to local tourism actors, because they are the ones who finally deal with the new guests, not the JNTO or the Japanese government.

Ratz is a pioneer in comparative analysis of hot spring tourism. In particular she has conducted in-depth studies comparing Hungarian spa tourism with Japanese hot spring tourism and investigating the experience Caucasian tourists have at Japanese hot spring sites (Ratz, 2009 & 2011). During her research she noticed that the emphasis being put on Japanese hot spring bathing etiquette in virtually all hot springs on large boards and even in promotional brochures might deter tourists who are not familiar with this particular bathing etiquette from trying the otherwise relaxing tourist attraction (regardless of bathing rules actually being enforced or not). This is due to Ratz's observation that the emphasis put on rules makes foreign tourists afraid of not taking the bath right and being blamed for it or blamed as a foreigner.

In addition, the habit of naked bathing in front of others is one that many Caucasian tourists are not familiar with and feel uncomfortable about. This is even more the case as they clearly stand out as tourists due to their skin color (more than other Asian tourists for example). Moreover, most Japanese hot springs are based on gender-separated bathing which makes it an unattractive site to visit with a spouse with whom a slightly challenging first hot spring experience in Japan could become less embarrassing.

To be clear about this aspect of Japanese bathing etiquette, it is not so much about how Japanese hot springs are in reality. In reality there are several different types of hot springs, including family baths that you can rent only with your spouse or family so that you don't have to be embarrassed to bathe naked and even some gender-mixed baths

you enter with swimming wear. It is more about how hot spring experiences are communicated to foreign tourists and the idea these tourists have of a Japanese hot spring and the problems they might encounter there. In addition to preventing inbound tourists from a good opportunity for meaningful personal communication with locals that goes beyond mere service matters (and vice-versa), such a communication of hot spring experiences also contradicts the need for cultural sensibility in tourism that Yu and Lee (2014) believe to become crucial due to the strong growth of international tourism in this century.

Since the year 2000 Beppu is in a quite unique situation as a hot spring resort that could be advantageous for promoting inbound tourism (Dolkar, 2005). Since 2000 Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) on a hill above Beppu City is a leading international university in Japan with nearly half of its student body comprised of international students. Students, instructors and staff of the university usually perceive it to have a positive effect on intercultural understanding and openness in the local community due to the large number of international students living downtown, the university's local exchange activities and its' inbound tourism ripple effects (relatives and friends of international APU students visiting them in Beppu) (personal communication).

However, physically the whole campus and the university dormitories are separated from the actual City of Beppu. Furthermore, even in downtown Beppu students tend to cluster in certain areas and use few, similar commercial facilities that they deem suitable for their lifestyle (personal experience), so that there is question about how intense the exchange with the local community actually is, and if the local community is actually

more successful in communicating with and welcoming foreigners since the existence of APU.

3. Objective and Methodology of the Research

a) Epistemology and Methodology

This thesis is inspired by the epistemological paradigm of social constructionism. Social constructionism shares with radical constructionism the viewpoint that the objects investigated by researchers are constructions of human kind and no reality or outside world can be sensed and explained by humans (Lamnek, 2005; Reuber & Pfaffenbach, 2005; Schnell, Hill, & Esser, 2005). However, whereas this idea leads radical constructionists to believe that research in itself is a merely individual process of construction within the researchers' consciousness so that no inter-subjectivity can be achieved what so ever, social constructionists have a slightly different stance on possibilities and the meaning of social research.

Social constructionism emphasizes the investigation of a socially constructed reality (Reuber & Pfaffenbach, 2005). To social constructionists the idea of reality and the objective outside world that positivists try to understand does not matter, since reality in a human context is socially constructed through processes of communication and discourse and in that way constituted by society. Therefore social constructionism tries

to investigate different constructions about the world as elements of communication and structuring principles of society (Reuber & Pfaffenbach, 2005). Reuber and Pfaffenbach (2005) cited Cassirer (1956) in this regard who wrote that through communication places and material elements also become symbols and that only through their symbolic context meaning is ascribed to them. This study is concerned with how the perceived reality of inbound tourism in Beppu is influenced and constituted by processes of intercultural communication in the inbound tourism context and thus approaches the research objective from an epistemological stance inspired by social constructionism.

Like most other studies in the realm of constructionism, this study applies a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods have a number of advantages in relatively new research fields in which not many established theories exist yet such as the specific challenges of intercultural communication in inbound tourism. First of all, they are more flexible and open than quantitative methods that have to be designed in a strictly uniform manner in order to ensure statistical validity. That way, qualitative methods can be modified or even rejected throughout the research process so that the appropriateness of the method for the research object is easier to ensure. This is especially important in new research fields in which prior scientific knowledge about research objects is limited.

In addition, qualitative methods have a higher scope to integrate subjective perspectives of interview partners and thus a higher depth of information and inductive power than quantitative methods. Thus, research results from qualitative research are hard to quantify, however they provide more opportunities to get know a new research field deeper and help to find crucial aspects for theoretical consideration. They are more able to create theories than to test theories and should thus be applied in fields where little trusted theories exist yet (Lamnek, 2005; Mayring, 2002).

Within the realm of qualitative methods this study focuses especially on guideline-based interviews. Guideline-based interviews are a suitable method for research fields in which some research has been conducted already so that it is not necessary to start from a completely blank slate, but the trusted theoretical framework is not big enough yet to ask standardized questions for quantification. In qualitative, guideline-based interview research, a prior (before the field stage) understanding of the topic by the author developed through literature review, and explicated in the beginning of the paper provides supposedly relevant issues and categories for the guideline. However, this prior concept is not disclosed to interview partners so that they have enough scope to share their own, subjective perspectives on the issue, and the prior-to-research concept or theory can be modified or even fail in confrontation with the research object. Thus guideline-based interview methods combine deductive and inductive approaches (Lamnek, 2005; Mayring, 2002).

There are different opinions as to whether and how hypotheses should be used in qualitative research. Mayring (2002) states that openness in the research process does not call for a total abandonment of hypotheses. Instead of neglecting or denying hypotheses in general, the prior hypothetical considerations of the researcher should be explicated. However, the inductive and open nature of qualitative research does not allow a strictly hypotheses-focused research scheme of merely testing strictly schemed hypotheses as common in quantitative research techniques (see e.g. Friedrichs, 1990). Moreover, the information created in the qualitative interview conduction can also give input for new hypotheses which are not synthesized by review of previous literature in the fields.

Moreover, qualitative research cannot provide definite statements regarding the validity of the content of hypotheses, so that also the falsification principle of critical rationalism which is based on definite decisions of falseness cannot be applied (Lamnek, 2005; Mayring, 2002). Critical rationalism in its original form as of Popper (1984) claims to follow a strictly deductive research process which can only end with falsification or non-falsification of completely theoretically elicited hypotheses. This principle does not suit the more inductive oriented qualitative paradigm which acknowledges the power of the research object to modify or even destroy prior theoretical considerations of the researcher. Therefore qualitative research can never absolutely proof or disproof hypotheses, but merely support or doubt them to a certain level which has to be well argued by the researcher, since it also cannot apply statistical techniques of evaluation or only to a very limited extent (Lamnek, 2005; Mayring, 2002).

In addition, the epistemological paradigm of constructionism does not support the falsification principle. In the eyes of constructionists data are not “found” by researchers, but “constructed” by them. This significantly different view on reality and the possibilities of research also means that, if data are constructed by the researcher, they can never be an independent instance for proof or disproof of a theory (Lamnek, 2005). Therefore, to constructionists not “truth” but “usefulness” is the relevant measure of the quality of hypotheses (Schnell, Hill, & Esser, 2005).

According to these methodological and epistemological considerations this study does not use hypotheses in an investigative sense, but instead poses questions that are derived from literature review and form an input from which the interview guideline was created. These questions are answered based upon the data created in this research and

these answers are summarized in Table 5.1 in chapter 5. However, these answers are by no means definite or absolute statements, but merely reflect the information created in this research. As such they are meant to give input and reason for further research that can try to broaden their scope, modify them or challenge them again.

b) Research Objective and Research Question

Research Objective:

Given the recent inbound tourism policy focus of both the JNTO and Beppu City Hall and the promising macro-economic and –political circumstances, a further increase in inbound tourists in the city of Beppu is likely to occur in the near future. With this in mind, this research is trying to assess if the current tourism environment of Beppu is suitable for large-scale inbound tourism in regards to intercultural communication and understanding. The information gained through this research could especially be valuable for local policy makers in Beppu City Hall who are constantly trying to improve the inbound tourism environment in Beppu and for local tourism staff. It can also contribute to the research body of cross-cultural interactions in international tourism in general by providing a qualitative perspective from a particular destination in Japan.

Research Question:

Which challenges in intercultural communication and understanding in Beppu inbound tourism are to be overcome in order for Beppu City to become a leading inbound tourism destination in Japan?

c) Subquestions

1. Does a lack of emotional solidarity with international tourists create a challenge for hosts (tourism staff) in Beppu to communicate successfully with them and deal with cultural differences delicately (see Yu & Lee, 2014; Woosnam, 2012)?

2. Do perceived cultural and language barriers between Beppu residents and international tourists have a negative impact on host hospitality as perceived by international tourists?

3. Do “Japanese-only” communication and hospitality by tourism related businesses in Beppu (e.g. providing no foreign language speaking staff, signage, announcements, promotion material, websites; strong emphasis on Japanese hot spring etiquette in communicating hot spring experiences) create an unfavorable attitude in international tourists towards the destination (see Han & Yotsumoto, 2010; Ratz, 2009 & 2011; Uzama, 2009)?

4. Does a lack of meaningful personal conversation and cultural exchange between hosts (tourism staff as well as local residents) and international guests make international guests' travel experiences less valuable (see Uriely & Reichel, 2000; Yu & Lee, 2014)?

5. Does widespread segregation between international students and local Japanese non-student residents hinder Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University to considerably help Japanese non-student residents in Beppu to communicate with foreigners more successfully?

d) Research Instruments

The subquestions created for this research were derived from relevant ideas in previous literature in the fields of intercultural communication and understanding in international tourism, Japanese inbound tourism in general and hot spring tourism in particular. They were approached using data derived from two major target groups in Beppu City. Inbound tourists in Beppu gave valuable information about the tourist side with which hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 are concerned. Local tourism managers and staff provided the view of the host side with which subquestions 1 and 5 are concerned. The data for subquestions 2, 3 and 4 were created by conducting a small number of qualitative

guideline-based interviews in which relevant aspects were clarified. These were then further tested with a semi-qualitative questionnaire containing some open-ended questions in order to widen the data base. The data to approach subquestions 1 and 5 were created in qualitative interviews conducted by a Japanese research assistant in Japanese language in order to avoid errors resulting from the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

The sample of inbound tourists was derived using a convenience sampling method. Therefore international tourists have been approached and asked for interviews and/or handed out the questionnaire around Beppu Station, Kamenoi Hotel and Kitahama area. Caucasian travelers were identified by eyesight by the author. Travelers from Korea, China and Taiwan were identified by eyesight and acoustic reception by Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese research assistants, who accompanied the author around Beppu Station and Kamenoi Hotel. In general all inbound tourists who were identified were asked, if they were willing to meet for an interview during their stay in Beppu (with the promise of treating them for a meal) and those who reported that they didn't have time for an in-depth interview were handed out the questionnaire. Thereby international tourists that were obviously accompanied by a Japanese person on their trip were not approached, since they were expected to have a quite distinct communicative situation on their journey with their Japanese company acting as an intermediary and transmitter between Japanese and a foreign language.

Caucasian tourists were handed out the English language version of the questionnaire. Korean tourists were handed out the Korean version. Taiwanese tourists were handed out the Traditional Chinese version and Chinese tourists were handed out the Simplified Chinese version. The translation of the questionnaire in Korean, Traditional Chinese

and Simplified Chinese was meant to accommodate the largest inbound tourist groups as of Table 3.1 (Hori, n.y.). Four Simplified Chinese questionnaires were forwarded electronically to Chinese tourists who had visited Beppu in the past, but were not in Beppu at the time of investigation. These survey respondents were approached via acquainted APU students. A total of 45 filled-in questionnaires and five guideline-based interviews with a total of ten inbound tourists have been used in this research. The interviews had a length of between 23 and 44 minutes and were all recorded and transcribed in full. One of the interviews with a Chinese who had been in Beppu in the past, but not at the time of research, was conducted via online-calling. This interview partner was approached via an acquainted APU student.

Table 3.1: Top Ten Source Countries for Foreign Tourists to Beppu (Hori, n.y., p. 96)

(unit: people,%)

Ranking	Countries	The Number of Tourists	Percentage
1	Korea	104,012	64.16
2	China	9,726	6.00
3	Taiwan	8,843	5.45
4	Thailand	4,670	2.88
5	America	4,586	2.83
6	Germany	3,664	2.26
7	France	3,278	2.02
8	Singapore	3,163	1.95
9	Australia	2,425	1.50
10	Italy	2,193	1.35

Source: Hori (n.y., p. 96) based on Heisei 21 Kanko Dotai Yoran

(Beppu-Shi ONSEN Tourism-Department Kanko Machizukuri-Department)

The sample of tourism managers and staff was derived using purposive sampling so that the sample covers a range of different tourism businesses that might have different encounters with inbound tourists. Therefore each of the Japanese research assistants chose one tourism business in Beppu that is frequently patronized by foreign visitors under consultation with the author. These businesses were then contacted by the Japanese research assistants themselves who each made an appointment for one interview preferably with staff in a higher position in the assigned businesses. The qualitative interviews with tourism managers and staff had a length of approximately 20-30 minutes each and took place at the business they were working at. They were transcribed by the Japanese research assistants and translated to English by other bilingual research assistants.

For evaluation of the guideline-based interviews the researcher used a manual coding technique by reading all interview transcripts and assigning colors to parts of the transcript according to which subquestions are being touched upon. By reading all transcripts completely aspects that are not represented in the subquestions, but that are deemed important by interview partners, can be noted as well in a separate section. Moreover, in order to maintain the privacy of the interview partners the names of tourist interview partners were changed. The names of tourism staff interview partners were not disclosed either. They are cited only by their job position and an anonymized description of their work place (such as “hotel 1” for instance). The questionnaires were mainly evaluated together with the interview data in order to keep the qualitative nature of the study. However, information derived from the questionnaires was not of representative quantity for the whole base of inbound tourists in Beppu.

For an overview of the interview partners see tables 3.2 and 3.3. The two interview guidelines and the questionnaire can be found in the attachments to this thesis.

Table 3.2: Beppu Inbound Tourist Interviews

Interview number	Interviewee	Country	Age group	Length of stay in Beppu	Length of stay in Japan	Place of interview	Length of interview (recorded file)
1	Ellen	Australia	under 30	2.5 days	5 weeks	Japanese pub (izakaya)	28 min.
	Conor						
2	Tian	China	40-50	3 days	2 weeks	Online call	31 min.
	Tian's daughter		under 30	5.5 years	5.5 years	APU B building	4 min.
3	Lukas	Switzerland	30-40	3 days	not yet decided	British pub	29 min.
4	Anezka	Czech Republic	30-40	1.5 days	3 weeks	Italian restaurant	44 min.
	Kamila						
	Radek						
	Marek						
5	Franziska	Germany	under 30	2 days	3 weeks	bar	39 min.
	Jonas		30-40				

Table 3.3: Beppu Tourism Staff Interviews

Tourism business/ interview place description	Interviewee job position	Interviewer
ryokan 1	ryokan owner	Tomohiro Ogawa
hotel 1	lodging manager	Mami Tominaga
local bus company information office 1	reception staff	Sayo Mizoguchi
Beppu Hell 1	senior managing director	Ikumi Imamiya
hot spring 1	manager	Yukari Kawasaki

4. Discussion of the Results

a) General Statistics of the Research Participants

The total number of survey participants in this research was 45. The gender distribution among the participants who disclosed their gender (all participants but 2) is almost even. The highest represented age groups of the survey were 30-40 years with 22 participants and 40-50 years with 14 participants. The countries that most survey participants came from are South Korea (18) and Taiwan (11). Other than these two countries there were four participants from (Mainland) China, one from Hong Kong, five from France, two from Germany, two from the Netherlands, one from Czech Republic and one from Spain. Participants from East Asia totaled 34, while there were eleven participants from

the European region. The average duration of stay in Beppu of the survey participants was 1.7 days, whereas the average stay in Japan was approximately 1.6 weeks. The best experience in Beppu was an onsen visit for 22 of the survey respondents. The hardest part about talking with locals was language for 22 of the survey respondents.

In addition to the survey for inbound tourists, five qualitative guideline-based interviews were conducted with a total of ten participants, four females and six males. Out of the ten interview participants six were between 30 and 40 years old, three were under 30 years of age and one was between 40 and 50 years old. Four participants came from Czech Republic, two from Germany, two from Australia, one from China and one from Switzerland.

For the host side of this research with which subquestions 1. and 5. are concerned five qualitative guideline-based interviews were conducted by five different Japanese research assistants. They were all undergraduate students of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. They interviewed tourism staff of five different tourism businesses in Beppu (one ryokan, one hotel, one bathing hot spring, one Beppu Hell and one local bus company information office) in Japanese.

b) Subquestion 1.

1. Does a lack of emotional solidarity with international tourists create a challenge for hosts (tourism staff) in Beppu to communicate successfully with them and deal with cultural differences delicately (see Yu & Lee, 2014; Woosnam, 2012)?

Subquestion 1. brings up the topic of emotional solidarity between hosts and international guests in Beppu's inbound tourism. Emotional solidarity is a feeling of closeness or togetherness that can arise between two distinct groups of people, when they personally interact with each other or share similar activities or beliefs. In tourism settings this means that in addition to shared philosophies regarding to the qualities of the destination and shared activities within the destination, emotional solidarity can also arise in personalized service that involves close interaction between hosts and guests. This personalized service again provides hosts with opportunities to learn to understand the culture of the guests better and deal with cultural differences and needs even more delicately and effectively, thus enhancing the tourist experience.

When asked if they could think of things that they share with inbound visitors, some of the tourism staff interviewed couldn't think of anything. However, some came up with notable aspects. The senior managing director at Beppu Hell 1 (11 years in this position, age: 40-50) for instance said the common point with foreign tourists would be enjoyment. While tourists enjoy the sightseeing, the staff at this hell pond enjoys the hospitality, the act of serving them. This is somewhat similar to the talks of the ryokan owner of Ryokan 1 who saw the connection between the tourists and himself in

destination Beppu. Foreign tourists want to enjoy Beppu and he as a host wants them to enjoy Beppu too:

“I do not know, but the tourists want to enjoy Beppu, and we have a consciousness that we want them to enjoy Beppu. In addition, I want the tourists to experience Japanese culture. I think the inbound tourist want to experience it. Therefore I prepare rooms that have *Tatami* mat and a *Yukata* and the hot spring and let the guests eat Japanese food as a method to experience Japanese culture. This is important and I feel that it is necessary to keep the quality. It is a future task to perform events related to Japanese culture. Before, the people of the hot spring master club did an event related to hot springs, but it is also important to keep basic Japanese culture such as giving *Yukata*, leather-soled sandals, *Futon* and *Tatami* mats to the inbound tourists who want to feel Japanese culture. (ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50)

In addition to the shared passion for Beppu City the ryokan owner mentioned another important aspect from which emotional solidarity can arise. He viewed it as his task as a ryokan manager to make an effort to consciously share Japanese culture in the sense of authentic travel behavior with his international guests, by enabling them to travel and eat like Japanese. By doing this he tries to fulfill their wish of getting to know Japan authentically, an approach to inbound tourism which is quite different from the common perception that in order to increase inbound tourism Japan would need more international style hotels. This aspect of sharing Japanese culture was also stated by the senior managing director of Beppu Hell 1 (11 years in this position, age: 40-50) who said that foreign tourists come to Japan, because they like the country and are interested in its culture, so they will try to follow Japanese customs while they are here. If this is the case that inbound tourists are so keen on having an authentic Japanese experience and following “the Japanese way”, and hosts in Beppu openly embrace and welcome

this interest and do everything to facilitate this intercultural experience for the foreign tourists, then emotional solidarity should be created very easily.

However, it does not seem to be that easy in all cases. The lodging manager of hotel 1 for example, who couldn't think of things he shares with international tourists, on the contrary mentioned differences in bathing habits between Japanese and foreign tourists, which at times lead to claims by Japanese tourists:

“...there are cultural differences so of course there are differences in terms of manners. To give an example, our hotel has a big onsen. There are a few aspects that are noticeable such as using the shower standing, talking loud and so on. We get a few claims because of the foreigners. However, we make sure at the front desk that the guides of the foreigners teach them the Japanese rules and have started a few things to support this problem.” (lodging manager of hotel 1)

It is interesting to note that this lodging manager receives foreign tourists usually as group tourists. According to the ryokan owner of ryokan 1 (20 years in this position, age: 40-50) generally more problems with manners are occurring with group tourists than with individual tourists, regardless of the nationality of the group tourists.

“...a large number of tour visitors, I think, Japanese and foreigners make problems. But our ryokan does not have such a trouble because there are many individual guests. I think that you must understand about it, is it an individual or group tourist, rather than the nationality. Because individual tourists gather information by themselves, so they don't make much trouble.” (ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50)

In this sense it might be harder to overcome critical incidents during the tourists stay and develop emotional solidarity in the case of group tourists, since they might feel

stronger solidarity within the group they are travelling with than with their hosts with whom they interact far less than within their group.

Regarding communication with inbound tourists there are different approaches among the tourism staff interviewed for this research. Some businesses operate with rote memorizing of important vocabulary and phrases and/or explanatory pamphlets and signs translated to English, Korean and Chinese. In some cases, esp. in hotel 1, international APU student workers who speak foreign languages can assist in communicating with foreign tourists. Additionally, written messages and gestures are used, when spoken messages cannot be successfully transmitted. In general, the staff interviewed enjoys to communicate with foreign tourists, even if it bears some obstacles, and makes an effort to engage in small talk with customers as well, or, in cases where there are international students working at the facility, lets these students have small talk with international customers in order to provide a personal service and make them feel welcome in their facility.

“...sometimes I have a hard time to communicate with them compared to Japanese. However, I’m not so worried about it because these days there are many foreign tourists who understand Japanese or there are interpreters with them and because the staff studies English. [...] I talk with them about easy topics such as weather or climate. In this case, I can have a lively conversation with them. [...] Our staff enjoys it with smile, but it’s still difficult to communicate in foreign languages.” (senior managing director at Beppu Hell 1, 11 years in the position, age: 40-50)

"It seems like the front desk staff communicates frequently with tourists. A foreign tourist often communicates more than a Japanese tourist. We are happy to talk with them, but don't think that we want them to speak Japanese." (ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50)

“I do not myself, but according to what I hear from customers they are very happy to have a chance to chat with staff who can speak foreign languages, more than staff who can’t.” (lodging manager of hotel 1)

However, even when utilizing all of the methods mentioned above, the personal communication is not always successful in the sense that it leads to understanding.

“...sometimes people don’t understand. When they don’t understand at all, I use gestures; for example, when showing the way to the highway bus stop. Also, when two guests want one way tickets, actually the one-way ticket is 3100 yen per person, but we cannot explain the pair discount system well to foreign tourists. After introducing that sometimes the tourists get a different ticket. That time we need to refund the tourists who changed to the new ticket when they already bought a different ticket. For the refund there is a provision, but I can’t explain that in detail in English. So we will prepare pen and paper and then explain about that: “You bought a ticket at this price, it takes a changing fee and we will return this amount of money to you.” After that the tourists still ask us: “Why? How?” However, we cannot explain in detail in English and it is very difficult to understand for tourists, because they will ask “Why? How?” many times. That is very difficult. [...] All countries have different language origins and speaking speeds. When people from other prefectures hear Oita dialect, it sounds like quarrel to them. It’s the same with other countries. The way of speaking and the nuance are different. Sometimes when people speak fast, I think, they are in a hurry or nervous. Regarding cheerful countries where the gestures and the way of speaking are different, I also get nervous, like: “What is this person trying to say? I have to understand quickly!” My own study regarding this is also not sufficient though. [...] I sometimes worry, because I want to tell more, but I cannot tell the information specifically. For example, in this season many foreign tourists want to go up the ropeway. I cannot tell specifically, so I will say that the bottom is warm, but on top it’s cold, so you should wear more clothes by gesture. Also, it is difficult to explain to tourists about which traffic lane they should wait, because even when I tell the bus station name there is a lane going up and a lane going down.” (reception staff at local bus company information office 1, 2 years in this position, age: under 30)

This example shows that even when making a great effort, sometimes specific messages that can still be relevant to tourists cannot be conveyed without foreign language skills.

In such cases the communication will fail, even if the staff involved feels some degree of solidarity with the tourist.

The last aspect mentioned in subquestion 1. is how staff of tourism businesses in Beppu deals with cultural differences. Since shared activities, beliefs and in-depth personal communication lead to emotional solidarity as a feeling of closeness to the tourist, it can be expected that staff showing higher degrees of this solidarity will also show a higher skill of dealing with the cultural differences between themselves and the guests they are hosting. The most common ways of dealing with cultural differences reported in the interviews used in this thesis are explanatory signs and personal explanation of cultural differences that might create an obstacle to inbound tourists, such as differences in manners at and usage of Japanese spas and hotels when compared to other countries' similar facilities. Among all the tourism staff that was interviewed ryokan owner 1 has probably the most sophisticated and interculturally competent approach to dealing with international guests by trying to understand their behavior from their countries perspective, not merely by memorizing differences to Japan:

“I think that it must be understood about these people that they have their own habits without comparing foreign tourists though with the Japanese thought. So I try to understand on the conditions of a country and the habits of the tourist, then choose a room for them. It is very important to understand the habits of other countries for tourism.” (ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50)

In conclusion, it can be stated according to the insights created in the interviews conducted for this research that subquestion 1. can be answered with “Yes.”. The lack of emotional solidarity seems to be one challenge for hosts to communicate with international tourists successfully and deal with them delicately. However, whereas the degree of real emotional solidarity in the sense of a feeling of closeness created through shared beliefs, activities and in-depth interpersonal communication is not high for all

tourism staff interviewed, all of them generally appreciate the patronage of inbound visitors. Thereby some follow the attitude: “All our guests are important, no matter where they are from.” (e.g. lodging manager at hotel 1). Others appreciate foreign visitors in some particular way, for example, because they made a great effort to come to Beppu which is a totally new environment for them (senior managing director at Beppu Hell 1, 11 years in this position, age: 40-50) or because they create a new sector in Beppu tourism and a potential increase in tourists in Beppu in general (reception staff at local bus company information office 1, 2 years in this position, age: under 30; ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50).

The ability to communicate successfully with international guests, however, seems to be much more directly dependent on verbal and nonverbal communication skills, esp. language skills, and the confidence of the staff than on emotional solidarity with international tourists in particular. In contrast, regarding the participants of this research, there seems to be a stronger correlation between the degree of emotional solidarity felt with inbound tourists and the delicate and professional handling of cultural differences with them.

c) Subquestion 2.

2. Do perceived cultural and language barriers between Beppu residents and international tourists have a negative impact on host hospitality as perceived by international tourists?

Whereas subquestion 3. is concerned with hospitality in tourism businesses in particular, subquestion 2. regards the general host population of Beppu, therefore the wording “Beppu residents”.

Firstly, subquestion 2. asks, if international tourists perceive cultural and language barriers between Beppu residents and themselves. Regarding the cultural barrier the interview research revealed that the interview partners do feel considerable cultural differences. When asked, if he felt big cultural differences between the local population of Beppu and his hometown, one Czech tourist ironically said:

“...apart from everyone smiling, not rushing so much, being clean and polite, no.”
(Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

This statement suggests that cultural differences are not necessarily perceived as a barrier, but can also be valued as positive virtues that don't exist in the home countries' culture. The same Czech tourist and two of his friends went on to describe these virtues in greater detail:

“Yeah, those things are amazing. Yeah, and even driving in the street, you look like a complete asshole and the cars just stop behind you. Actually you're about to just bump into it. [...] Even when the streets are dark you can walk on the road [...]. They just drive slow. Yeah, really, the Japanese are smiling all the time.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Completely different. Just you can't believe that it's real. It's too different. When you walk in Prague [...] nobody's caring about people around themselves. [...] just: ‘It's my

way and I will go through and I don't care about nobody.'" (Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

"...I think it's really, because Japanese are really polite. So if you don't feel good, when you do something they are watching, they are looking that they didn't see anything. Or maybe they tell you and show you how to do it in the right way. But no screaming, no arguing." (Kamila, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

These statements are exemplary for the general notion of all interview partners in this research that there are considerable cultural differences, but these are mostly not perceived as negative in the way that they would create a cultural barrier. Certain customs that require some getting used to like the custom of taking off your shoes frequently (stated by Ellen, Australia, age: under 30 & Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40) or snorting instead of blowing your nose in public (stated by Radek & Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40) are deemed relatively minor in contrast to widely appreciated virtues such as politeness, friendliness, safety and respectfulness of others that can be enjoyed in Japan.

Regarding language the inbound tourists interviewed and surveyed in this research do seem to face problems while travelling in Beppu. On a 5 point Likert scale the average value in regards to the question "How easy do you find talking with local Japanese?" was only 2.2, whereas most survey respondents stated language problems as the hardest part of talking with local Japanese. Similarly, the questions "How well could you communicate in English in Beppu?", "How well could you communicate in Chinese in Beppu?" and "How well could you communicate in Korean in Beppu?" had rather low results of respectively 2.8, 2.5 and 1.7.

These survey results might give reason to the confident confirmation of the language barrier stated in subquestion 2. very quickly. However, also regarding this aspect of subquestion 2. it is beneficial to have a closer look at the stories that were shared by the interview partners in the guideline-based interviews, since they have a slightly more nuanced view on the role of language in the course of travel and tourism in Beppu.

“I think it depends. At the key points, the hostel or at the station, there was no problem. Also the staff at the station spoke really good English, but otherwise, yesterday in the evening I went out for eating and there was a little bit difficult with English, so I had to spoke [sic] hands and images [...] but really friendly as well.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

“I think, it’s not exactly easy, but if you dump down the conversation level, use lots of hands, then you can always make your way...” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Yeah, they are really trying. Everywhere they are trying to help us. Even if they can’t speak English, they are trying to help you or trying to understand.” (Kamila, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“...Well, I went to a kusuriya today. [...] They were just very open and even if they can’t help you, I think, they would try and find someone who could, I guess. They’re used to tourists. Probably.” (Franziska, Germany, age: under 30)

“We went to a supermarket today. And it was kind of Beppu suburb, so not the city center, but the guy was pretty friendly, he tried to speak English until he noticed: ‘Okay, she speaks Japanese, so fine. So we’re fine.’ But they were very nice and people are like: ‘Oh, hello, where’re you from?’ That’s kind of nice. They seem to be open to foreign tourists.” (Franziska, Germany, age: under 30)

“Yeah, there was some older lady saying ‘Hello!’ to us explicitly. Trying to be nice. Yeah.” (Jonas, Germany, age: 30-40)

The above comments of interview partners from Switzerland, Czech Republic and Germany reveal that whereas most have some difficulties in talking in English with

people in Beppu that don't work in a particularly tourism related business, the notion of a barrier due to this fact doesn't seem suitable, since they shared many examples for how they were being helped and got what they were looking for even without the local people understanding English. This does not necessarily only apply to locals they meet in a service environment, but can also be observed on the street in general or when patronizing a facility together with local customers as the following comment of Lukas (Switzerland, age: 30-40) indicates:

“Speaking was difficult, but I met some people for example at the onsen and they were really helpful, even if I don't understood [sic] them. They showed me with the soap or something like this, with the hands, and how to do it and where is the shower and the locker room and, yeah, friendly.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

Considering above quotes by inbound tourists, it can be concluded for the participants of this research that they had language difficulties during their stay in Beppu, but these didn't provide a barrier in the sense that it made them unable to get what they were looking for in Beppu and created an obstacle to their satisfaction with their stay in Beppu.

Lastly, question 2 asks, if the cultural differences and language difficulties that, as has been shown, do not necessarily provide barriers for touristic endeavors in Beppu in general have a negative impact on host hospitality as perceived by international tourists. This notion can be refused in the context of this research, since research participants have generally appreciated the hospitality in Beppu, not only of tourism staff, but also of the population in general. The friendliness of locals was rated on average at 4.0 on a 5 level Likert scale by the survey participants. This high satisfaction with the

friendliness and hospitality of Beppu residents was shared by all interview partners as the following quotes illustrate:

“...the Japanese is [sic] very kind to us. [...] Fairly treated. Equality. Kindly, friendly. [...] so the tourism is perfect for all of our family.” (Tian, China, age: 40-50)

“Yeah, just all the people serving you and the people bringing you drinks. They say: ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you!’, whereas in Australia this might be said once or twice.” (Ellen, Australia, age: under 30)

“The quality of service is remarkable.” (Conor, Australia, age: under 30)

“Really friendly and helpful people they are. Overall really good.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

“But so far in general, I think, people seem overly nice, like I was actually expecting; what I was hearing before from Japan: People are extremely nice and that’s pretty much what I experienced.” (Jonas, Germany, age: 30-40)

“...people here were friendly in general. Helpful. Helping us find the way and, yeah, I like that.” (Franziska, Germany, age: under 30)

In conclusion, considering the information gained in this research, subquestion 2. can be answered with “No.”. While there are considerable cultural differences that inbound tourists feel between themselves and Beppu residents as well as language difficulties when communicating with Beppu residents, both of these do not generally create barriers for tourism in Beppu and clearly do not have a negative impact on the perception of host hospitality as perceived by survey respondents and interview partners of this research project.

d) Subquestion 3.

3. Do “Japanese-only” communication and hospitality by tourism related businesses in Beppu (e.g. providing no foreign language speaking staff, signage, announcements, promotion material, websites; strong emphasis on Japanese hot spring etiquette in communicating hot spring experiences) create an unfavorable attitude in international tourists towards the destination (see Han & Yotsumoto, 2010; Ratz, 2009 & 2011; Uzama, 2009)?

Subquestion 3. deals with communication and hospitality in specific tourism settings in tourism related businesses. It is based on the observations of “Japanese-only” hospitality of Han & Yotsumoto (2010) and Uzama (2009), and on Ratz’s (2009, 2011) notion that the strong emphasis put on Japanese hot spring etiquette in communicating hot spring experiences deters inbound tourists from trying this tourist attraction which Beppu tourism is heavily based upon.

In the first part of subquestion 3. possible signs and characteristics of “Japanese only” communication and hospitality in tourism related businesses are noted, of which the first one is a lack of foreign language speaking staff. The survey data give some support to this notion, since the ability to get by with foreign languages in Beppu is rated only at 2.8 on average for English. For Chinese and Korean it is rated only at respectively 2.5 and 1.7. However, similar to the observations of the perceived hospitality of the general local population, in case of the tourism businesses it can also be doubted that these language difficulties alone have a negative impact on the hospitality felt by foreign

tourists, as survey respondents rated friendliness of tourism staff at a very high 4.4 average. The interview partners also had not only good experiences with English in Beppu's tourism environment. However, all of them confirmed that the staff of their accommodation spoke sufficient English.

“I think, it helps a lot for foreign visitors, if the staff speaks English, at least basic English. So it was at the Khaosan Hostel. All the staff, I met three people over there at the front desk and all of them speak really good English, yeah.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

Moreover, especially Lukas, but also Ellen and Conor (Australia, age: under 30) were talking positively about the professional English language service at the tourist information at Beppu Station:

„The tourist information. [...] There was a woman. She explained me with all the maps and buses and, yes. [...] It was good to know and nice to have in the sense of welcoming in Beppu. Get all the maps and they understand you, they can explain you everything. She even explained me the way to the hostel. [...] As she asked me where I want to go today, I told her ‘To the Kannawa area.’ and she calculated all the bus fares and told me afterwards that I don't have to buy a one day pass, ‘cause it's getting cheaper, when I just single bus tickets, so [...] that was really nice, yeah.“ (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

However, in some businesses that are still tourism related, but not patronized frequently by international tourists, apparently English is not always understood, as the experience of the four Czech inbound tourists interviewed for this thesis exemplifies:

Anezka: “We just went to a ramen shop.”

Radek: "...they were actually fighting who will serve the foreigners, because they were a little bit afraid of our Japanese. [...] They were like: 'Oh, you go there! You go there! I don't want to go there. I don't want to speak with foreigners.' They were behind the bar. You could see them, but they were changing the block for taking the order."

Anezka: "But they were afraid to speak English or they don't understand us. [...] They decided who will go there and the guy was really friendly and everything, but they were fighting who will serve the foreigners. It was like sitcom. [...]"

Radek: "Fight, like [...] when you encounter something completely you have never met before."

Anezka: "You're trying to send someone else."

Radek: "Yeah, you don't want to be there to try it out."

(Anezka & Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

This occurrence might be an example of "Japanese only" communication to be a little worried about, though the Czech tourists weren't offended by this scene, but found it rather amusing.

The second aspect of "Japanese only" communication in tourism and hospitality referred to in subquestion 3. is signs and announcements. The survey respondents were a bit more satisfied with signage and announcements in foreign languages than with foreign languages speaking staff. They rated signage and announcements in English at an average of 3.0, in Chinese at 3.2 and in Korean at 2.1. The relatively high rating of Chinese language signage and announcements though might be due to the fact that Chinese and Japanese writing are somewhat similar, so that Chinese and Taiwanese tourists can also read information written in Japanese as the daughter of Tian (China, age: 40-50) who helped conducting the interview with Tian revealed:

“...because Chinese Kanji and Japanese Kanji is almost same, we can read all the Kanjis here. So if they have Kanji we don't have problems. Most of the signs or [...] pamphlets, they have many Kanjis there, so we understand. Mainly we can understand. Hiragana, Katakana, nope, but Kanji is okay. So mainly we can get.” (daughter of Tian, China)

Taking into account the observations of inbound tourists from countries that don't use pictographic letters similar to Japanese pictographic letters, there are somewhat mixed experiences among the interview partners as the comments of Ellen and Conor (Australia, age: under 30), show:

“The signage isn't too bad. Sometimes the announcement, 'cause they're in Japanese first, unless you really stand there and wait. I mean, we normally don't. And we're like: 'Don't know, what's that.' And just keep walking. [...] In the train it's not really a problem, 'cause they do the announcements in Japanese and you're just sitting there. It's not like you're walking through that anyway, you just sit there. So there you do and then the next will be in English which has been fine. It's no problem.” (Ellen, Australia, age: under 30)

“And then up on the Shinkansen, on the trains they have it up there as well which has been pretty good [referring to signage on Shinkansen trains (note by the author)]. And the signage on the train stations; [...] if you go stop by stop by stop. There have been main train stations, previous one, next one. So that's good. That's very helpful.” (Conor, Australia, age: under 30)

“Yeah, but just those random, general announcements, we hear, we just sort of ignore them, 'cause I don't know. I don't understand.” (Ellen, Australia, age: under 30)

The observations of Ellen and Conor reveal what Lukas (Switzerland, age: 30-40) has also mentioned: Not all signs and especially not all announcements are in both, English and Japanese, but those crucial for tourists, including street names, usually are.

Another aspect that Ellen and Conor (Australia, age: under 30) talked about that can be considered in the realm of intercultural communication and hospitality in tourism

businesses are food models. Using food models to display food in front of restaurants is a way to make international tourists understand the dishes on offer without having to translate the menu.

“I love the food, so I was googling what food is made in the area or what specialty. And I thought that maybe getting there and trying everything would be hard [...]. But it really hasn't been an issue, it's kind of just been there. It's been out there. That's good.” (Ellen, Australia, age: under 30)

“So yeah, the food culture is extremely accessible. [...] Plastic food things out the front.” [...] Today we went to the ramen restaurant and we just saw ramen and asked for ramen. Couldn't read anything. Just asked for it.” (Conor, Australia, age: under 30)

“If we got desperate, we could have walked out the front and pointed at the plastic food, but ramen was understood, so.” (Ellen, Australia, age: under 30)

The interview partners in this research project nearly ever talked about foreign language promotional material. Maybe this is due to the fact that Tian (China, age: 40-50) was travelling together with his daughter who is a student of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, and could thus guide him as a local foreign resident, Lukas (Switzerland, age: 30-40) had an English-language travel guidebook at hand and Ellen and Conor (Australia, age: under 30) as well as the four Czech interview partners (age: 30-40) were researching a lot of information online. However, the Czech interview partners did mention at one point their dissatisfaction with the lack of English language material for tourists in Beppu:

Radek: “[...] that's the strangest in Beppu that even the tourist maps, they are not in English. They have nothing written in English. Do you have them?” (Kamila pulls out the tourist map (note by the author))

Radek: “Great!” (ironically, pointing at the map (note by the author))

Anezka: “Nothing in English.”

Radek: “And then you have to pick up [...] the whole one from Beppu Station and all around the Beppu Park [referring to an English language map of Beppu downtown area available at the tourist information at Beppu Station (note by the author)]. But these maps, they need to have something in English, if it’s for tourists. It doesn’t make it easy for us.”

(Radek & Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

Concerning the availability of English language information online on websites, none of the interview partners had a complaint.

The last aspect of “Japanese only” communication and hospitality in tourism related businesses in Beppu noted in subquestion 3. is the strong emphasis on Japanese bathing etiquette that was observed by Ratz (2009, 2011) in the Japanese hot spring resorts she investigated. Is this perceived over-emphasis also shared by inbound tourists in Beppu? In fact there was only one case when research participants reported an over-emphasis on the Japanese hot spring bathing rules which Franziska (Germany, age: under 30) and Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40) experienced when renting a family bath in Kannawa area. In total, all of the interview partners either had visited an onsen already or were planning to do so in the course of their stay and 39 survey participants reported and onsen visit, while only five had not visited a hot spring. One survey respondent didn’t respond to that question.

These figures show that for international tourists as well the hot spring visit is a crucial part of their stay and in many cases actually the main motivation to visit Beppu. Moreover, the satisfaction with the hot spring experience of survey respondents was rated at a very high 4.5 average and 22 of the survey participants noted their hot spring

visit as the best experience during their stay in Beppu. So considering the data created in this research project it seems like the destination generally does a good job in creating memorable hot spring experiences, and the case of Franziska (Germany, age: under 30) and Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40) is rather an exemption.

However, as hot springs are clearly perceived as the main attraction of Beppu tourism also by inbound tourists, it is also important to consider the voices of research participants who did not visit a hot spring and look at why they chose not to. Tian (China, age: 40-50) comments on this are exemplary in this regard:

“No, we bath by myself [sic]. Not just like Japanese. So many persons get together to bath together, take a bath together. It seems very difficult for China to accept [...] this style. It's better for China, for the most citizen near the south of China. But in the north of China maybe they can accept, because in the north of China we have such habit to take a bath in big pool. In public.” (Tian, China, age: 40-50)

And his daughter added some more explanation about the hesitation of her Chinese relatives to bathe in hot springs in Beppu:

“...we don't have this [...] custom to go inside of onsen with other people together. We want to try, it's very good experience, and we also wanted to try, but just a public, it's hard to accept it. Especially for like tourists, they only stay here for [...] three, two days. Then it needs time to get used to it, but they don't have that much time.” (daughter of Tian, China)

This feeling of shyness to take a hot spring together with many other people in a nude was shared by the survey respondents that reported not to have taken an onsen in Beppu. They were all coming from the southern part of China. In contrast, European interview

partners and survey respondents as well as the two Australian interview partners Ellen and Conor (age: under 30) did not report major difficulties with the Japanese hot spring etiquette and bathing style that would keep them from trying this experience. Lukas' (Switzerland, age: 30-40) comment can be viewed as representative in this regard:

“I think, people are a little bit afraid of maybe at the first time. Just relax and if you are not sure about doing something, look at the others how they do! And normally you have a little bit information ahead before going to an onsen and you know to take of all your clothes. And even the staff there was really helpful at the onsen sight I visited. They explained me: ‘Go over there, shoes off, locker there.’ And then they showed me the man entrance, because sometimes with the letters you don’t know, women, men, because it’s all Japanese. And they showed me: ‘This way!’ to men entrance. Yeah, easy.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

This feeling of being slightly insecure in the beginning, but trying anyway with the assistance of hot spring bath staff, explanatory signs and fellow bathers whose behavior can be copied, was shared by the Australian and Czech interview partners as well and in all cases led to positive hot spring visits. Moreover, similar to Lukas (Switzerland, age: 30-40), the Australian and Czech inbound tourists interviewed in the course of this research also appreciated the explanations available in English about how to take the bath. Lastly, none of them stated problems with nude bathing. This, however, might be due to the fact that many tourists who have serious problems with nude bathing in a public bath don't visit Beppu in the first place.

In conclusion, it can be said that hot spring experiences in Beppu are generally communicated to inbound tourists combined with the Japanese hot spring bathing etiquette. In this regard it can be summarized that the majority of participants in this research did not feel an over-emphasis on the Japanese bathing etiquette in the sense

that this emphasis would make them afraid to behave wrongly and thus prevent them from trying this experience at all as Ratz (2009, 2011) stated. On the contrary, the interview partners in this research appreciated explanatory signs and advice from hot spring staff and felt more secure with it. However, promoting hot springs with a more internationally compatible bathing etiquette (e.g. swim wear-only hot springs like Kitahama Onsen Thermas or Aqua Garden in Suginoi Hotel) to foreign tourists would make this important tourist attraction available to more foreign tourists, also those who seem to have problems with the Japanese bathing etiquette, such as tourists from Southern China.

It can be concluded about subquestion 3. that the communication and hospitality in tourism related businesses should be called “Japanese-centered” rather than “Japanese-only”, taking into account the findings of this research. There is a lack of foreign language speaking staff, especially in regards to foreign languages other than English and businesses that are merely peripherally related to tourism. Furthermore, not all signage and announcements are in English, Korean and Chinese as well. However, the most crucial ones for tourists seem to be. The comments about promotional material in foreign languages are not sufficient to make any qualified statement about this issue. No problems regarding online tourism related research were stated and while hot spring experiences are generally communicated together with Japanese hot spring etiquette to international tourists, it is questionable, if these tourists perceive an over-emphasis in this regard.

So there are certain shortcomings in professional multi-language communication and hospitality in Beppu inbound tourism. However, since all interview partners reported that they enjoyed their stay in Beppu, these shortcomings do not seem to create an

unfavorable attitude towards the destination as a whole. Therefore subquestion 3. can be answered with „No.“.

e) Subquestion 4.

4. Does a lack of meaningful personal conversation and cultural exchange between hosts (tourism staff as well as local residents) and international guests make international guests' travel experiences less valuable (see Uriely & Reichel, 2000; Yu & Lee, 2014)?

Subquestion 4. is derived on the one hand from Uriely's and Reichel's (2000) observation in their investigation of working tourists in Israel that those with a more tourist-like approach towards their stay who had some meaningful personal conversation and developed social ties with their hosts showed a higher satisfaction with their travel experience. On the other hand it is inspired by Yu's and Lee's notions that "cultural experience, the interactions between tourists and locals, makes tourism appealing and valuable" (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 226), and that "cultural contacts and interactions will be more important variables for deciding the quality of tourism in the future as the contemporary pattern of international tourism activities shifts to emphasizing on-site experiences and contacts with host local-residents" (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 236).

In contrast to Yu and Lee (2014) in this thesis hosts will be understood as both, tourism staff in particular and local residents as the entire host society due to a number of considerations: Firstly, Uriely and Reichel (2000) from whom the above subquestion is inspired too, regard to hosts as the locals providing both work and accommodation. Secondly, in contrast to Yu's and Lee's (2014) observation, the interview partners' talks in this research do not support the idea that hospitality in a tourism setting is being taken for granted, since all interview partners were positively impressed by the high level of hospitality of the tourism staff in Beppu. Thirdly, meaningful personal conversation and cultural exchange can happen not only in random town settings, but also, if the host of the accommodation for example provides extraordinarily personal service, as might be the case (as will be shown later) in small-scale ryokan for instance.

In relation to meaningful personal conversation it can be said that survey respondents had small talks not relating to tourist inquiries on average with 3.9 locals. However, the 5-point Likert scale question "How easy do you find talking with local Japanese?" only could reach an average response of 2.2 which indicates that the tourists surveyed for this thesis did not find it easy to talk with them. The interview partners in this research project also shared some situations where they happened to chat with locals not regarding touristic topics that were usually perceived as pleasurable, interesting occurrences in the course of travel, such as the Czech interview partners who talked with a homeless man close to Beppu Station about the Czechoslovakian Saxophone he used to own.

Anezka: "And close to the station we met a guy and he was crazy that he met Czech people."

Radek: “Yeah, because [...] he used to have a saxophone that was made in Czech republic, so he..”

Anezka: “In Czechoslovakia.”

Radek: “In Czechoslovakia, so he asked us, when it was separated. And he was like a homeless guy and he was speaking English. It was surprising.”

(Anezka & Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

The episode Lukas (Switzerland, age: 30-40) shared in this respect is also notable, since it demonstrates how personal interaction with locals can even be possible without a common language, if for example a common activity, like in this case the smoking of a cigarette together, is shared which might create emotional solidarity as well.

“Yesterday I spoked [sic] to the man before the onsen, but [...] I could not understand him and he could not understand me. [...] But we talked and he was smiling and I was smiling and then we smoked a cigarette together, but we didn't understand each other.”
(Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

The example of the four inbound tourists from Czech Republic that were interviewed for this research illustrates how intimacy within a place that improves the travel experience (Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Woosnam & Norman, 2010) can also arise when receiving local tips and insights that go beyond the recommendation of places popular with tourists. In this sense even an in-depth consultation with the host of a ryokan as a personalized service can be perceived as meaningful personal conversation that helps to overcome the tourist setting and adds a local social dimension to the travel experience (see Uriely & Reichel, 2000; Yu & Lee, 2014).

“...the ryokan is amazing and especially the host in the ryokan. He’s great.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Yeah, he’s so helpful. He showed us the way to the city. He offered us the places, where we can go for dinner. So like the sushi bar or something like that where they have really cheap and good sushi [...]” (Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Yeah, he made us feel as local. As citizen, and not as a stranger or anybody from abroad, but as local.” (Kamila, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

On the other hand, the same Czechs also noticed throughout their travel that in general it is almost impossible to “blend in” with Japanese. So even though they perceived Japanese in general as well as their host and the general population in Beppu to be very friendly and hospitable, they also perceived the scope for true cultural exchange to be very limited.

“...we feel like tourists. And you always will. But it’s for good or for bad. Sometimes it’s probably for bad, because you don’t get the local experience. You have to go with somebody local to get a local experience, because you don’t know the places. You don’t know all the stuff. Even if they are always helpful, it’s a little bit strange. But [...] you are foreign, it’s okay. But you can never blend in with the Japanese. [...]” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Yeah, we are strangers here.” (Marek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“We are strangers, but you can’t blend in. I guess it might hurt the Japanese. Hurt the Japanese culture, if they blend in too much with foreigners.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

This opinion of Radek and Marek (age: 30-40) from Czech Republic is also supported by another observation that could be made in the interview process for this research. Many of the interview partners said they would be interested in more cultural exchange and shared activities with local residents. However, the cases of cultural experience they

mentioned seem to be rather a one-sided touristic consumption of certain aspects of Japanese culture such as hot spring bathing and the tea ceremony.

“I hadn’t heard of Beppu until I was researching to come to Japan. The hot springs, the onsen. That’s all the thing that attracted us to put it into the travel plan, I guess. [...] ‘Cause we definitely don’t have anything like that in Australia. Yeah, so I wanted to experience that part.” (Conor, Australia, age: under 30)

“Oh, it’s a spa city. Definitely. [...] We call it ‘Little Carlsbad’, but it’s much actually bigger than Carlsbad. [...] Immediately [...] when we were arriving on the train, then I saw old ladies and then I thought: ‘Oh, they are going to Beppu for the spa!’ [...] I saw that. Old ladies going for the spa. So it’s cool, yeah, it’s a spa city. We like spa cities.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“I think, mostly you come to Beppu for the onsens and that’s what I did. Today I spent the day at Kannawa area and was visiting two onsens. And, yeah, I really enjoyed it. [...] it’s new...” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

“Teaism is special for me and attractive for me. Yeah. The tea ceremony. Yeah, the tea ceremony is some kind of spirit for young men, for young generation. To do everything carefully, devoted. And so I think, it is for young men to learn traditional culture for Japanese also. Yeah. For China as a visitor it’s quite different. More different. Look, in China tea is just a kind of fruit, just got it with water, just drink. It’s useful as a drink. But the tea ceremony includes more culture, spirit. And this kind of culture, spirit has most significance for young men to do their work and make their friends and to do some other kinds of things. Very useful. So this is [...] important for me, yeah.” (Tian, China, age: 40-50)

Whereas in general the tourists interviewed enjoyed this kind of consumption of aspects of Japanese culture and Beppu culture, such as hot springs and the tea ceremony, there was no evidence in the talks of these international guests of situations where they could share their experience of Beppu culture with locals or exchange and synthesize this with their own culture what Yu and Lee (2014) perceive to become important in tourism in

the future. This might be the case, because, as Radek (Czech Republic, age: 30-40) mentioned “it might hurt the [...] Japanese culture, if they blend in too much with foreigners.” Nevertheless, all foreign visitors interviewed for this study confirmed that they would enjoy activities that involve cultural exchange with locals and create opportunities for in-depth conversation.

“I would like to, for example, if Beppu tourist information or Beppu marketing can offer something, like meet locals or [...] going out, eat food with locals or something like this would be really nice as an offer. [...] Local food eating with locals or something like this. That would be nice.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

Franziska: “They had really nice pamphlets back at the hostel about, well, of course hot springs, because that’s THE thing, but also about food and what to eat and I think, it would be nice to advertise local specialties a bit more, offer like maybe guided tours to some nice restaurants or places where they handcraft stuff just to experience more about handicrafts and food. [...] This is my first time to Kyushu, so I kind of wanted to know more about what people eat and do here, what makes them special. [...] I feel like Kyushu food to be really.. on the hearty side, like a lot of meat and noodles and broth and I think, one could definitely talk about German food over here, because they would love that too, a lot of pork and potatoes and rather..”

Jonas: “Combine cooking classes..”

Franziska: “Yeah. Warm, heartfelt cooking. Kind of. I guess. [...]”

Jonas: “Well, I think, in general [...] hiking is pretty popular in Japan, right? [...] So [...] it’s the same in Germany [...] and there is quite some nice landscape around, so.. I think, that could be something [to share with locals (note by the author)]”

Franziska: “Yeah, the love of nature and outdoor clothing.”

(Franziska, Germany, age: under 30 & Jonas, Germany, age: 30-40)

The participants from Czech Republic also mentioned that they will have an opportunity in Tokyo to be guided by a local which they are looking forward to, since it makes a

different, deeper tourism experience possible than if they would do sightseeing on their own:

“...when we go to Tokyo, we have a friend of a friend [...] who is Japanese and we will be spending some days with him, so, completely different. Somewhat different experience...” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“So he will plan the trip for us and good places to visit and I think it will be different than we are planning everything by ourselves.” (Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

“Even if we’ll still be doing tourism. Not like the day to day, daily routines. Not like day at the work as a Japanese.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

It can be concluded from the data in this research that subquestion 4. can be answered with “Yes.”. Even if survey respondents and a number of interview partners mentioned small talks with locals regarding non-tourism related topics, survey respondents didn’t find it easy to talk with locals. This is congruent with the general notion of interview partners that small talk with locals happen, but also due to language problems these conversations are not usually of deep content and thus do not provide chances of true cultural exchange with locals (see e.g. Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40: “You can’t blend in.”). Moreover, the interview partners stated that they would enjoy more offers and programs for cultural exchange with locals such as the sharing of food or hiking culture. Therefore, if deeper personal conversation that creates situations of real cultural exchange would be possible or events and programs for cultural exchange with hosts would be offered by tourism actors in Beppu, it would make their travel experience more valuable.

f) Subquestion 5.

5. Does widespread segregation between international students and local Japanese non-student residents hinder Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University to considerably help Japanese non-student residents in Beppu to communicate with foreigners more successfully?

Subquestion 5. challenges the optimistic perception of many researchers as well as fellow students at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University that the existence of this university has a considerable positive influence on Beppu City (personal communication) and in this regard, in particular helps local Japanese non-student residents to communicate with foreigners more successfully – which, if true, would make Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) a crucial driving force of inbound tourism in Beppu. The subquestion thereby takes into account the fact that the campus of the university is spatially separated from the town, and the perception that even students living in town and not on campus cluster in a small number of districts and commercial establishments into consideration.

Considering the comments of local Japanese tourism staff interviewed in this research project the idea of widespread segregation between local Japanese non-student residents and international students in Beppu cannot be supported. All of the interviewed staff confirmed that they meet and talk with international APU students at least occasionally. How often and how closely they interact with APU's international students, however, varies greatly among the interview partners. The person who interacts mostly with

international students in Beppu is probably the lodging manager of hotel 1, since, as he reported, a third of the hotel's front desk staff is made up of international students.

“A third of our front desk staff in our hotel are international APU students so of course, yes, I do speak a lot with them. [...] We are really thankful to the international APU students, because they can speak lots of languages and can help us a lot with the hotel. Within our hotel I see lots of intercultural communication among the staff and I think it is going a better way in our hotel as well.” (lodging manager at hotel 1)

According to the talks of this lodging manager, the international APU students working at hotel 1 not only talk to foreign tourists directly, but also lead to an increase in intercultural communication within the hotel due to personal interaction with Japanese staff. Therefore, in the case of this hotel, it can be expected that in the long run APU's international students have a generally positive influence on intercultural communication skills of the hosts.

However, not all tourism staff in Beppu are fortunate to have such a strong support from an international student part-time worker base. While recognition and acknowledgement of a new international spirit that came with APU and aids Beppu City in general and Beppu tourism in particular is widespread, some of the interviewed staff wished for more exchange with APU's international students:

“I'm not quite sure about this, but I think Beppu ranks number one in Japan for the highest ratio of foreigners. There, I think, it's about how we plan to communicate with international students and what we could learn from them. On the contrary, we could also teach them about our culture, or the customs in Oita prefecture, such as how we celebrate New Year in Japan. When I talk about this with the Vietnamese students who work here, it's very fun to see how interested they are in our culture. On the other hand, they could teach us about their culture in return. [...] I personally think that if the locals

familiarize themselves with foreigners from the time they are young, it would also change how they look at people from overseas in the future. Sometimes cultural exchanges can be seen in newspapers as they are special activities, but I wish that it could one day become a “normal” thing in Japan.” (manager of hot spring 1, 6 months in this position)

This opinion is similar to that of ryokan owner 1 (20 years in this position, age: 40-50) who also recognizes benefits from APU due to its revitalizing effects for life in Beppu in general and also its inbound tourism promoting ripple effects when international students’ relatives visit Beppu for instance, but who also said that the town could make more use of this:

"I think, it had a very big effect [referring to APU (note by the author)]. Because it is a symbolic university within Japan. However, Beppu cannot utilize it very well. I personally am very thankful to APU. My life became richer. I have a chance to meet the students of various countries in events for example, and there are even students who are like sons to me. In addition, I came to have a global viewpoint regarding tourists. Because there are a lot of people who visit Beppu because of APU. What would have happened to Beppu when there was not APU? I’m scared and don’t want to think about it. It might be in a tragic situation.” (ryokan owner of ryokan 1, 20 years in this position, age: 40-50)

The above comment also shows that intercultural communication with international tourists is not only valued in the sense that it might increase the ability to deal with inbound tourists, but also as an experience that can enrich the personal life and thus as a value in itself. The reception staff at local bus company information office 1 interviewed for this thesis shares this point of view. She appreciates the fact that due to APU Beppu’s environment changed in a way that it is easy to mingle with people from

other countries which is usually only possible when travelling abroad or living in big, international cities:

“I have a chance to meet people in Beppu that I once had to travel abroad to meet. For example, when I was studying, I met a person from Bangladesh. A person that I would usually have to go abroad to meet, I was able to meet in Beppu. I can think of going to China or Korea, because it is close to Japan. However, I never thought about visiting Bangladesh, so it is amazing to meet people from there. That is a characteristic of Beppu. If you go to big cities there is a higher possibility of meeting them. However, now you can meet them in Beppu City which is very concentrated place. Also, they attend festivals and thus improve the mood of the town. Therefore, they are very locally attached now.” (reception staff at local bus company information office 1, 2 years in this position, age: under 30)

Concluding the above statements it can be said in regards to the information created in this research that subquestion 5. can be answered with “No.”. The degree to which local Japanese non-student residents mingle and interact with the international students of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, varies. However, all of the interview partners in this research project have at least some interaction with them, so that the wording “widespread segregation” might be too pessimistic. In general, the interview partners are interested in APU and appreciate the new special environment which is created by the increase of foreign students. Due to that changed environment they have more opportunities to engage with foreigners which might in the future also affect their intercultural communication skill positively. It should be noted, however, that the interview partners in this research are not any local residents, but are all residents that are at the same time tourism staff in Beppu as well. Therefore, due to the recent general focus on inbound tourism especially of the JNTO this tourism staff might also have a

viewpoint on foreigners which is different from local Japanese non-student residents who are not directly working in the local tourism industry.

g) Crucial Observations not Covered by the Subquestions

In addition to the observations made in the interviews and the survey that relate to the subquestions derived from the literature review for this thesis, a number of notable observations have been made that do not directly relate to one of the subquestions, but are still relevant to the overall research objective of understanding challenges in intercultural communication and understanding that are to be overcome for Beppu City to become a leading inbound tourism destination in Japan.

First of all, there still seem to be a number of unfavorable prejudices that are not related to Beppu in particular, but to Japan as a whole. Even though these prejudices or negative images of Japan do not necessarily originate in Beppu, they have an effect on Beppu as an inbound tourism destination, since they deter tourists from visiting Japan at all, and therefore also negatively impact the number of possible inbound tourists to Beppu. The prejudice which has been shared by most interview partners concerning travelling in Japan is the assumption that language difficulties in Japan will create a major obstacle to travelling in the country.

“I think [...] Swiss people are afraid [...] for the language. So they don't go to Japan, because they are afraid that nobody will understand them and they can't speak or can't

order or something and they're lost in Japan, because they could not get the beer or something like this, because nobody speaks English and nobody speaks German, French, Italian or something like this. That might be the biggest issue for Swiss people to come to Japan.” (Lukas, Switzerland, age: 30-40)

Radek: “...I was afraid that nobody speaks English, so I will be completely lost all the time. It is true that nobody speaks English here, but you are not lost. It's not as much of a problem as I thought it would be. Travelling is much easier than I thought. Maybe it's because of the JR Pass [...]. I mean, my image of Japan, it didn't change, but just these things that might be a problem, and it's not.”

Anezka: “Yeah, and because of the different type of letters. They are not using the alphabet as in Europe, I think. People are afraid of this.”

Radek: “Yeah, but in every city, even in Nigata or in Akita all the street names are written in English as well.”

Anezka: „So it's easy.“

Radek: “It's really easy. There are pieces of information you don't get. But they are not crucial. You get along.“

(Radek & Anezka, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

As the comments above illustrate the interview partners did have some language difficulties. However, these language problems did not seem to be a crucial obstacle to travelling in Japan. On the contrary, travelling in Japan was usually perceived as a safe and easy endeavor due to the high standard of service and hospitality which were greatly appreciated by the interview partners and overplayed insecurities regarding understanding:

“...overall in Japan it really feels like you can't go wrong. Take anything! 'Cause the people are so helpful.” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40)

This feeling of “you can’t go wrong” (Radek, Czech Republic, age: 30-40), this feeling of trust and safety while touring Japan was shared by the other interview partners as well, so that they were all positively surprised how easy it was to travel in Japan despite language problems. Another prevailing image of Japan that was shared by Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40) that might keep people from visiting the country at all is the prejudice that it is an expensive travel destination:

“...actually one prejudice that I had was, that it’s an expensive country. And in general, I mean, we did our planning of the trip rather early. So we finally ended up with very reasonably priced accommodation. And I think, the cost, if you just have drinks, if you eat in restaurants and everything, I think, [...] it’s really not expensive. [...] I went to Southeast Asia and a lot of my friends do it. One of the reasons is that pretty much you have an expensive flight, but then getting along locally is quite cheap. And I think, [...] even Japan, you can cope with the costs here. I mean, if you use the JR Rail Pass like we do. [...] And if you plan in advance to get accommodation that you can pay for. And if then you know that you can eat out at restaurants and have really good food at a reasonable price, then.. I think, that could be one thing that people think that it’s a very expensive country. To a lot of other countries in the area.” (Jonas, Germany, age: 30-40)

Jonas comments indicates that he could not hold that image of Japan as an expensive country when he came here, and on the contrary was positively surprised by the reasonably priced accommodation and gastronomy. Another notable quote regarding unfavorable images of Japan that exist abroad was made by Tian (China, age: 40-50) who mentioned that the image of Japanese politicians in China is not very good, but who was impressed by the kindness of local Japanese while visiting Beppu:

“...in Japan it is very easy to be trusted. Yeah. Political life is the things you can’t trust. Japan and Chinese, the reason is very difficult to understand, why in general it is very easy to make a friend and easy to be trusted, but [...] politicians are very difficult to be trusted in China. Why? I want to know, why there is such a gap? I think, in general

Japanese citizens image is better than the politicians. [...] Honest, quiet, devoted. But the politicians in Chinese opinion it's more hypocrisy. [...] So the problems maybe have something to do with the history. Chinese opinion on Japanese history [...]. Japanese and Chinese war [...]. So really affected [...] Chinese visitors' viewpoint to Japan [...] a little negative." (Tian, China, age: 40-50)

Tian and his daughter who supported the interview process said that this image of Japanese politics and politicians is distinct from the general reputation of Japanese citizens. However, they admitted that in order to form this positive image of the general Japanese public, you have to actually come to Japan, and if you don't the negative image of Japanese politicians will be the prevailing, bad image of the country.

These quotes show that more than personal communication on the ground media-transmitted communication of a positive image of Japan abroad seems to fail, since all interview partners have been able to correct or change the negative prejudices they had about the country before coming here in a positive way. Therefore, the convincing communication of an image or brand of Japan as a hospitable, safe and affordable country that is convenient for tourism might be an even more important task than the improvement of personal intercultural communication with inbound tourists on the ground.

What part can Beppu play in the communication of an attractive tourism brand? Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40) and also Ellen and Conor (Australia, age: under 30) mentioned that they had never heard of Beppu before researching to come to Japan. Franziska (Germany, age: under 30) states in this regard that in her opinion many German tourists would like the type of hot spring tourism which Beppu offers, but do not usually know about it (at least before coming to Japan).

“Actually yesterday the lady at the hostel [...] asked me whether Germans bathe in a different way and if they have this kind of bathing culture and then maybe you can explain to them that in Germany bathing is used for cleaning. [...] Not this kind of relaxing experience with food and yukata and.. I guess that’s a big difference, this kind of short time vacations that they take. Just eat and bathe and bathe and sleep. And [...] I think, a lot of German people would actually love this, if they knew about it.”
(Franziska, Germany, age: under 30)

This opinion is somewhat related to the other interview partners’ perception and appreciation of Beppu as a calm town. All interview partners came from major cities in Honshu before visiting Beppu and described the atmosphere of Beppu as being quiet and relaxing and as such a pleasurable alternation in their Japan trip. This consciousness for destinations like Beppu that can provide for variety in an otherwise city tourism based Japan travel experience is not very widespread according to Franziska (Germany, age: under 30):

“...when they think of Japan, they think of big cities and they think of neon lights and manga and anime and very fast pace life. They don’t think about nature which is beautiful here, but they don’t know. People asked me, like: ‘What are you gonna do? Three weeks of Japan, what are you gonna do? You know, there’s just cities!’ And I say: ‘No, that’s just wrong!’ But people [...] just think, there’s just like men walking around, reading manga and that’s it. And geisha, of course, geisha walking everywhere [ironic (note by the author)]. They actually don’t see the little details and the stuff that makes every city unique which I find very interesting. Like every city in Japan has unique food, unique specialties, unique language and unique clothing maybe. Unique dances, songs, I don’t know what. So I think, that could be something that Japan needs to push more. Like: ‘We don’t only have pop culture and geisha. We also have something in between that could actually be pretty attractive to people.’ I mean, you can relax here!”

Reading Franziska's talk, one could assume that the image of Japan as a travel destination is too much focused on pop-culture and city tourism, but that it could make Japan an even more interesting destination to visit, if potential travelers also had places like Beppu in mind where a different side of the country can be experienced – which is Japanese hot spring culture in a medium-sized resort town in a scenic natural location. What Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40) mentions concerning the marketing of Beppu as a full-scale resort is also notable in this regard:

“...all I pretty much knew about Beppu before we came here was that there will be onsens. So I'm not sure, how long the average tourist actually stays here. But I mean, we are here for two nights and maybe it's quite common that people stay here for rather short time, I don't know. Just travelling through and having a few nights of stopover. And then going somewhere else. So I could imagine that it's quite common. But of course if you want to attract people for longer periods, then, yeah, you would have to try to offer more. I mean, I'm not sure, how much is on offer...” (Jonas, Germany, age: 30-40)

Jonas' comment reveals that the media-transmitted and/or personal communication of the whole range of tourist attractions and activities Beppu has on offer is not sufficient for the town to receive tourists staying for a longer time period. This also correlates with the survey data that have been created for this research that indicate that Beppu is actually performing well in terms of hospitality of tourism staff in particular as well as the general host population, but that the satisfaction with the tourism aspects “sights” and “food” in Beppu which are perceived as the most important aspects of tourism by survey respondents is rather low (see Figure 4.1, also partly reflected in Table 4.1 of Nguyen, 2006, p. 68 (sample of 87 international student tourists from three Japanese universities)).

The introduction of Beppu tourism in chapter 1 has illustrated that Beppu actually offers a wide range of attractions and activities for tourists which could not even closely all be visited and undertaken in two or three days. Therefore the possibility that inbound tourists simply do not know much about other attractions than the Beppu Hells and other activities than bathing hot springs, like Jonas (Germany, age: 30-40), might be higher than that inbound tourists are actually dissatisfied with everything on offer in or near the town. This interpretation is also supported by the other interviews with inbound tourists that revealed that little about Beppu was known apart from onsen.

Therefore, for Beppu to become a major inbound tourism destination in Japan a more sophisticated branding of Beppu as a full-scale resort deems necessary. The campaign “Entertainment City Beppu” by the Beppu Tourism Association is a step in this direction. However, to this day also this campaign stays rather rhetorical. One could ask: What does that mean in particular, an entertainment city? And which city is not an entertainment city? What makes Beppu special as an entertainment city? So far these questions remain largely unanswered by the campaign. Moreover, as no interview partner in this research project mentioned “Entertainment City Beppu” the awareness of this campaign might not be extraordinarily high.

In order for the town to become a major inbound tourism destination within Japan a more full-scale foreign language campaign that includes cooperation between all important sights, attractions, gastronomical facilities and events is overdue, because so far no complete brochure of the resort town Beppu, neither a tourism magazine is available in a foreign language. Another important aspect for the successful media-transmitted communication of the attractive value of Beppu might be the communication and introduction of all attractions, activities and culinarian specialties

Beppu has on offer to major foreign language guidebook editors, which still in many cases lack the description of major attractions such as the aquarium “Umitamago” and the monkey park at Mt. Takasaki (e.g. Rowthorn et al., 2011; personal communication with interview partners).

Figure 4.1: Aspects of Tourist Experience

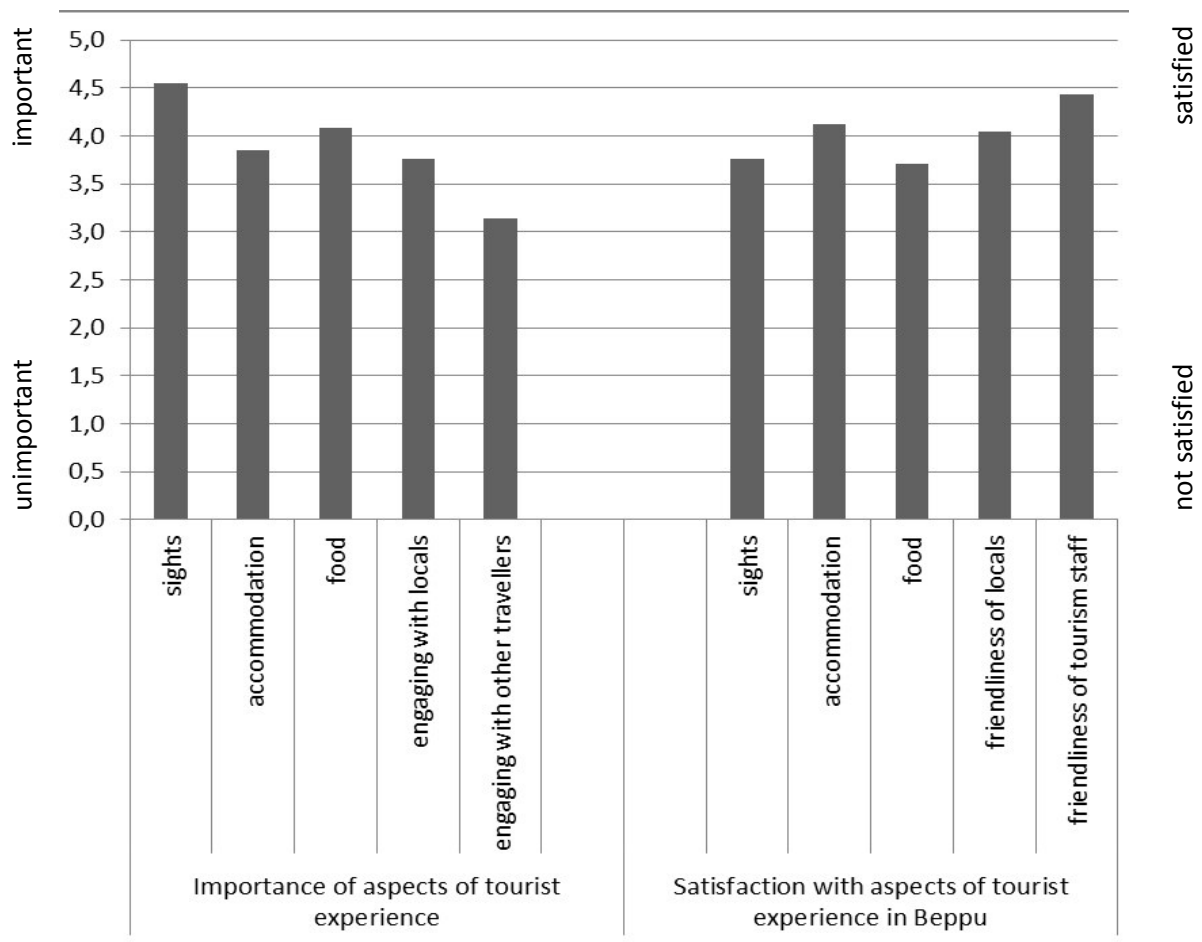


Table 4.1: Motivations to Travel, by Travel Style (Means), (n=87) (Nguyen, 2006, p. 68)

On a scale of 1-5 (1: not important – 5: very important)

Travel style	Backpacker	Traveler	Tourist	Total
Explore other cultures	4.56	4.11	4.06	4.17
Relax mentally	4.62	4.03	4.49	4.32
Interact with local people	3.86	3.69	3.49	3.64
Have a good time with friends	4.56	3.97	4.29	4.21
Challenge my abilities	4.19	3.50	3.43	3.60
Build friendship with others	3.81	3.67	3.46	3.61
Visit friends and relatives	3.38	3.78	3.51	3.60
Find myself	4.25	3.40	3.17	3.47
Relax physically	4.00	3.69	4.17	3.94
Associate with other travelers	3.16	2.76	2.91	2.89
Be in a calm atmosphere	3.44	3.58	3.94	3.70
Gain a feeling of belongings	3.50	3.17	3.28	3.28
Contribute to the place I visit	2.81	2.89	2.80	2.84
Get away from normal life	4.19	3.86	3.97	3.97

5. Conclusions

a) Implications of this Research

This study has tried to understand major shortcomings in intercultural communication and understanding in Beppu inbound tourism questioning ideas derived from the review of previous literature in the fields of intercultural communication and understanding in inbound tourism in general and in Japanese inbound tourism and hot spring tourism environments in particular. Some shortcomings in intercultural communication could be discovered in this research. These include verbal personal communication, since there is still scope for improvement in terms of English and other foreign language speaking tourism staff. In general, however, this improvement was deemed necessary rather by the side of tourism staff than by the inbound tourists interviewed for this thesis. According to the observations made in this research a higher English and other foreign language (e.g. Korean, Chinese) proficiency could create a higher confidence in tourism staff to communicate with inbound tourists and hence also improve their intercultural competence (which could in this research mostly be observed in the ryokan owner of ryokan 1).

In order to improve foreign language skills as well as intercultural competence tourism businesses should encourage their staff to engage in the various local exchange events that are organized by APU as well as interact with APU students during events, such as the Multicultural Weeks and Tenkusai Festival. APU students should also be encouraged by the student office to participate in local exchange events, local volunteer

circles and festivals, such as the summer festivals in Matogahama and Kamegawa areas and the Christmas fireworks at Matogahama Beach. Moreover they should be more encouraged by the Career Office to do part-time work not only on campus, but also in the local tourism industry and should be given contact information of business owners that are looking for bilingual or trilingual part-time workers.

One promising measure to improve intercultural communication skills may also be combined language and intercultural competence courses that could be organized by the Beppu Tourism Association in cooperation with APU and financed by business owners and/or the Beppu Hotel Association as a further education offer for their staff. These courses should include foreign language communication with foreigners and also consider issues such as culture-specific non-verbal communication and general intercultural competence. They might also benefit from cooperation with foreign culture circles at APU, such as Co-Korea, the Thai Students' Association in APU, Common Viet or Bayanihan.

Furthermore, there is still considerable scope for indirect, media-transmitted communication improvement in foreign languages within the destination (such as foreign language tourism promotion material) and especially out of the destination. The confident communication of Japan as a suitable country for tourism as well as the raising of awareness for the qualities of the destination Beppu out of Japan have been found to have the most urgent need for improvement.

Since a successful brand for the destination Beppu is highly dependent on local support it should be discussed and designed by the Beppu Tourism Association in cooperation with the local population. Moreover, in order to raise awareness for the wide range of

attractions and activities in Beppu for inbound tourists as well an all-inclusive pamphlet and tourism website should be created by Beppu Tourism Organization in cooperation with APU tourism classes in at least English, Korean, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese and should be presented in tourism fairs in and outside of Japan. Nonverbal personal communication in Beppu inbound tourism was perceived as a significant problem only by one tourism worker.

In conclusion, there is still scope for improvement in personal verbal communication, as well as media-transmitted communication within Beppu and especially out of Beppu for Beppu inbound tourism. However, the notion of Uzama (2009, p. 359) that inbound travelers are “met with hostility, staring and avoidance by locals” cannot be confirmed in this research, and the communication and hospitality in Beppu tourism cannot be called “Japanese-only” anymore, rather “Japanese-centered” which is, however, not surprising, as most tourists in Beppu are still domestic tourists.

As for intercultural exchange and the intercultural setting in inbound tourism in Beppu it can be noted that cultural differences and language difficulties in inbound tourism to Beppu in particular but also to Japan as a whole did not seem to create significant stress, anxiety and uncertainty for the inbound tourists interviewed in this research (maybe even more for tourism staff as the above explanation illustrates). Therefore the notion of Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007) that such difficulties would have a negative impact on the satisfaction with the travel experience cannot be supported according to this research.

Regarding positive intercultural host-guest interaction the idea of Uriely and Reichel (2000, p. 272) that “the positive results of the host-guest contact are determined by their motivation to interact with each other” can be partly supported in this research.

Interview partners perceived personal ties with locals created by meaningful, personal conversation as an important, memorable part of the social tourism experience that adds value to it. To survey respondents, however, sights and food were more relevant aspects of the travel experience than personal interaction with locals even though they rated the friendliness of tourism staff and of locals in general very high.

The idea of Yu and Lee (2014, p. 226) that “cultural experience, the interactions between tourists and locals, makes tourism appealing and valuable.” (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 226) can be supported in this study. The international guests interviewed for this thesis valued interactions with locals rather “as an element to overcome negative critical incidents likely to take place in the course of travel” (Yu & Lee, 2014, p. 234), which didn’t go so far that it would add another social dimension to their entire travel experience by making friends with locals though. However, they did wish for more meaningful intercultural exchange in order to overcome commercial tourism environments and be more included in the local community. Hence, in this research the trend towards intercultural experiences that Yu and Lee (2014) predict for international tourism in the future could be observed already.

In these terms one could conclude from the information created in this investigation that in terms of the elements of culture coined by Ferraro (2004, p. 24) inbound tourists to Beppu are especially interested in intercultural offers concerning ideas, values and attitudes, such as those associated with traditional local food culture. Further, Yu and Lee (2014) suggested that four elements (trust, hospitality by local residents, same languages spoken and a sense of equality when inbound tourists perceive to be treated fairly by hosts) are crucial for the success of intercultural interactions between international tourists and hosts. It can be stated that tourist interview partners in this

research indicated high satisfaction with all of these aspects, except for some languages spoken, and perceived the intercultural interaction with hosts (both tourism staff as well as the general host population) as generally positive, regardless of the wish for more meaningful cultural exchange and a higher level of inclusion.

This study might also have a few notable implications for ideas in previous research about the experience of Caucasian travelers at Japanese hot spring sites (Ratz, 2009 & 2011). Ratz' notion that the strong emphasis on Japanese hot spring bathing etiquette deters Caucasian inbound tourists from trying this experience cannot be supported in consideration of this research. All Caucasian travelers, who were interviewed, and nearly all Caucasian travelers that were surveyed for this study reported that they either had visited a hot spring already or were going to. Moreover, explanatory signs or pamphlets about Japanese bathing rules in English were generally perceived as helpful by them, and did not deter any of them from visiting an onsen in the first place.

Moreover, the perception of some scholars that so-called "Western" tourists are reluctant to nude bathing together with others more than tourists from other East Asian countries (personal communication with Li and her research seminar, 2013) cannot be confirmed in this research, since all research participants who reported this problem in the context of this study were from Southern China. For none of the European and Australian participants nude bathing was an issue. The situation might be different for North American tourists who could not be investigated in this research. However, the term "Westerner" does not allow such a nuanced statement, since it implies that people from three very distant major regions of the world (Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand) have basically the same culture.

It is important to note in this regard too, that only inbound tourists in Beppu have been interviewed in this research (and except for one these did not have a major problem with the Japanese hot spring etiquette). However, that observation might be due to the fact that foreign travelers who have a major problem with this etiquette do not visit Beppu in the first place, since the town, as discussed above, is mostly known for its onsen. The Chinese inbound tourists who participated in this research who could not accept Japanese bathing culture had another motivation to visit Beppu, since they visited a student of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University here. In order to satisfy the needs of inbound tourists for whom naked bathing creates an obstacle to try a hot spring, the town of Beppu should consider the active promotion of the swimsuit-only hot springs in Kitahama (Kitahama Onsen Thermas) and Kankaiji (Aqua Garden in Suginoi Hotel) areas in foreign languages to inbound tourists. Lastly, regarding hot springs in Beppu, the results of this research do not support the assumption that hot spring bathing facilitates non tourism related personal communication between inbound tourists and locals, since no such a case was reported to the author.

b) Limitations of this Research

Obviously, this study can't be exhaustive of the topics discussed and has some major limitations that should be explicated in the following. Firstly, due to time constraints only 45 completed questionnaires and ten qualitative guideline-based interviews were used in this investigation. These two research instruments were designed for two major

target groups, local Japanese tourism staff and inbound tourists in Beppu, and touched upon different modes of communication in international tourism. This research design was created in that way to get an overview over different aspects of intercultural communication in inbound tourism in Beppu and insights from both major groups that are involved in inbound tourism which are guests and hosts in order to create a rich, explorative study in which several crucial aspects can be noted. However, in order to increase the intersubjectivity of the findings discussed this research should be followed up by more in-depth interviews with both target groups and more specific research instruments touching on single aspects. Especially the topics of media-transmitted communication of positive brands of Japan in general and Beppu in particular outside of Japan should receive more attention in future research.

Further limitations of this study derive from the nature of the research process. Since the author had difficulties finding suitable inbound tourists from East Asia for qualitative guideline-based interviews, the insights for the side of inbound tourists in Beppu City are quite centered on the European region, since apart from seven European inbound tourists to Beppu only two Australian tourists and one Chinese tourist were interviewed for this thesis. Since according to statistics (e.g. Han & Yotsumoto, 2010, p. 70; Table 3.1), though, inbound tourists from other East Asian countries (esp. South Korea, (Mainland) China and Taiwan) outnumber European inbound tourists in Beppu by far, this imbalance should be approached by further research in this field.

Moreover, there might be errors resulting from the way the Japanese language interviews with tourism staff in Beppu were conducted. Because it was hard to find one Japanese research assistant who could conduct all five interviews, they were conducted by five different interviewers of which four of them did this as an assignment for an

undergraduate class at APU. However, errors in the results may arise from the interview process, since each undergraduate research assistant might have her own way to conduct a guideline-based interview slightly different from others. The author who coordinated the whole research process tried to limit this problem by carefully instructing each of the interviewers about how to conduct the interview before the respective interview was scheduled.

In addition, even though the Japanese language interviews were translated by bilingual translation assistants who are fluent or nearly fluent in both English and Japanese, errors in meaning might have resulted from the translation of the Japanese language interview transcripts that were submitted by the Japanese research assistants who conducted the tourism staff interviews. The author who is also nearly fluent in both English and Japanese tried to approach this issue by re-checking the translations of all interview passages that were cited in this thesis under the use of a dictionary.

Lastly, subquestion 5. bears a methodological problem. The wording of this subquestion is “Does widespread segregation between international students and local Japanese non-student residents hinder Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University to considerably help Japanese non-student residents in Beppu to communicate with foreigners more successfully?” As can be noted when reading this subquestion, it deals with the degree of exchange between international students and local Japanese non-student residents in Beppu. Out of all local Japanese non-student residents of Beppu, however, the points of view of only five residents who are all working in tourism related businesses could be explored. Due to the recent general focus on inbound tourism in Japan, especially by the JNTO, workers in the tourism industry, however, might have a slightly different, more open, relationship with foreigners in general and might also have more experiences and

higher skills in communicating with foreigners than Beppu residents who do not work in specifically tourism related businesses. Therefore, in order to approach subquestion 5. professionally in the wording as it is written, interviews should be conducted with a wider range of Japanese non-student residents in Beppu.

c) Resume

This study has tried to understand challenges in intercultural communication and understanding that are to be overcome in order for Beppu to become a leading inbound tourism destination within Japan. Regarding the host side of the intercultural communicative setting in Beppu inbound tourism, it can be concluded that the major obstacle for successful intercultural communication is a lack of personal verbal communication skill, in particular the lack of knowledge of foreign languages. This, however, has seen a slight improvement since the existence of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University as a major international university in Beppu which can be expected to play an even bigger role in facilitating intercultural communication and inbound tourism in Beppu in the future. Moreover, due to the personal ties between some students of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and tourism staff in Beppu, the latter could slightly improve their intercultural understanding which can be expected to create a higher scope for emotional solidarity not only with international students but also with inbound tourists in the future and enable them to deal with cultural differences delicately.

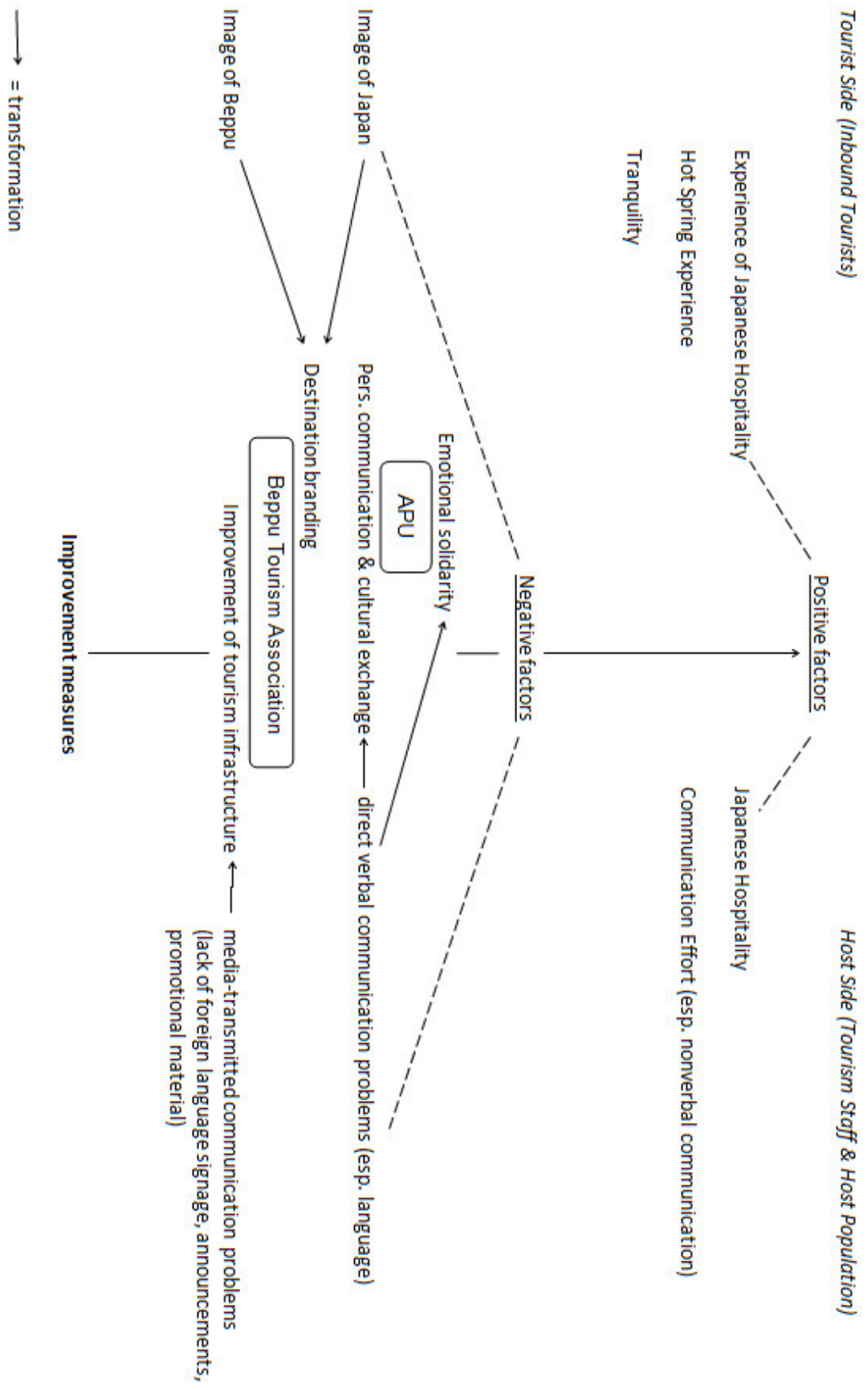
In regards to the guest side of the intercultural communicative situation of Beppu inbound tourism, the biggest problem seems to be the media-transmitted communication of a positive image of Japan as a whole and Beppu in particular. Regarding the communication of an image of Beppu in particular, it can be stated that a wider destination branding that promotes all attractions and qualities of the resort town is necessary in order for Beppu to become a major inbound tourism destination in Japan.

Concerning verbal communication on the ground, it can be concluded that there are certain shortages in foreign language speaking staff, signage, announcements and promotion materials, especially in regards to languages other than English (Korean and Chinese were investigated in this research). However, these shortages do not seem to significantly interfere with international guests' satisfaction with their stay and attitude towards the destination Beppu as a whole. Moreover, despite language problems, the hospitality of tourism staff as well as the general host population of Beppu is perceived to be very good. Lastly, it can be stated that the tourism experience of inbound tourists in Beppu could be further improved by a higher degree of meaningful personal communication not relating to tourism relevant topics and some programs or offers for cultural exchange with hosts.

Table 5.1: Subquestion Summary

Subquestion number	Answer (according to information created)	Short explanation
1.	Yes.	Beppu hosts appreciate international tourists. However, real emotional solidarity is rare. More emotional solidarity could help hosts to deal with cultural differences more delicately. However, successful communication with international tourists is more directly dependent on communication skill.
2.	No.	Considerable perceived cultural differences and language problems exist between Beppu hosts and international tourists. However, these do not create barriers for tourism and the hospitality of Beppu hosts is perceived as very good by international tourists.
3.	No.	Communication and hospitality in tourism related businesses in Beppu are not “Japanese-only”, but rather “Japanese-centered”; and this “Japanese-centered” communication does not create an unfavorable attitude in international tourists towards the destination.
4.	Yes.	Meaningful personal conversation and cultural exchange between hosts and international guests in Beppu is limited. International guests would appreciate more meaningful personal conversation including non-tourism related topics and offers and programs for cultural exchange.
5.	No.	There exists no widespread segregation between international students and local Japanese non-student residents. Local Japanese non-student residents working in the tourism sector have more opportunities to communicate with foreigners since the existence of APU. Therefore their intercultural communication skill is expected to improve.

Figure 5.1: Summary Figure



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Appendix

Research Instruments

- a) Interview Guideline: Tourism Staff (English)*
- b) Interview Guideline: Tourism Staff (Japanese)*
- c) Interview Guideline: Inbound Tourists (English)*
- d) Questionnaire (English)*
- e) Questionnaire (Traditional Chinese)*
- f) Questionnaire (Simplified Chinese)*
- g) Questionnaire (Korean)*

Interview Guideline: Tourism Staff

Introduction

Hello, I'm, nice to meet you! Thank you very much for letting me interview you!
I am studying "....." at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Beppu and I'm doing a field study for my class ".....".
My research project is about intercultural communication and understanding in inbound tourism to Beppu.
I believe that the information gained through this research can help local policy makers in Beppu City Hall who are constantly trying to improve the inbound tourism environment in Beppu and local tourism staff.
Your privacy will be guaranteed. I'd like to record our talk. Are you fine with that?

General/Introductory Questions

Do you have many foreign tourists in this hotel/ryokan/shop/restaurant?
How do you feel about foreign tourists in Beppu?
Did you notice an increase in foreign tourists over the last few years?
If, yes, did it change anything? In your business? In tourism in Beppu in general?

Acceptance of Foreign Tourists

Do you care, if your guests are foreigners or Japanese?
Are there any big differences?
Do you feel any challenges from foreign tourists in Beppu?
If yes, what are they?
Are foreign tourists in any way better or worse for the local tourism industry/for your business in particular than Japanese?

Intercultural Experience

Do you feel any cultural differences that make it difficult to serve foreign tourists?
If yes, what are these differences? And how do you usually deal with them?
What are things you have in common and can share with foreign tourists?

Intercultural Communication

How do you communicate with foreign tourists?
Japanese/English/Korean/Chinese?
Do you feel comfortable about talking with foreign tourists?
Does it make any difference from Japanese tourists?
Is the atmosphere of communication somehow different?
Do you have small talk with foreign guests as well?

Do you enjoy making an effort to speak foreign languages that inbound tourists can understand or would you rather like them to speak at least a little Japanese?

Influence of APU (Hypothesis 5)

Do you meet international students of APU often?
If yes, do you talk with them? Do you come along with them?

Do you think, APU made a difference to Beppu?
If yes, what kind of difference?
Do you find the university influenced the town in some way negative or positive?

Closure

Then, if you don't mind, I'd like to take a few statistical data:
age: under 30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, over 60
gender
How long have you been working in Beppu? And in this business?
occupation/position

Do you know any other persons who have expertise in this topic that I could interview?
Thank you very much! If you're interested in the results of my field study, I can send you the final paper by email around February.

インタビューガイドライン・観光スタッフ

はじめに

こんにちは、はじめまして。私は。。。です。インタビューにお答えしていただき、まことにありがとうございます。

私は別府にある立命館アジア太平洋大学で。。。を専攻しています。。。の講義のためにこの調査を行っています。

私の研究プロジェクトは、別府へのインバウンド観光の異文化間コミュニケーションと理解への課題についてです。

私がこの研究を通して得られた情報は常に別府インバウンド観光環境と地元の観光スタッフを改善しようとしている別府市役所の地方の政策立案者を助けることができると信じています。

ここでのインタビューの内容は、この研究プロジェクトにのみ使用しますので、情報は口外することはありません。そしてこの会話内容を録音させていただきたいのですが、よろしいですか？

一般/入門質問

このホテル/旅館/お店/レストランには多くの外国人観光客が訪れますか？

あなたは、別府市の外国人観光客についてどう思いますか？

あなたは、過去数年間で外国人観光客の増加に気づきましたか？

気がついた場合…なにか変わりましたか？事業、別府市の観光について、具体的に教えて下さい。

外国人観光客の受入れ

あなたは、お客さんが外国人か日本人かを、気にしていますか？

大きな違いがありますか？

あなたは別府での外国人観光客から、なにか問題を感じることはありますか？

はいの場合、どのようなことを感じましたか？

外国人観光客はあなたのビジネス、別府の観光業において、日本人観光客と比べていい影響と悪い影響、どちらを与えていますか？

異文化体験

あなたは外国人観光客をもてなすにあたって、文化の違いによる不便を感じたことがありますか？

はいの場合、それらの違いは何ですか？そして、どのように、解決しますか？

あなたと外国人観光客が、共通して持つ意識や物は何ですか？

異文化間コミュニケーション

どのように外国人観光客とコミュニケーションをしますか？
日本語/英語/韓国語/中国語？

あなたは外国人観光客と話す際、不安を感じていますか？
日本人観光客との違いはありますか？
コミュニケーションの雰囲気にはどのような変化がありますか？
あなたも外国人と世間話をすることがありますか？

あなたは、インバウンド観光客と外国語で会話することを楽しんでいますが、または彼らにもう少し日本語を話して欲しいですか？

APUの影響（仮説5）

あなたは、よく APU の国際学生に会いますか？
はいの場合、その学生と話しますか？ APU の国際学生と会話が弾むことがありますか？

あなたは APU が別府に変化をもたらしたと思いますか？
はいの場合、どのような違いがありますか？
APU は別府に何か悪い影響、いい影響を与えましたか？

最後に

もしよければ、いくつかの統計データを取りたいと思いますので、お答え下さい。：
年齢：30歳以内、30-40、40-50、50-60、60歳以上
性別
あなたは別府で働いて何年間ですか？そして、このビジネスでは何年目ですか？
職業/役職

あなたは、私が他にインタビューできる、このトピックの専門知識を持っている人を知っていますか。
どうもありがとうございました！この現地調査の結果に興味がある場合、2月ごろに
電子メールで、結果を遅らせていただきます。

Interview Guideline: Inbound Tourists

Christoph HUELSEN
graduate student (M.Sc. International Cooperation Policy)
email: chrihu13@apu.ac.jp

Introduction

Hello, I'm Christoph, nice to meet you! Thank you very much for letting me interview you!
I am studying "Tourism Policy and Administration" at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Beppu and
I'm doing a field study for my master thesis (graduate school).
My research project is about intercultural communication and understanding in inbound tourism in
Beppu.
I believe that the information gained through this research can help local policy makers in Beppu City
Hall who are constantly trying to improve the inbound tourism environment in Beppu and local
tourism staff.
Your privacy will be guaranteed. I'd like to record our talk. Are you fine with that?

General/Introductory Questions

Did you enjoy your stay in Beppu (so far)?
What did you enjoy about it?
Why can't you enjoy your stay?

Just from the time you spent here, how would you describe the atmosphere of the town?

Tourism Customer Experience

Do you find the people in Beppu hospitable?
How about the staff of your hotel/hostel/ryokan?

What was your experience as a customer in Beppu?
Did you have any special (especially good/bad) customer experience while being here
that you want to share?

Intercultural Experience

Did you notice big cultural differences with local Japanese while staying in Beppu?
If yes, did they influence your travel experience/satisfaction with your stay? How?
Do you feel insecure about cultural differences with locals?
Would you like to learn more about the local culture?
If yes, were you able to learn more about it while you were staying here? How?

Did you feel you could trust your hosts/the general local population?
Did you feel treated fairly by them?
Did you feel treated in any way special or different from Japanese?
If yes, how do you feel about it? Does it influence your travel experience?

What are things you have in common and could share with locals?

Intercultural Communication

Did you talk with some locals/staff of your accommodation, restaurants etc.?
If yes, how was the conversation?
If no, why didn't you want to start a conversation? Did you try to start a conversation?

Do you find it easy to communicate in English/Korean/Chinese in Beppu?

If no, how do you communicate? Does it influence your travel experience negatively?

Do you find signage and announcements in foreign languages sufficient?

Hot Springs (Hypothesis 3)

Did you visit a hot spring in Beppu?

How was this experience?

Did you feel ashamed having to take off your clothes?

Where people looking at you?

Did you find anything difficult/challenging with bathing in the hot spring?

➔ If not, did you consider visiting a hot spring during your stay in Beppu? Why (not)?

Closure

Then, if you don't mind, I'd like to take a few statistical data:

age: under 30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, over 60

gender

country

length of stay in Beppu/in Japan in general

Do you know any other persons who have expertise in this topic that I could interview?

Thank you very much! If you're interested in the results of my field study, I can send you the final paper by email around February.

Christoph HUELSEN
 Graduate student (M.Sc. International Cooperation Policy)
 Email: chrihu13@apu.ac.jp



Questionnaire:

Challenges in Intercultural Communication and Understanding in Inbound Tourism to Beppu, Japan

Introduction

Hello, I'm Christoph, nice to meet you! Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire! I am studying "Tourism Policy and Administration" at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Beppu and I'm doing a field study for my master thesis (graduate school). My research project is about intercultural communication and understanding in inbound tourism to Beppu. I believe that the information gained through this research can help local policy makers in Beppu City Hall who are constantly trying to improve the inbound tourism environment in Beppu and local tourism staff. Your privacy will be guaranteed.

Statistical Data

age: under 30 30-40 40-50 50-60 over 60

gender: Female Male

country: _____

length of stay in Beppu / in Japan in general _____ / _____

1. Travel Experience

a) How important are the following aspects of travelling to you in general?

1 = not important;
 5 = very important

Sights	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Food	1	2	3	4	5
Engaging with locals	1	2	3	4	5
Engaging with other travelers	1	2	3	4	5

b) How would you rate the following aspects of your stay in Beppu?

1 = not satisfied;
5 = very satisfied

Sights	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Food	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness of tourism staff	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness of locals	1	2	3	4	5

c) Do you find it easy to travel to and in Beppu?

Yes No

If no, why? Please specify!

2. Language/Communication

a) How well could you communicate in English / Chinese / Korean in Beppu?

1 = not well;
5 = very well

English	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese / Korean (depending on survey version)	1	2	3	4	5

b) How satisfied are you with signage and announcements in English / Chinese / Korean in Beppu?

1 = not satisfied;
5 = very satisfied

English	1	2	3	4	5
Chinese / Korean (depending on survey version)	1	2	3	4	5

1 = not easy;
5 = very easy

c) How easy do you find talking with local Japanese?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

d) With how many local people in Beppu did you have a small talk (not regarding travel/sightseeing related questions)?

3. Hot Springs

Did you visit a hot spring in Beppu?

Yes No

1 = not satisfied;
5 = very satisfied

If yes, how did you like it?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

If no, why? Please specify!

4. Open-ended Questions

a) What was your best experience while staying in Beppu?

b) What is the most challenging part of talking with local Japanese?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Christoph HUELSEN
研究生（國際協力政策碩士）
Email: chrihu13@apu.ac.jp

調查問卷:

日本別府的多文化間互相交流及理解中所存在的挑戰

調查簡介

您好，我叫 Christoph，很高興認識你！非常感謝您填寫這份問卷！本人系立命館亞洲太平洋大學旅遊政策與管理專業的學生。我正在為撰寫碩士畢業論文而進行調查。我的研究題目是關於別府入境遊中存在的多文化間交流和理解。我相信此次調查所獲得的資訊能夠幫助別府市政府中一直在致力於改善入境遊環境的政策制定人員以及別府當地旅遊業的相關從業人員。我在此保證您的隱私不會透露給任何第三方人士。

統計數據

年齡： 30 以下 30-40 40-50 50-60 60 以上
性別： 女性 男性
國家： _____
在別府停留天數/在日本停留天數： _____ / _____

1. 旅行體驗

a) 以下有關旅行的各個方面對你來說哪些比較重要？

	1 = 不重要 5 = 很重要				
觀光	1	2	3	4	5
住宿	1	2	3	4	5
餐飲	1	2	3	4	5
與當地人民或旅遊行業從業人員的交流	1	2	3	4	5
與其他遊客交流	1	2	3	4	5

b) 您如何評價在別府的旅行體驗？

	1 = 不滿意				
	5 = 非常滿意				
觀光	1	2	3	4	5
住宿	1	2	3	4	5
餐飲	1	2	3	4	5
當地旅遊行業工作人員的親切程度	1	2	3	4	5
當地人民的友好程度	1	2	3	4	5

c) 您覺得來到別府或在別府市內旅行方便嗎？

方便 不方便

如果您選擇不方便，請問為什麼？請具體說明。

2. 語言/交流

a) 您在別府能夠順暢地使用英語或者中文進行交流溝通嗎？

	1 = 有障礙				
	5 = 很順暢				
英語	1	2	3	4	5
中文	1	2	3	4	5

b) 您對別府的中英文標識或告知感到滿意嗎？

	1 = 不滿意				
	5 = 非常滿意				
英語	1	2	3	4	5
中文	1	2	3	4	5

c) 您覺得和當地日本居民交流有困難嗎？

	1 = 很困難				
	5 = 很順暢				
	1	2	3	4	5

d) 您在別府和幾位當地居民進行過交流（不包括旅行/觀光的相關問題）？

3. 溫泉

您在別府去過溫泉嗎？

去過 沒去過

如果去過，您對溫泉還滿意嗎？

	1 = 不滿意				
	5 = 很滿意				
	1	2	3	4	5

如果沒去過，請問是什麼原因？請具體說明。

4. 開放式問題

a) 請問您在別府最美好的體驗是什麼？

b) 與當地日本居民交流時最大的困難是什麼？

非常感謝您的參與！

Christoph HUELSEN
研究生（国际协力政策硕士）
Email: chrihu13@apu.ac.jp



调查问卷:

日本别府的多文化间互相交流及理解中所存在的挑战

调查简介

您好，我叫 Christoph，很高兴认识你！非常感谢您填写这份问卷！本人系立命馆亚洲太平洋大学旅游政策与管理专业的学生。我正在为撰写硕士毕业论文而进行调查。我的研究题目是关于别府入境游中存在的多文化间交流和理解。我相信此次调查所获得的信息能够帮助别府市政府中一直在致力于改善入境游环境的政策制定人员以及别府当地旅游业的相关从业人员。我在此保证您的隐私不会透露给任何第三方人士。

统计数据

年龄： 30 以下 30-40 40-50 50-60 60 以上
性别： 女性 男性
国家： _____
在别府停留天数/在日本停留天数： _____ / _____

1. 旅行体验

a) 以下有关旅行的各个方面对你来说哪些比较重要？

	1 = 不重要 5 = 很重要				
	1	2	3	4	5
观光					
住宿					
餐饮					
与当地人民或旅游行业从业人员的交流					
与其他游客交流					

b) 您如何评价在别府的旅行体验？

1 = 不满意
5 = 非常满意

观光	1	2	3	4	5
住宿	1	2	3	4	5
餐饮	1	2	3	4	5
当地旅游行业工作人员的亲切程度	1	2	3	4	5
当地人民的友好程度	1	2	3	4	5

c) 您觉得来到别府或在别府市内旅行方便吗？

方便 不方便

如果您选择不方便，请问为什么？请具体说明。

2. 语言/交流

a) 您在别府能够顺畅地使用英语或者中文进行交流沟通吗？

1 = 有障碍
5 = 很顺畅

英语	1	2	3	4	5
中文	1	2	3	4	5

b) 您对别府的中英文标识或告知感到满意吗？

1 = 不满意
5 = 非常满意

英语	1	2	3	4	5
中文	1	2	3	4	5

1 = 很困难
5 = 很顺畅

c) 您觉得和当地日本居民交流有困难吗？

1	2	3	4	5
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d) 您在别府和几位当地居民进行过交流（不包括旅行/观光的相关问题）？

3. 温泉

您在别府去过温泉吗？

去过 没去过

1 = 不满意
5 = 很满意

如果去过，您对温泉还满意吗？

1	2	3	4	5
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如果没去过，请问是什么原因？请具体说明。

4. 开放式问题

a) 请问您在别府最美好的体验是什么？

b) 与当地日本居民交流时最大的困难是什么？

非常感谢您的参与！

Christoph HUELSEN
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설문지

일본 벳푸에서의 이종 문화간 커뮤니케이션과 인바운드 투어리즘의 이해

소개

만나서 반갑습니다! 저는 크리스 라고 합니다. 먼저 이 설문에 응해주셔서 매우 감사합니다. 저는 벳푸에 위치한 리츠메이칸 아시아 태평양 대학교 대학원에서 "관광 정책/경영학"을 전공하고 있고 석사학위에 필요한 필드 스터디를 위해 이곳에 나와 있습니다. 우선 이 리서치 프로젝트는 벳푸의 이종문화간 커뮤니케이션과 인바운드 투어리즘의 대한 이해를 다루고 있습니다. 저는 이 리서치를 통해 얻은 자료가 벳푸 시청에서 벳푸의 인바운드 투어리즘 환경 증진과 지역 관광 담당 직원들과 꾸준히 노력하는 지역 정책가들에게 도움이 될 것이라 확신합니다. 필히 귀하의 개인정보는 보장 될 것임을 약속드립니다.

Statistical Data (통계 데이터)

age

나이: 30 이하 30-40 40-50 50-60 60 이상

Gender Female Male

(성별): 여성 남성

Country

(국적): _____

length of stay in Beppu / in Japan in general _____ /

벳푸 거주 기간/일본

1. Travel Experience (여행 경험)

a) How important are the following aspects of travelling to you in general?

아래의 표에서 귀하께서는 각각 이번 여행에 있어 얼마나 중요하다고 생각하십니까?

1 = 중요하지 않음;

5 = 매우 중요함

Sights (볼거리)	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation (숙박)	1	2	3	4	5
Food (음식)	1	2	3	4	5
Engaging with locals (지역관광)	1	2	3	4	5

Engaging with other travelers (타 여행자들과의 관광/교류)

1	2	3	4	5
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b) How would you rate the following aspects of your stay in Beppu?

아래의 사항에서 귀하의 벳푸 관광의 만족도는 어떠셨습니까?

1 = 중요하지 않음;

5 = 매우 중요함

Sights (볼거리)

1	2	3	4	5
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Accommodation (숙박)

1	2	3	4	5
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Food (음식)

1	2	3	4	5
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Friendliness of hosts/tourism staff (관광사 직원/호스트의 친절함)

1	2	3	4	5
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Friendliness of locals (지역주민들의 친절함)

1	2	3	4	5
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c) Do you find it easy to travel to and in Beppu?

귀하께서는 벳푸 관광지(길)등을 쉽게 찾으셨습니까?

Yes(네) No(아니오)

If no, why? Please specify! (그렇지 않았다면, 상세한 이유를 기재해 주세요)

2. Language/Communication (언어/커뮤니케이션)

a) How well could you communicate in English / Korean in Beppu?

벳푸에서 귀하의 언어 (영어/일본어/한국어)로 원활한 소통이 가능하였습니까?

1 = 소통불가

5 = 매우 원활함

English(영어)

1	2	3	4	5
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Korean (한국어)

1	2	3	4	5
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b) How satisfied are you with signage and announcements in English / Chinese / Korean in Beppu?

벳푸에서 귀하의 언어로 된 안내방송, 도로 표지판 등의 표시는 만족하십니까?

1 = 중요하지 않음;

5 = 매우 중요함

English (영어)

1	2	3	4	5
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Korean (한국어)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1 = 쉽지 않음

5 = 매우 쉬움

c) How easy do you find talking with local Japanese?

벳푸 지역 주민들과 대화를 하기가 수월하십니까?

1	2	3	4	5
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d) With how many local people in Beppu did you have a small talk (not regarding travel/sightseeing related questions)?

베틀 지역 주민들과 얼마나 대화를 하셨습니까?(여행과 관계없이/볼거리와 관련하여)

3. Hot Springs (온천)

Did you visit a hot spring in Beppu?

베틀 관광 시 온천을 방문하하셨습니까?

Yes (네) No(아니오)

1 = 전혀 만족하지 않음

5 = 매우 만족함

If yes, how did you like it?

1	2	3	4	5
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그렇다면, 어떠셨습니까?

If no, why? Please specify!

그렇지 않으셨다면, 상세한 이유를 기재해 주세요.

4. Open-ended Questions (주관형 질문)

a) What was your best experience while staying in Beppu?

베틀를 관광하시면서 귀하께서 가장 인상적 이었던 경험은 무엇 이였습니까?

b) What is the most challenging part of talking with local Japanese?

베틀 지역 주민들과 대화 시 가장 어려웠던 점은 무엇 이였습니까?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

설문에 응해주셔서 대단히 감사합니다.