



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Master's Degree Programme
in Languages, Economics and Institutions of Asia and
North Africa

Final Thesis

From Views to Visits

Assessing the Impact of Algorithmic Recommendations on
Japan's "Hidden Gem" Destinations

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Hirofumi Utsumi

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Marcella Maria Mariotti

Graduand

Benedetta Braga
884301

Academic Year

2025 / 2026

Abstract

The research aims to analyze the post-pandemic tourism landscape in Japan and the influence of short-vertical media content (SVC), such as TikTok videos, Instagram's Reels and YouTube Shorts, in shaping international tourism destinations and habits within the framework of the contemporary Japanese economy. In recent years, Japan has seen a steady increase in international inbound tourism and an explosive growth in social media presence. Given the dominance, popularity and virality of SVCs in shaping customer behaviour, the ultimate goal of the study is to identify underlying correlations between SVCs visibility and tourism travel destination popularity by highlighting case studies of modern Japan's overtourism as foundation of the analysis. The research adopts a mixed approach and it is articulated on two analytical parallel axes. Initially, data is collected from the SVC-based social media platform Instagram, by simulating four distinct social media user behaviours and preferences (null case, travel-focused, Japan-focused, intersection case), in order to draw a snapshot of Japan's tourism image on foreign accounts, and the most sought-after travel destinations according to social media content. The data and conclusions drawn from the aforementioned analysis are compared against real case studies of recent overtourism phenomena in Japan. A case study about Ehime prefecture is conducted in order to analyze a tangible effect of the relationship between SVC and tourism. The case study aims to understand if SVC could possibly impact inbound tourism flux in the prefecture. In this comparison, a common pattern which links social media popularity and relevance to funneling tourism fluxes and ultimately to overtourism, comes to light.

Index

Introduction	4
要旨	7
 Chapter 1. Short Vertical Content (SVC) and Commodification of Culture	 11
1.1 Definition and History of Social Media	11
1.2 Short Vertical Content (SVC): history and definition	14
1.3 Algorithm-driven content and its effects	21
1.4 Doomscrolling and low-cognitive priming	26
1.5 SVC Priming: Culture Merchification of Tourism Destination	30
1.6 Japan's Cultural Commodification on SVC	32
 Chapter 2. Overtourism and Social Media: The Case Study of Japan	 36
2.1 Brief history of recent tourism trends in Japan	36
2.2 Overtourism: an operative definition	37
2.3 A Japanese case study of Overtourism: the Gion District and Tourism Ban	47
2.4 Social media and Overtourism: Must-sees vs Hidden Gems	53
2.4.1 A Japanese Hidden Gem: the Lawson at Fujikawaguchiko case study	57
 Chapter 3. Research Framework	 65
3.1 Research Question and Hypothesis	65
3.2 Operational Hypothesis: Algorithm Analysis	67
3.3 Methodology	67
3.3.1 Choice of platform	67
3.3.2 Defining the tool of analysis: the Likes	69
3.3.3 Choice of Subjects of Study: Creation of Four Different Accounts	70
3.3.4 Defining a Timeline for Data Collection	72
3.3.5 Data Tabulation by Category	73
3.4 Trend Analysis Metrics	74
3.5. Phi (Φ) Analysis	76
3.6 Comparative results	77

3.7 Operational Challenges	78
Chapter 4. Data Analysis	79
4.1 Introduction	78
4.2 Tourism and Japan - Trends and Analysis	79
4.2.1 TC content	80
4.2.2 JC Content	82
4.2.3 JTC content	84
4.2.4 Final Observations on Content Behaviour	87
4.3 Location based Analysis	88
4.3.1 The Golden Route destinations	91
4.3.2 The Lower Frequency Data: Subpath and Isolated Destinations	95
4.3.3 Statistical Outliers: the Φt analysis	99
4.4 Closing Remarks	103
Chapter 5. Φt Case Study Analysis: Ehime Prefecture	105
5.1 Introduction to the Prefecture	105
5.1.1 SVC Analysis Summary	106
5.2 Overtourism analysis	107
5.2.1 Ratio between local population and annual tourism flux (LQD1)	108
5.2.2 Increase in the number of infrastructure aimed at tourists (LQD2) and Increase in tourism investment by the central government (NDP1)	111
5.2.3 Limiting measures to curb tourism behaviour and access (LQD3) and incident count (LQD4)	115
5.2.4 Increase in cost of living (LQD5) and decrease in purchasing power of tourists (NDP3)	116
5.2.5 Shortening of length of stay (NDP2)	121
5.2.6 Social media presence (NDP4)	124
5.3 Final Observations	129
Chapter 6. Conclusions	131
Chapter 7. Bibliography	136
Chapter 8. Appendix A: Data and Charts	153

Introduction

From 2020 to 2022, Japan enforced strict border control measures to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus, effectively suspending international arrivals. Following the lifting of these travel bans in 2023, the nation witnessed an unprecedented resurgence in inbound tourism, with arrival numbers returning to over 70% of pre-pandemic conditions in less than 5 months. While this rapid growth generated benefits by stimulating local service economies and justifying infrastructural enhancements, it simultaneously introduced challenges for the resident populations. Notable manifestations of this structural strain include the implementation of access restrictions for international visitors within Kyoto's historic Gion district, and the deployment of a physical barrier at a Lawson convenience store in Fujikawaguchiko to deter crowds gathering to photograph Mount Fuji. These localized crises illustrate a modern phenomenon wherein specific municipal sites experience sudden, unsustainable traffic driven primarily by viral exposure on global digital networks.

As social media has become an integral component of daily life, its utility has shifted from basic interpersonal networking to serving as an essential source for information retrieval. Within the tourism context, travelers increasingly utilize these networks during the preliminary phases of itinerary planning to discover prospective destinations and acquire local insights. In recent years, this digital landscape has undergone a major transition characterized by the rise of Short Vertical Content (SVC), a fast-paced, vertically oriented video format that gained widespread popularity during pandemic lockdowns and has since emerged as the dominant communication medium of the 2020s. Concurrently, the implementation of preference-driven recommendation algorithms has fundamentally altered how users discover and interpret information online. By continuously curating content streams that reflect a user's historic preferences and behaviors, these algorithmic systems restrict the diversity of viewpoints.

The structural constraints of SVC influence not only individual consumption habits but also the broader mechanisms through which regional travel destinations are represented and transmitted online. Because the compressed format of short videos demands immediate user engagement, content creators frequently deploy hyper-stylized visuals, cultural stereotypes, and simplified popular icons as cognitive shortcuts to appeal to the audience. This reductive approach triggers a

distinct cultural commodification effect, stripping localized environments of their nuance to satisfy rapid digital consumption. Japan has been profoundly impacted by this algorithmic trend; its digital presence on contemporary platforms is frequently characterized by over-saturated, hyper-aestheticized imagery and recurring cross-cultural misconceptions that frame the country through an exoticized lens.

The objective of this research thesis is to analyze the relationship between the post-pandemic surge in international inbound tourism to Japan and the pervasive influence of SVC algorithmic systems on regional tourism fluxes. Specifically, this study addresses the following central research question:

Is there a quantifiable correlation between Japan's recent growth in international inbound tourism and its surging popularity within SVC algorithmic applications? If so, to what extent do these algorithmic platforms actively construct and dictate international travel trends within the Japanese context?

To evaluate these hypotheses, this dissertation employs a mixed-methods research design that bridges empirical algorithmic tracking with localized case studies. The quantitative component relies on a controlled simulation framework using distinct social media profiles, each specifically targeting varying biases of global tourism and Japanese cultural interest, in order to chart the clustering behaviors, retention rates, and distribution biases of short-video recommendation engines over a structured temporal sequence. These empirical insights are subsequently contextualized through a qualitative case analysis of a case study of a Japanese region (Ehime) experiencing varying degrees of algorithmic exposure and tourist saturation.

In order to achieve such a goal, this work is structured into six subsequent chapters that transition from macro-theoretical concepts to localized empirical validations. The investigation begins in Chapter 1 with a comprehensive exploration of the historical trajectory of social media architectures, providing a robust conceptualization of Short Vertical Content (SVC) and evaluating how algorithmic curation restricts cognitive priming to induce cultural commodification. This digital paradigm is subsequently mapped onto physical data in Chapter 2, which examines the contemporary overtourism phenomenon in Japan, detailing the local and

global factors involved, and delineating the multi-staged frameworks through which viral digital exposure materializes as severe structural strain in destinations all over the world.

Having established both the digital and physical parameters of the crisis, Chapter 3 formalizes the mixed-methods operational design. This section establishes the research hypotheses alongside the exact parameters of the multi-profile algorithmic tracking simulation, specifying the timeline for data collection, the hierarchical categorization schemas, and the mathematical trend metrics used to parse the dataset. The empirical results of this simulation are discussed in Chapter 4, which traces the inner workings of platform recommendation engines and evaluates how simulated user engagement and feedback loops govern distribution patterns, topic-specific retention rates, and cluster formations.

These quantitative findings are then bridged with regional tourism realities in Chapter 5, which offers an in-depth case study analysis of Ehime Prefecture. This chapter analyzes how regional administrative initiatives deliberately deploy hyper-aestheticized, highly replicable content to attract prospective international markets, while simultaneously evaluating the resultant carrying capacity risks posed to fragile rural populations. By evaluating the systemic digital trends with reactive state-level public and structural investments, this final section provides a holistic response to the central research question and outlines strategic administrative frameworks for navigating the intersection of algorithmic virality and sustainable destination management.

要旨

2020年から2022にかけて、新型コロナウイルスの感染拡大を抑制するため、訪日客に対して日本を観光することを制約することを決定した。2023年から、それらの制約が解除された途端、日本へのインバウンド観光は爆発的に増加してきた。現在は、3年間にわたって日本の外国人観光客数が感染拡大前の水準と比べて7割に達してきたのだ。経済的な結果をもたらすことができたものの、当然、望ましくない結果ももたらすことになった。オーバーツーリズム（観光過剰）という現象が過去何回も議論されたことがあるにもかかわらず、最近では日本にて話題となっている。議論を呼んでいたのは観光過剰で京都市の祇園の観光客に対する罰金と制限を確立することや、富士河口湖町でローソンの富士山の風景が覆われたという事例だ。

共通点はSNSで流行っていたというものだ。現在の社会においてはSNSは情報を得る道具として大事な役割を果たし、ある国の観光地を見つけるためにも使われるようになった。その中で、SVC（短尺縦型コンテンツ）が近年ますます新型コロナの時から人気になり、今世の新しいコミュニケーションの仕方になってきた。SVCが早いSNSのコンテンツであり、ユーザーの情報の受け方明らかになっていた。集中力が悪化する上、情報に対するプライミング効果ももたらす。ユーザーがSVSを見ながら興味がなかったら、すぐにスキップする。したがって、SVCにおいてメッセージの伝え方が簡略化され、観光のための文化の普及も影響を受けることになった

それらの背景に、本論文は新型コロナ後に訪日外国人数の急増とアルゴリズムを基にしているSVCの使い方の間にどのような関係があるのだろうかというテーマを研究するのを目指す。なぜかという、SNSが人々の意思決定権に影響するほど強いもので、SNSのせいで海外で日本の偏った情報を伝えかねないからだ。それ以外にも、特にSVCが観光地の人気を高める傾向があるかどうか明らかにしたいからだ。そうであれば、SVCがオーバーツーリズムの現象に貢献するかどうか把握するのを目指す。

三つの仮説を立てる。一つ目はSVCにおいて人気のある観光地がオーバーツーリズムを誘発することである。二つ目は前の仮説と関係があるが、他の観光地と比べてSVCにおいて人気のある観光地が過大に代表されていることになることである。最後のはSVCプラットフォームでの人気は、日本政府や行政による地域経済やインフラへの投資につながっていることである。

第一章では、SNSとSVCの歴史を語った上で、SVCの特徴を定義する。さらに、SNSを通してユーザーに対してどのような影響を与えるのか、短ければ短いほどいいというSNSの文脈において文化がどのように広まっていくのか研究する。

第二章では、日本での観光動向を検討して、本研究におけるオーバーツーリズムの定義と指標を確立する。決めたうえで、穴場スポット（Hidden-Gems）と必見スポット（Must-sees）という主義を通じてSNS主導観光というものを説明してみる。

第三章では、研究方法を説明する。本研究の質問に答えるため、二つの研究方法を使うと試みる。インスタグラムの嗜好と性格の異なっている4つのアカウントを作る。

それらの通じて、SVC からのデータ収集を行い、どのような日本に関するコンテンツ、どのような日本観光地がアルゴリズムに選ばれるのか、傾向を分析する。特には収集したデータと現実的な訪日観光行動の間において摩擦が生じた場合、その摩擦の原因を調査していく。

最初の研究方法の結果を元に、具体的なSNSの効果が理解できるように、第二章で決まっていたオーバーツーリズム指標を通じて愛媛県をケーススタディとして研究する。詳しくは、新型コロナ後の観光行動と、観光の増加によって政府と県庁からインフラ投資をもらうことを調査する。

本論文の結果として、SVCがわずかに日本の観光地に対して影響を与えるが、SVCにおける人気は美的感覚で、「日本らしさ」のあるスポットとして認められることに基についていることになる。したがって、SVCの人気による訪日外国の行動が狭く、極めて集中した地理的拠点へと圧縮してしまう。したがって、SVCは多様な観光地を表す可能性があるものの、その場所の持続可能性や地元住民にとって、長期的な問題を引き起こす可能性がある。

1. Short Vertical Content (SVC) and Commodification of Culture

1.1 Definition and History of Social Media

Social media can be described as the most powerful instrument in contemporary society, going from a simple platform for sharing moments with family, friends, and acquaintances, to a political and economic ideological instrument that influences thousands and thousands of people all around the world. While traditional media, such as television and radio, were the main source of information for the previous generation, social media is the current location for every person to look up what they need at any time. Just by opening their personal social media account's feed, people are struck by different forms of media content, such as videos and posts that depict a world in terms of trends and social relevance. Not only they have become an essential tool, but they could be also seen as the main or primary source of fast and convenient information in current times¹. Their phenomenon can and has been analyzed in multiple ways², and in order to lay the foundations of our analysis it can be useful to give a cross-cutting overview of the topic that might highlight their main features and pitfalls. In order to understand the phenomenon and to produce a suitable definition, it might be useful to go back in time and to briefly outline the early history of the internet, as its role in shaping the birth of rudimentary social media cannot be overstated.

Web 1.0, the first phase of the World Wide Web, was the age of static connections and deliveries. It was defined by Berners-Lee as “read-only web”³: users were able to browse information through intertextual HTML pages, but they were lacking the ability to interact and produce content. Akin to traditional information media such as the printed press, the internet was merely a new vehicle to peruse and consume the top-down produced content without allowing for user interaction⁴. Although it seemed dynamic at a glance, Web 1.0 was static and incapable

¹ Naomi, et al. “Young Adults and the Future of News.” Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, 3 Dec. 2025, www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2025/12/03/young-adults-and-the-future-of-news/.

² Kietzmann, Jan H., et al. “Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media.” *Business Horizons*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2011, pp. 241–251, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005>.

³ Berners-Lee, Tim, et al. “The World-Wide Web.” *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 37, no. 8, 1 Aug. 1994, pp. 76–82, <https://doi.org/10.1145/179606.179671>.

⁴ Hiremath, Banesh, and Anand Kenchakkanavar. *An Alteration of the Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0: A Comparative Study*. Vol. 2, no. 4, 8 Mar. 2016, pp. 705–710,

of fostering on-platform dynamic communities, limited instead to rudimentary blogs and read-only articles hosted on servers⁵.

The evolutionary step to Web 2.0 can be seen in the shift from a static server type of functionality, to a more dynamic and user-active space⁶. Web 2.0 was defined by Darcy di Nucci in 1999 in the transition to an user-centric environment where content interaction, production and fruition was as much grassroots as top-down⁷. Users can actively contribute to the overall knowledge online by posting ideas and sharing them. In this second phase, people are encouraged to post, comment and share their thoughts and their daily life, democratizing the online space through a process of source diversification⁸. Moreover, the new age of the internet allowed online users to connect and interact with each others, thus creating communities in online spaces, where people could engage in active and network-fostering conversations⁹. This marked the beginning of a new era not only for the internet, but also for overall social interactions, as people felt encouraged to share with one another, shaping the internet as a proper new venue of daily communication.

In this very internet landscape, social media, and most forms of internet platforms for content sharing such as wikis pages, find their birthplaces¹⁰. Scholars¹¹ often refer to *Sixdegrees.com* as the first example of the budding social media phenomenon, because some

www.researchgate.net/publication/303661797_An_Alteration_of_the_Web_10_Web_20_and_Web_30_A_Comparative_Study.

⁵ Deshmukh, Rahul Kalyanrao, and Anil Shahaji Phatak. "From Static Pages to Emotional AI: Comparing Web 1.0 to Web 5.0". 12 Jan. 2025,

www.researchgate.net/publication/391190398_From_Static_Pages_to_Emotional_AI_Comparing_Web_10_to_Web_50

⁶ Van Dijck, José. "The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media". Oxford, Oxford University Press, 30 Jan. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199970773.001.0001>

⁷ DiNucci, Darcy. "Fragmented Future." Print, vol. 53, no. 4, p. 32,

www.proquest.com/docview/231011953?source-type=Trade%20Journals. Accessed 11 April 2026

⁸ Kaplan, Andreas M., and Michael Haenlein. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59–68, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.

⁹ Mechant, Peter, and Lieven De Marez. "Studying Web 2.0 Interactivity." *International Journal of Interactive Communication Systems and Technologies*, vol. 2, no. 2, July 2012, pp. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijicst.2012070101>.

¹⁰ Kaplan, Andreas M., and Michael Haenlein. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59–68, doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.

¹¹ Boyd, Danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210–230, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>.

defining features of the genre were already present on this web site from 1997. Users could add people in their friend list, confirming their relationships status on the site, and sending messages to one another on the platform¹². *Sixdegrees.com* represented the first attempt to create a social active and interactive community online where people could react and act to content, not just consume it.

From the early 2000s, social media started to make their public debut online on a major scale. The most notorious early social media platform is *Myspace*, a social network launched in 2003 that reached a global audience (reaching almost 115 million of users in 2011)¹³ from its early years. Online users not only were able to connect with others registered on the website, but could also personalize their profile and create posts¹⁴. Freedoms of creation and customization were a big step forward for social media, as they marked a paradigm shift from the old, rigid Web 1.0 model to a more tailor-made and ever evolving version of the internet.

Without any doubt, Facebook changed how social media is perceived in today's society. Founded by Mark Zuckerberg as a social network initially exclusive for college students of Harvard University¹⁵, Facebook increased the degree of personalization and expression possible to users by sequentially adding features such as friend lists and personal feeds with posts and moments shared by your friend list¹⁶.

From there, content and format-specific social media platforms started to come about: YouTube for long format videos, Twitter for short format thoughts within a character limit, to eventually Vine and Instagram for short format video productions.

Among all of them it is possible to identify some common characteristics and patterns that can give a baseline definition of the structural qualities of social media:

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Zandt, Florian. "Infographic: The Rise and Fall of MySpace." Statista Daily Data, Statista, 12 Nov. 2021, www.statista.com/chart/26176/estimated-number-of-myspace-users-at-key-milestones/?srsId=AfmBOopCyq36A_HUs_TT9art0RmO2iybJ7eP1WH7fJIKomx0hm0d3jxl. Accessed 23 April 2026.

¹⁴ Boyd, Danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210–230, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>.

¹⁵ Greiner, Andrew, et al. "Facebook at 15: How a College Experiment Changed the World." *Www.cnn.com*, 1 Feb. 2019, edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/02/business/facebook-history-timeline/index.html. Accessed 23 April 2026

¹⁶ Cassidy, John. "Mark Zuckerberg and the Making of Facebook." *The New Yorker*, 7 May 2006, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/05/15/me-media. Accessed 23 April 2026

1. User Generated Content. As already mentioned, Web 2.0 brought about a revolution in online spaces, as users acted as the main contributors to the content produced¹⁷. Social media provides a platform for online users to express themselves, while sharing their thoughts with their followers and mutual friends.
2. User self-profiling. As Boyd and Ellison discuss in *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*¹⁸, creating a personal profile is the backbone of social media, as being identified by a personal user account is necessary for content generation and user-interaction between accounts. The act of self-profiling is necessary also from a personal point of view, since social media has become a personalized space where users can self govern themselves by selecting what to consume.
3. Community fostering and social connection. As users became the heart of content generation, this has translated into fostering interactions between those who create content and those who consume. Traditional media operated in a top-down system, where creating media and consuming were structurally diversified domains. Social media integrated them both in the same ecosystem, creating a collaborative and a participatory space whereas the two roles are interchangeable¹⁹.

Given these common characteristics among the major platforms, social media have been constantly evolving in many different directions, that are significantly distant from the early versions of social media like Facebook or even the now discontinued MySpace. Social media are not considered anymore just a tool for networking with friends, acquaintances and others, instead they have become a fruitful space for personal branding, information pool and career development.

¹⁷ Obar, Jonathan A., and Steven S. Wildman. "Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge: An Introduction to the Special Issue." Papers.ssrn.com, 22 July 2015, pg. 774, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2647377.

¹⁸ Boyd, Danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210–230, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>.

¹⁹ Obar, Jonathan A., and Steven S. Wildman. "Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge: An Introduction to the Special Issue." Papers.ssrn.com, 22 July 2015, pg. 774, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2647377.

1.2 Short Vertical Content (SVC): history and definition

Content can be represented online in different ways such as photos, videos, comments in a few characters, and so on. However, in recent years, a specific, vertically oriented, short-spanning video format has been rapidly gaining popularity especially through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok: Short Vertical Content or SVC. In academic literature, the topic of SVCs, usually is part of a wider discussion of Short Video Format (called SVC as well), which finds its roots in early YouTube video production²⁰. However, due to both its surging popularity in recent years, and some strikingly differentiating features of SVC (portability, touchability etc.) over other forms of media, we decided to give the topic its own free standing relevance.

Short Vertical Content (SVC) can be defined, in its most basic format, as a short (usually less than a minute long) vertically-oriented video shared on social media platforms²¹. Although the actual duration of the video can vary from platform to platform (e.g. on TikTok videos can last up to 10 minutes, while on Instagram Reels usually lasts 3 minutes), and the content of the piece can be landscape oriented (cropped videos), briefness and verticality are nonetheless the salient and essential characteristics of the genre underlined by scholars²². From sharing moments of everyday life (e.g. ‘GetReadyWithMe’ or GRWT, ‘Come with me to’ type of videos), to tutorials (e.g. crafting and makeup tutorials), tips (e.g. suggestion about travelling or shopping) and many other topics, their ubiquitary and multifaceted presence in the contemporary media landscape is undeniable.

It is important to note that there are many different names associated with SVC (e.g. Reels, Shorts, etc), as the video format has been progressively been implemented on different platforms introducing slight variations on the formula. Hence, in order to discuss the topic and wade through the vast marsh of available content it is essential to have a look at the evolution and

²⁰ Cheng, Xu, et al. “Understanding the Characteristics of Internet Short Video Sharing: A YouTube-Based Measurement Study.” *IEEE Transactions on Multimedia*, vol. 15, no. 5, Aug. 2013, pp. 1184–1194, <https://doi.org/10.1109/tmm.2013.2265531>. Accessed 14 April 2026.

²¹Kaye, D. Bondy Valdovinos, et al. “The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok.” *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 9, no. 2, 30 Aug. 2021, pp. 229–253. Accessed 14 April 2026.

²²Kaye, et al. *TikTok: Creativity and Culture in Short Video*. John Wiley & Sons, 16 June 2022.

history of SVCs over the years, highlighting the main players in the space and their progressive contributions to the format.

Wei and Wang²³ marked the start of SVCs, in their most embryonic form, with the launch of the video-centered social media YouTube. Although still lacking defining features of modern SVC such as vertical scrolling and vertical screen optimization, these types of content are considered the precursors of current SVC, as the ‘short form’ aspect was emphasised when compared to standard media such as television and cinema²⁴.

The crucial point for the tech industry, and consequently for SVC as well, was the advent of smartphones in the market, which changed the trajectory for social media content. The ubiquitous access to social media on your personal mobile devices made content more accessible to people and more personalized²⁵. The shift of perspective was pivotal, as it allowed to transform social media as an everyday means of online communication. Regarding SVCs, the generational change that smartphones made was essential, as from now on the new device platforms that revolve around SVC began to emerge.

One of the first social media platforms that introduced the format of SVC to the wider market was Snapchat²⁶. Launched in 2011 by Evan Spiegel, the core functionality of the platform were the “Snaps”, short videos that could be used as an alternative private text, or shared with an audience with the Story feature visible only for 24 hours. Many people started to send these Snaps to their friends, adding filters. Among these people many prominent celebrities and cultural icons like Ariana Grande or Justin Bieber started to create a fanbase on the app as well, generating engagement through these short videos. Snaps were considered one of the first form of SVC, since the major feature of the genre (vertical and short videos) were integral to their definition²⁷.

²³ Wei, Tao, and Xiaohong Wang. “A Historical Review and Theoretical Mapping on Short Video Studies 2005–2021.” *Online Media and Global Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1 June 2022, pp. 247–286, <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2022-0040>.

²⁴ Cheng, Xu, et al. “Understanding the Characteristics of Internet Short Video Sharing: A YouTube-Based Measurement Study.” *IEEE Transactions on Multimedia*, vol. 15, no. 5, Aug. 2013, pp. 1184–1194, <https://doi.org/10.1109/tmm.2013.2265531>.

²⁵ Islam, Md Mujahidul, et al. “the IMPACT of SHORT VIDEO CONTENT and SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS on DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW of SMARTPHONE USAGE .” *Ssrn.com*, 6 Jan. 2025, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5388107.

²⁶ Wei, Tao, and Xiaohong Wang. “A Historical Review and Theoretical Mapping on Short Video Studies 2005–2021.” *Online Media and Global Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1 June 2022, pp. 247–286, <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2022-0040>.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

Although Snapchat was essential for the SVC format to start, it still operated mostly under a peer to peer logic, competing more with messaging apps than social media platforms²⁸. In contrast, Vine was the first SVC based platform to dig its roots in the social media landscape. Launched by Twitter in 2013, “Vines” were only 6-seconds-long short videos which mostly focused on 2010’s internet culture and observational humor²⁹. Some Vines gained a lot of popularity and several current internet influencers, at the time simply called Viners³⁰, were discovered through the platform (eg. Lele Pons). Both Vine and Snapchat are crucial steps for the evolution of SVC, although there were various distinctions between the two platforms in terms of content generation: on Snapchat, user-generated content was the base for the app, on Vine content creators were the one generating content while followers and fans were more likely to just watch it. Although on Vine everyone could record and upload short videos, the platform thrived on this new content creator-consumer dynamic born on YouTube but not yet present on SVC apps. YouTube was the pioneer in the world of content creator fostering, as the so-called Youtubers quickly became established creators on Vine as well.

Vine was later surpassed in adoption rates (also due to the closure of the platform in 2017)³¹ by Musical.ly, another SVC based social media platform launched in 2014. Although the two SVC based apps might seem similar in terms of video format, some differences are visible. Unlike on Vine, where SVC were usually more about comedy, on Musical.ly lip-sync videos³² were the most popular genre³³. What made Musical.ly popular was the appeal of a wide and diversified base of content creators due to the nature of its content. Musical.ly took the best features of the other platforms and made them its selling points: combining both the accessibility and replicability of content from Snapchat and the both emotional connection with the Musers (content creators on Musical.ly) like on Youtube and Vine. Thanks to lip-sync videos, Musical.ly

²⁸ Piwek, Lukasz, and Adam Joinson. ““What Do They Snapchat About?” Patterns of Use in Time-Limited Instant Messaging Service.” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 54, no. 4, Jan. 2016, pp. 358–367, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563215301023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.026>.

²⁹ Pareesh, Dave et al. “Video App Vine’s Popularity Is Spreading, Six Seconds at a Time.” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 June 2013, www.latimes.com/business/la-xpm-2013-jun-20-la-fi-vine-20130620-story.html. Accessed 18 April 2026

³⁰ Linaker, Ema. “What’s That Vining? A Bit of a Look at Vine & Viners.” *Medium*, 17 Jan. 2016, emalinaker.medium.com/what-s-that-vining-a-bit-of-a-look-at-vine-viners-191a71289411. Accessed 17 April 2026.

³¹ Roettgers, Janko. “It’s Official: Twitter Has Shut down Vine.” *Variety*, 17 Jan. 2017, variety.com/2017/digital/news/twitter-vine-shut-down-1201961620/. Accessed 17 April 2026.

³² Creators would mime along the lyrics of a song with the music playing.

³³ Price, Emily. “How Musical.ly Became a Pop Culture Phenomenon.” *Fast Company*, 18 Aug. 2016, www.fastcompany.com/3062863/how-musically-became-a-pop-culture-phenomenon. Accessed 21 April 2026.

had made content creation accessible to a wider audience than its predecessors, such as Vine, where typically only a small group of creators produced content whilst the rest of users simply consumed it. Moreover, as more people replicated the trends, some Musers became real celebrities, building up a large following of fans who supported them. For instance, Lisa and Lena, popular German Musers during the prime of the app, had more 20 million followers by the time the app was acquired by ByteDance³⁴. Musical.ly is an important chapter for SVC-based social media history, as it marked the beginning of the new generation of content consumption and creation. Musical trends, the democratisation of SVC content creation and the unlimited consumption of content in vertical scrolling format (see section 1.4) are all key features, as future social media platforms will also replicate in their online eco-systems.

In 2016 Douyin was launched by ByteDance, a Chinese tech company based in Beijing, capitalizing on the popular format of SVC. In 2017 the Chinese big tech company stepped in the western market, launching the international version of Douyin globally, TikTok.

In 2018, after only nine months, TikTok merged with Musical.ly, marking the beginning of a new era for SVC. The outbreak of COVID-19 was a pivotal moment for TikTok and the SVC genre, as the number of people signing up to the app increased³⁵. The Chinese short-video user base increased rapidly, hitting a new record of 226.1 million users in 2019³⁶, and showing surges of popularity throughout the pandemic years³⁷, with an yearly increase of 120% in downloads in 2020 (see image 1.0). According to Kaye et al., the reason for this explosive fame is directly connected with the rigid lockdowns around the world that prevented people from going outside³⁸. Since then, other popular social media platforms implemented the ‘TikTok format’ following the popularity of the video format: on September 2020 Instagram saw the birth of Reels³⁹, and

³⁴Bankable. “How Teen Twins Lisa & Lena Became Musical.ly’s Most Followed “Musers.”” Forbes, 17 May 2017, www.forbes.com/sites/levelup/2017/05/17/how-teen-twins-lisa-lena-became-musical-lys-most-followed-musers/. Accessed 21 April 2026.

³⁵ Zeng, Jing, et al. “Research Perspectives on TikTok & Its Legacy Apps| Research Perspectives on TikTok and Its Legacy Apps—Introduction.” International Journal of Communication, vol. 15, no. 0, 7 July 2021, p. 12, ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/14539.

³⁶ “TikTok Users Worldwide 2029| Statista.” Statista, 2025, www.statista.com/forecasts/1142687/tiktok-users-worldwide/. Accessed 29 April 2026

³⁷ Kaye, et al. *TikTok: Creativity and Culture in Short Video*. John Wiley & Sons, 16 June 2022.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Instagram. “Introducing Instagram Reels.” Instagram, 5 Aug. 2020, about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/introducing-instagram-reels-announcement. Accessed 25 April 2026.

YouTube introduced its Shorts alongside its standard long format videos in the same year⁴⁰. All these formats were and are colloquially called under the moniker of Reels.

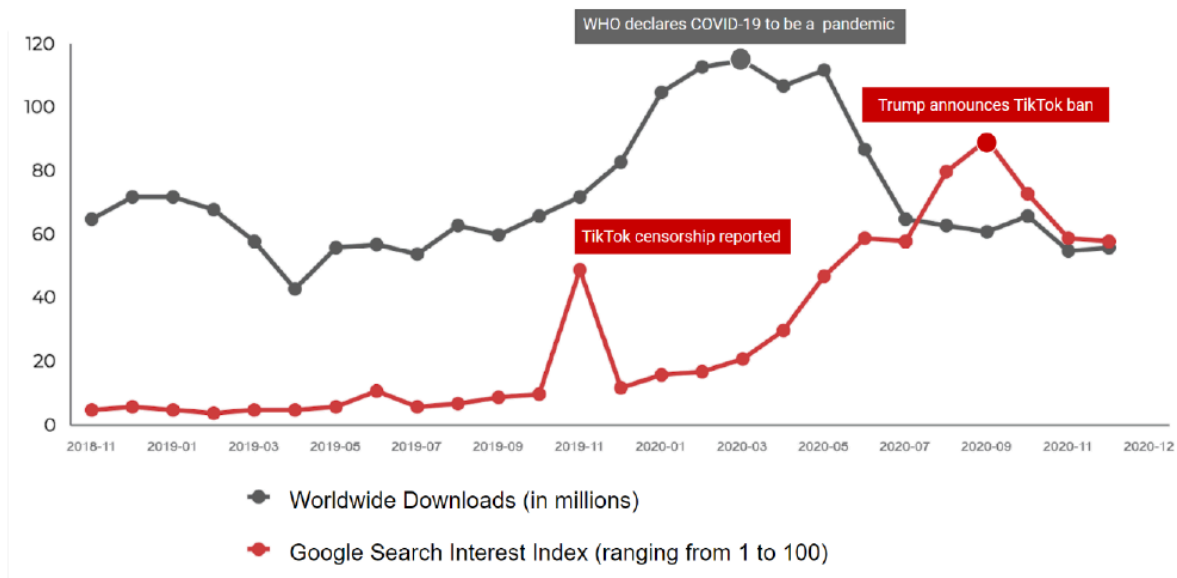


Figure 1.1. TikTok's Worldwide download statistics and Google Search Interest Index for "TikTok" between December 2018 and December 2020

TikTok, through its sheer popularity, solidified the role of SVC as the dominant format of content creation. Because of its intergenerational style of communication, TikTok is the proof that SVC democratised not only content creation but also a variety of themes compared to Vine and Musical.ly. While the former platforms were specialized on a single type of content (e.g. comedy or musical), TikTok diversified content creation thanks to the use of algorithms that sieve it according to their preferences (see. 1.3).

	Year of birth	Peak User Base	Type of format	Type of content
Youtube	2005 (acquired by Google in 2006)	2.72 billion monthly active users (2026)	Long Format Video (Since 2005) Short Format Video (Since 2020)	Varied

⁴⁰ Sherman, Todd. "One Year of YouTube Shorts — What We've Learned so Far." Blog.youtube, 16 Oct. 2021, blog.youtube/news-and-events/one-year-of-youtube-shorts-what-weve-learned-so-far/. Accessed 25 April 2026.

Instagram	2010	2.99 billions (2025)	Post, short videos (2010) Reels (2020)	Varied
Snapchat	2011	432 million (2024)	Peer to Peer short messages (Snaps) - maximum of 60 seconds	Personal messages
Vine	2013	24 million (2013)	SVC (Vines) - 6 seconds long	Mostly internet culture (memes) and comedy
Musical.ly	2014	200 million (2018)	SVC - 15 seconds to 1 minute	Voice Over, Music Content
TikTok	2016 (Douyin) 2017 (TikTok)	1.6 billions (2024)	SVC - 60 seconds long SVC - 10 minutes long (since 2022)	Varied

Table 1.1. Main Short Vertical Media (SVC) platforms and their characteristics

Through this brief overview of SVC history, some common characteristics can be outlined. Although not all present since the inception of the media, the modern end product can be seen as a progressive conglomeration of ideas, tested on different platforms. Fundamentally we can distill them in the following:

1. Brevity. As the name suggests, SVCs tend to prefer brevity over long extended content compared to other popular video content online platforms, such as Youtube. Unlike other forms of short media content, where brevity is a choice (eg. short Youtube videos vs long ones), SVC have a hard cap on their length imposed by the platform (e.g. for TikTok the original SVC went from 30 to 60 seconds, while on Instagram Reels can be recorded up to 3 minutes). This fundamental choice has produced two fold results. On the retention metric of platform this has highlighted that by reducing the length of online content by 30% to 40% of the average it gains more engagement than other length of content⁴¹. On

⁴¹ Gligorić, Kristina, et al. "Causal Effects of Brevity on Style and Success in Social Media." Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, vol. 3, no. CSCW, 7 Nov. 2019, pp. 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3359147>.

the content production front, the length has shown a strong topic shaping effect. Since the mass adoption of the media, trends such as sketch comedy, dances, voice over works (e.g. Vine, Instagram) have flourished in the space and have defined the medium itself. Nowadays their short virility is almost synonymous with SVC themselves.

2. **Verticality.** Before the introduction of smartphones in the tech market, applications and content were made to suit horizontally oriented computer screens. However, once the Iphone was introduced in the tech market in 2007, smartphones became standardized and online platforms had to optimize user interaction to the vertical screen of phones. In response to this, social media platforms introduced feeds designed to allow users to view content not by clicking with a mouse, but by scrolling with their fingers. SVC leverages these smartphone features and makes them crucial, making user interaction more touch optimized. For instance, scrolling down is the main way to navigate on SVC platforms, and double-taps (two touches of the screen in rapid succession) convey a like (positive feedback) to the video. Being vertical is therefore not only a stylistic choice intrinsic to the type of device used, but a defining feature that reduces downtime and friction between different content fruitions.
3. **Algorithmic.** Although not unique to SVC, content fruition on SVC-oriented platforms have always been, since their very inception, highly algorithmic based⁴². Since Vine, content consumption has been driven by a discovery algorithm that has fostered in-app behaviour to increase customer retention. This tailored-made content works synergically with the short format and the low attrition usage (read verticality) to retain users in longer timeframes. More on the algorithm and its effects will further analyzed on chapter 1.3
4. **Portability.** Their vertical format and brevity have encouraged social media platforms to provide content that is highly accessible to the public, as it is always available on mobile phones. Compared to other video content platforms such as Youtube or Twitch for live streaming where the users have to actively look for content, on platforms like TikTok the content is already presented to the users by just scrolling downwards on the screen. In other words, smartphone portability has been leveraged by SVC based platforms to make

⁴²Bhandari, Aparajita, and Sara Bimo. "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media." *Social Media + Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 22 Mar. 2022, pp. 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086241>.

consumption of content into a downtime-filling activity⁴³. SVC finds its place in the commute to work or to school, while waiting for an appointment, or during all those moments of life where someone has to kill some time off. Hence, SVC can be considered as a low-friction activity from the point of view of the social media user, since they do not need to look up for content making it easy to access.

In conclusion, SVCs can be seen as the dominant medium of communication in contemporary society. By following the evolution of technology it adapted itself to the new challenges of the online ecosystem. Their popularity and relevance in shaping public perception is undeniably shown in the the statistics, with 71% of TikTok users say TikTok is the best platform at recommending content that is relevant⁴⁴, and other 60% confirms that are more likely to first hear about tentpole events on TikTok rather than other platforms⁴⁵. This user base watches SVC as the new source of information about the state of the world and trends.

1.3 Algorithm-driven content and its effects

In all social media, but especially in SVC, algorithms play a crucial role in enhancing user experience by tailoring content to personal preferences.⁴⁶ In their broadest definition algorithms are sets of rules outlining sequences of operations that can be implemented as computer programs in computational machinery⁴⁷. The main role of algorithms is to have a

⁴³ “*Mobile vs. Desktop: Statistiche Di Utilizzo E Quote Di Mercato Nel 2022.*” Kinsta, [kinsta.com/it/quote-di-mercato-mobile-vs-desktop/](https://www.kinsta.com/it/quote-di-mercato-mobile-vs-desktop/). Accessed 2 May 2026.

⁴⁴ “*Unlocking Business Impact through Personal and Cultural Relevance | WARC.*” Warc.com, 2024, www.warc.com/en/article/unlocking-business-impact-through-personal-and-cultural-relevance-6fe84e07b8e64528aa32299f23592f4f. Accessed 2 May 2026.

⁴⁵ TikTok Marketing Science Global The TikTok Blueprint for Tentpole Success 2024 conducted by MAGNA (n=1,661)

⁴⁶ Eg, Ragnhild, et al. “A Scoping Review of Personalized User Experiences on Social Media: The Interplay between Algorithms and Human Factors.” *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, vol. 9, no. 1, Mar. 2023, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958822000872, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100253>.

⁴⁷ Zimmer, Franziska, et al. “Fake News in Social Media: Bad Algorithms or Biased Users?” *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2019, www.isi.hhu.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Fakultaeten/Philosophische_Fakultaet/Sprache_und_Information/Informationswissenschaft/Dateien/Franziska_Zimmer/2019_JISTaP_7_2_Zimmer_Scheibe_StockM_StockWG.pdf, <https://doi.org/10.1633/JISTaP.2019.7.2.4>.

specific outcome according to a set of values that has been previously decided⁴⁸. In digital spaces, they act as filters in internet search that, according to the previous sequences of actions of the users, select related content that the users might enjoy. This level of personalization of content is a crucial asset to social media platforms, helping in maximizing both user experience and user retention through compelling and engaging content⁴⁹.

The general idea behind algorithms can be considered as a three-gate system: inputting, processing and outputting⁵⁰. Given a set of quantifiable data, the algorithm filters it in order to give a desired output. When social media users interact with the platform, the algorithm is ‘fed’ with data that is processed and filtered with specific variables, and ultimately it is tailored to the users' preferences⁵¹.

Although the aforementioned definition might seem straightforward, the reality behind it is anything but clear. Moreover, given the primary role that algorithms have in shaping the fruition and enhancing retention on social media platforms, it is a well-known fact the inner workings and logics behind them are usually hidden from the public eye⁵². It follows that discussions of these proprietary algorithms are usually done through ‘black box’ analysis, as Frank Pasquale explained in *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*: as users interact with social media, we can only analyze the input and the output of the content, and the actual computational step is deduced by fixing boundary parameters⁵³.

The most common variables that algorithms use are demographic (age, gender, etc), geographic and previous watching behaviours on the platform (likes, time of visualization, etc)⁵⁴.

⁴⁸Kitchin, Rob. “Thinking Critically about and Researching Algorithms.” *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, 25 Feb. 2017, pp. 14–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2016.1154087>.

⁴⁹Sharma, Bhakti, et al. “The Dark at the End of the Tunnel: Doomscrolling on Social Media Newsfeeds.” *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, vol. 3, no. 1, 10 Jan. 2022, tmb.apaopen.org/pub/nn9uaqsz/release/3, <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000059>.

⁵⁰Longo, Anthony. “How Do Social Media Algorithms Appear? A Phenomenological Response to the Black Box Metaphor.” *Minds and Machines*, vol. 35, no. 2, 4 Mar. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-025-09716-1>.

⁵¹Narayanan, Arvind. “Understanding Social Media Recommendation Algorithms.” Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, 9 Mar. 2023, knightcolumbia.org/content/understanding-social-media-recommendation-algorithms.

⁵²Coretti, Lorenzo, and Daniele Pica. Facebook’s Communication Protocols, Algorithmic Filters, and Protest. 7 Dec. 2018, pp. 72–85, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315107066-6>. Accessed 9 May 2026.

⁵³Pasquale, Frank. *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard University Press, 2015. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0hch>. Accessed 9 May 2026.

⁵⁴Narayanan, Arvind. “Understanding Social Media Recommendation Algorithms.” *Academic Commons*, 2023, [academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/khdk-m460](https://doi.org/10.7916/khdk-m460), <https://doi.org/10.7916/khdk-m460>.

Researchers such as Arvind Narayanan tried to analyze the role of algorithms in the virality of online content, defining the behaviour of these platforms as engagement prediction.⁵⁵ The engagement prediction is defined as a calculated probability of user interaction with a given content, by taking into account previously engaged content. The process functions as a continuous test for the algorithm: a trial-error mechanism which only serves to refine predictive accuracy. In this way, the algorithm can improve engagement prediction and the user experience that, ultimately, results in a unique and personalized social media feed. The more content is consumed, the better algorithms become in predicting appropriate videos and posts.

This constant tailoring (and thus filtration) of content by an algorithm has several effects on people's perception of information online. One of its most common byproducts is the so-called *Filter Bubble* on users' content. The term *Filter Bubble* was first coined by Eli Pariser in 2011, and it is defined as a personal environment generated by algorithms, in which only familiar and likeable content and information are accessible.⁵⁶ The Bubble, according to Pariser, is extremely dangerous, as it confines user perception of information, confirming personal biases. This over-filtered information is also compared to an 'echo chamber'. The 'echo chamber' is a metaphor to describe environments created by personalized information sources that isolate from antagonistic or thought provoking content: an echo of people's personal biases.⁵⁷ Although the two theories use different terms to analyze algorithms' effect, both terms underline a sense of a 'comfortable' isolation. Both theories criticize algorithms in confining people in polarized environments where they are not confronted with information that might challenge them critically and cognitively⁵⁸. As Pariser explains:

The filter bubble tends to dramatically amplify confirmation bias—in a way, it's designed to. Consuming information that conforms to our ideas of the world is easy and pleasurable; consuming information that challenges us to think in new ways or question our assumptions is frustrating and difficult. [...] As a result, an information

⁵⁵ Ivi, p.18

⁵⁶ Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. New York, Penguin Press, 12 May 2011.

⁵⁷ Cinelli, Matteo, et al. "The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 118, no. 9, 23 Feb. 2021, pp. 1–8. PNAS, [www.pnas.org/doi/epub/10.1073/pnas.2023301118](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

environment built on click signals will favor content that supports our existing notions about the world over content that challenges them.

(The filter bubble: what the Internet is hiding from you, p.29)

Within social media ecosystems, these invisible barriers become thicker. Content is algorithmically generated based on proxy values and past users actions, in order to prioritize similar content that the user is most likely to consume and engage with. On SVC-based social media platforms, this effect is extremely visible. SVC has a positive feedback loop interaction with the algorithms, which is embedded into its vertically scrolling navigation and quick accessibility (see 1.2). By scrolling and liking SVC on the platform, users feed an endless chain of feedback to the algorithm that further optimizes its ability to select possible likable content, and further minimizes the possibility to watch diverse content.

An example of such self-contained environments can be seen in TikTok's 'For You Page' (FYP). The FYP, according to the TikTok support page, is “a personalized feed of content based on your interests and engagement. The For You feed is the first feed you'll see when you open TikTok. The more you use TikTok, the more your For You feed will reflect your interests and show you creators and content you're likely to enjoy”⁵⁹. As TikTok itself explains, the FYP collects all the possible likable content for the user through the use of algorithms based on user interaction (e.g. videos you like or share, accounts you follow, comments you post), video information (e.g. captions, sounds, and hashtags) and device and account settings (e.g. language and country)⁶⁰ in order to tailor the content. The logic behind the FYP is explained by the TikTok support page in following building elements⁶¹:

1. *Content Forecasting*: estimating the appreciation factor of a SVC by compounding their prediction scores;
2. *Classification*: sorting the videos by their prediction scores, from highest to lowest;

⁵⁹ “For You | TikTok Help Center.” [Support.tiktok.com](https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/exploring-videos/for-you), support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/exploring-videos/for-you.

⁶⁰ “How TikTok Recommends Videos #ForYou - Newsroom | TikTok.” Newsroom | TikTok, 2020, newsroom.tiktok.com/how-tiktok-recommends-videos-for-you?lang=en. Accessed 3 May 2026.

⁶¹ “Presentazione Del Sistema Di Raccomandazioni TikTok | Politiche E Coinvolgimento.” Tiktok.com, 2021, www.tiktok.com/safety/it-IT/policies-and-engagement/recommendation-system. Accessed 3 May 2026.

3. *Similarity Check*: measures how different consecutive videos are in the FYP, in order to diversify content (see ‘Cluster Analysis’ in chapter 3);
4. *Recommendation rules*: further application of rules such as including content from creators based on localization, and not selecting content created by accounts belonging to users under the age of 16 not eligible for recommendation.

It is worth mentioning that, if on one hand the previous theories argue that algorithms create restrictive boundaries in terms of content recommendation, TikTok emphasized its role in diversifying SVC on the personal feed. The algorithms will attempt to propose new content in order to improve its prediction ability and to give more content diversity on the FYP. In particular, when a user does not confirm any particular bias, the algorithm will show more balanced content variation⁶². Additionally, the input of more personalized data can in fact increase diversification of content, according to Moeller et al⁶³. However, algorithms are more inclined to show a certain bias towards content recommendations that reflect users personal preferences rather than divergent and challenging content⁶⁴. Hence, even if it has been proven that the algorithm attempts to suggest new possible content to the users, the positive feedback loop of algorithms will still remain biased towards content that users are still familiar with. Although TikTok in its guidelines claims to make an effort in diversification of content in the personal feeds, the bubble effects of algorithms are visible and harmful when it comes to information. What this algorithm system does on the user base is to change how people are exposed to information⁶⁵. It re-enforces pre-existing ideas by suggesting related content online, amplifying the user retention on the app.

⁶² Messing, Solomon, and Sean J. Westwood. “Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online.” *Communication Research*, vol. 41, no. 8, 31 Dec. 2012, pp. 1042–1063, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212466406>.

⁶³ Möller, Judith, et al. “Do Not Blame It on the Algorithm: An Empirical Assessment of Multiple Recommender Systems and Their Impact on Content Diversity.” *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 21, no. 7, Mar. 2018, pp. 959–977, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1444076>.

⁶⁴ DeVito, Michael A. “From Editors to Algorithms.” *Digital Journalism*, vol. 5, no. 6, 12 May 2017, pp. 753–773, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1178592>.

⁶⁵ Paolo Gerbaudo. “TikTok and the Algorithmic Transformation Social Media Publics: From Social Networks to Social Interest Clusters.” *New Media and Society*, 2025, www.academia.edu/126364484/TikTok_and_the_algorithmic_transformation_social_media_publics_from_social_networks_to_social_interest_clusters.

1.4 Doomscrolling and low-cognitive priming

One of the most common consequences of algorithm-based retention tactics is a modern phenomenon dubbed as *Perpetual Scrolling* (PS). PS, or *Doom scrolling*, is defined as the act of consuming content on social media for an extended period of time that, in most cases, leads to a loss of perception of the time spent on the platform or to a ‘time black hole’⁶⁶. This new behavioural pattern has also been dubbed as ‘binge-scrolling’, the digital way of binge-watching for Television content⁶⁷. Once users open their social media, they are instinctively stimulated by the amount of videos, text, audio, and music that the algorithm has suggested, ultimately increasing the on-platform retention of users beyond the initial planned amount. The algorithm creates hooks for users to spend more time on the app, by short spurts of quick re-engagement with the content⁶⁸. What users experience is a lack of self-control in watching content: once started, people find it extremely difficult to interrupt the session⁶⁹.

The term “scrolling” carries in itself an intrinsic meaning of verticality and smartphone optimization. Akin to a scroll that is read vertically through progressive unspooling, so an SVC consumer proceeds through unveiling the content through vertical swift motions. It should not come as a surprise that the ‘Doom scrolling’ moniker was conceived to explain the recent behaviour specific to SVC users, who have experienced uncontrolled scrolling habits⁷⁰. Recently the topic has gained academic relevance due a supposed linkage between perpetual scrolling and pathologies such as sleep deprivation and low attention span⁷¹.

⁶⁶ Zhao, Zhengwei. “Analysis on the “Douyin (Tiktok) Mania” Phenomenon Based on Recommendation Algorithms.” E3S Web of Conferences, vol. 235, no. 03029, 2021, pp. 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202123503029>.

⁶⁷ Karunakaran, Rajarathi, et al. “Antecedents of Binge-Scrolling Short-Form Videos.” IEEE Xplore, 1 Aug. 2022, ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10010460/references#references.

⁶⁸ Wang, Chuang, et al. “Why We Cannot Stop Repetitive Scrolling on Short-Form Video Apps: The Roles of Content Types and Recommendation Systems.” Information & Management, vol. 63, no. 3, Apr. 2026, p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2026.104316>.

⁶⁹ Tokunaga, Robert S. “A Meta-Analysis of the Relationships between Psychosocial Problems and Internet Habits: Synthesizing Internet Addiction, Problematic Internet Use, and Deficient Self-Regulation Research.” Communication Monographs, vol. 84, no. 4, 23 June 2017, pp. 423–446, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1332419>.

⁷⁰ Barak, Mark. ““Quarantini.” “Doomscrolling.” Here’s How the Coronavirus Is Changing the Way We Talk.” Los Angeles Times, 11 Apr. 2020, www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-11/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-changes-how-we-talk. Accessed 15 May 2026.

⁷¹ Karunakaran, Rajarathi, et al. “Antecedents of Binge-Scrolling Short-Form Videos.” IEEE Xplore, 1 Aug. 2022, ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10010460/references#references.

What are the main causes of this perpetual scrolling? Following the research of Park J. and Jung Y.⁷², the so-called ‘binge-scrolling’ is explained as a three-level model behaviour: Stimulus, Organism, and Response (SOR). The model was already used to analyze users’ behaviour under external stimuli by focusing on emotional response. From there, the SOR model was extended to the present-day situation, and it was used to explain the recent behaviour of people over SVCs.

The first stage of the model is *Stimulus*. Stimulus are the external factors that trigger actions. In terms of SVC, stimuli are associated with the algorithm-driven content, content features, and platform features⁷³. As already mentioned, algorithm-driven content is selected by proxy values of users' preferences and past behaviour on social media. This results in users not being incentivized to look for information or possible likeable content and, eventually, passively watching infinite information displayed on their screens.

Organism is the second stage of the model, and it is linked with the internal and stimulus-induced emotional status of users. In previous studies, what users experienced were a state of anxiety and regret, with a low cognitive comprehension of what was shown on TV⁷⁴. In the era of smartphones and SVC, a lack of self-control and low cognitive process of information is amplified⁷⁵. Lack of self-control is often described as the incapacity to control once impulse to, in this case, watch social media⁷⁶. Consequently, a lack of self-control can lead to poor cognitive performance and attitude while consuming media online⁷⁷. In SVC media, this was extensively analyzed on TikTok user as they showed a much more passive attitude towards SVC than any

⁷²Park, Joohye, and Yoonhyuk Jung. “Unveiling the Dynamics of Binge-Scrolling: A Comprehensive Analysis of Short-Form Video Service Consumption Using a Stimulus-Organism-Response Model.” *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 95, 1 Oct. 2024, pp. 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102200>.

⁷³ Ibidem

⁷⁴ Hofmann, Wilhelm, et al. "Of sweet temptations and bitter aftertaste: self-control as a moderator of the effects of media use on well-being." vol. 21,. 2017, pp. 13 *The Routledge Handbook of Media Use and Well-Being: International Perspectives on Theory and Research on Positive Media Effects*. Routledge (2017): 229-240.

⁷⁵Park, Joohye, and Yoonhyuk Jung. “Unveiling the Dynamics of Binge-Scrolling: A Comprehensive Analysis of Short-Form Video Service Consumption Using a Stimulus-Organism-Response Model.” *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 95, 1 Oct. 2024, pp. 4-5, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102200>

⁷⁶ Hofmann, Wilhelm, et al. "Of sweet temptations and bitter aftertaste: self-control as a moderator of the effects of media use on well-being." vol. 21,. 2017, pp. 13 *The Routledge Handbook of Media Use and Well-Being: International Perspectives on Theory and Research on Positive Media Effects*. Routledge (2017): 229-240.

⁷⁷ Horvath, Jared C., et al. “The Impact of Binge Watching on Memory and Perceived Comprehension”. *First Monday*, vol. 22, no. 9, Sept. 2017, doi:10.5210/fm.v22i9.7729.

other social media format, because of its easy fruition and fast-paced vertical portability⁷⁸ (see section 1.2).

The last stage of the model is user Response, the coping mechanism towards the feeling of distress by online media. If in the first early stages, the users can feel a sense of harmony towards the content that the algorithm meticulously tailored according to their preferences, in the long run, this pleasant feeling can be transformed into discomfort and alienation from the content⁷⁹.

Given the SOR model as the blueprint for the infinite scrolling effect, it is essential to define some of the side-effects of doom scrolling on the users. One issue that many scholars have already pointed out is that in recent years people's attention span has decreased due to the aforementioned social media habit⁸⁰. Platforms based on consuming fast-paced content like TikTok are more likely to have a shorter attention span: the more the content is consumed, the more attention will decrease drastically. What people, especially younger generations, have experienced is not being able to concentrate on simple tasks, and cognitive levels are measured to have become slower over the years: according to literature SVC consumption is related to shallower processing, slower cognitive processing and memory problems⁸¹.

Let us now analyze the small yet crucial difference in the user behaviour between algorithm-based SVC social media and user-input driven platforms such as YouTube. On YouTube, an algorithm has been implemented in order to recommend videos based on the user's past behaviour, however the application interface of the platform still incentivizes users to actively look for content by implementing a research bar on top of the screen and hyperlink interconnectivity (eg. video descriptions). On the other hand, on SVC social media platforms the research bar is completely absent from the user's feed, and the research of content is purely

⁷⁸Park, Joohye, and Yoonhyuk Jung. "Unveiling the Dynamics of Binge-Scrolling: A Comprehensive Analysis of Short-Form Video Service Consumption Using a Stimulus-Organism-Response Model." *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 95, 1 Oct. 2024, p. 6, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102200>

⁷⁹Siles, Ignacio, et al. "Learning to like TikTok . . . And Not: Algorithm Awareness as Process." *New Media & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 512, 12 Dec. 2022, p. 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221138973>.

⁸⁰Husain, Muhammad, et al. "The Effect of Social Media Addiction on Attention Span and Aggression among University Students." *Kurdish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 19 Apr. 2024, pp. 6472–6480, [kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/2873/1869](https://doi.org/10.53555/ks.v12i2.2873), <https://doi.org/10.53555/ks.v12i2.2873>.

⁸¹Opara, Emmanuel, et al. "The Impact of Tiktok's Fast-Paced Content on Attention Span of Students." *The Impact of Tiktok's Fast-Paced Content on Attention Span of Students*, vol. 1, no. 1, 3 Jan. 2025, www.researchgate.net/publication/387697885_THE_IMPACT_OF_TIKTOK%27S_FAST-PACED_CONTENT_ON_ATTENTION_SPAN_OF_STUDENTS, <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202501.0269.v1>.

based on algorithm mechanisms. As users are not passively spectating content they are not actively showing searching initiative and are less mindful of the subjects presented.

What users experience during a binge-scrolling session can be described as a lack of cognitive priming towards the presented SVC. Cognitive priming is defined as the process by which exposure to media content triggers semantically related thoughts, concepts, or knowledge structures in the audience's mind⁸². Cognitive priming was applied by Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. in 1987⁸³ in analyzing mass media's role in shaping public perception. In their experiment, they showed that by continuously broadcasting specific political news (e.g. low employment rate), people's perception of politics was driven by that specific knowledge framework primed by mass media. Hence the audience's opinions were temporarily altered because they evaluated certain political statements on that primed vision and context⁸⁴.

This theory of mass media priming can be extended to SVC social media, with some crucial differences. While traditional mass media such as television or radio have a constant and uniform flow of information, on the contrary SVC are heavily fragmented, both in topics and frequency thereof. Users are exposed to a diverse range of topics to which they are not necessarily primed, since they are not actively looking for it and they may lack the a priori knowledge to evaluate the subject. If the user is not interested in the content, they will just 'swipe' it out to dismiss it, simultaneously training the algorithm to select other content. What the algorithm generates is a lack of awareness of SVC users towards watched content, as they are not fully prepared to watch the next TikTok in the sequence. Low cognitive priming among users affects engagement levels: if the content does not align with the audience's existing knowledge framework, it is simply not worth watching.

These conditions force content creators (in this case, those who record, edit and post SVC) to adapt their communication style to these cognitive and algorithmically determined systems, in order to stay relevant on the platform. Content creators have to vehicle the message in the most immediate way, in order to 'hook' the users' low attention. Communication of SVC

⁸² Yurii Havrylets, and Inna Bielinska. "The Role of Priming Theory in the Media Effects Research Paradigm." *Scientific Notes of the Institute of Journalism*, no. 86, 1 Jan. 2025, p. 68, <https://doi.org/10.17721/2522-1272.2025.86.5>. Accessed 27 April 2026.

⁸³ Iyengar, Shanto, et al. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 76, no. 4, Dec. 1982, p. 848, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1962976>. Accessed 1 June 2026.

⁸⁴ Fazio, Russell H. "On the Automatic Activation of Associated Evaluations: An Overview." *Cognition & Emotion*, vol. 15, no. 2, Mar. 2001, pp. 115–141, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930125908>. Accessed 1 June 2026.

needs to be more engaging in the short span compared to other forms of content, in order to compensate for the users' low cognitive priming. For instance, opening the SVC with an attention grabbing delivery of the message by using captivating sentences can be described as an effective way to hook users attention as it simplifies the cognitive process that the users have to put in action. The use of visuals or sentences that rely on established facts and "clichés" is another effective tactic employed by SVC's creators. These communication tools can act as 'cognitive shortcuts', as they allow users to immediately recognise this common ground of information and to decode the context of the video without excessive cognitive effort. Similarly, online trends or ironic visuals, commonly known as memes, are prime examples of this communication style. Memes or trends are accessible and easy to understand knowledge that does not require any particular frame of reference, hence resulting in more engagement for both the user and the algorithms.

1.5 SVC Priming: Culture Merchification of Tourism Destination

The deep relationship between tourism and social media algorithmic behaviour is well represented in the concept of *Tourism Destination Image*, or the collective knowledge, clichés, impression and thoughts that people associate with a tourism destination based on previous ideas of it⁸⁵. Usually this image of a destination is influenced by external factors such as other people's impressions or media's coverage of it, and it creates an expectation (or priming, see 1.4) on a country⁸⁶. Destination image plays an important role in the tourism sector, since it fundamentally decides the main selling point of the country based on people's perceptions⁸⁷. The most popular aspects of the country are usually predicted in the tourist literature and they are thus made into marketable commodities by the media.

This process of Cultural Commodification was conceived by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*⁸⁸ in 1989 to describe how culture has become an economic and

⁸⁵ Crompton, John L. "Motivations for Pleasure Vacation." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, Oct. 1979, pp. 408–424, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(79\)90004-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(79)90004-5).

⁸⁶ Govers, Robert, et al. "Promoting Tourism Destination Image." *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, Aug. 2007, pp. 15–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507302374>.

⁸⁷ Tasci, Asli D.A., and William C. Gartner. "Destination Image and Its Functional Relationships." *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 45, no. 4, May 2007, p. 413, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0047287507299569, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507299569>.

⁸⁸ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1994.

marketable tool in capitalist society. Most of these cultural aspects are turned into commodities that gain economic value in advertising⁸⁹ and through this process, they usually end up distorted, losing their original meaning⁹⁰.

Both the concept of *Destination Image* and *Cultural Commodification* are translated in the world of social media as the backbone of several communication tactics used in response to the aforementioned low attention priming. Cultural aspects of countries such as lifestyle, food habits or core values, that are often perceived by tourists, become tools for content creation. Since destination images are generally shared among people and easy to recognize, they can act as cognitive shortcuts designed to instantly hook users' attention. Cultural aspects of a country are being commodified in different forms some of which can be summarized as follows:

1. *Stereotyped visuals*: aesthetic images of a country that strongly resonate with users preconceived ideas of what a place might possibly look like (e.g. Tuscan hills or Japanese clash of modernity and nature with cherry blossom trees etc)
2. *Value signaling words*: words that are rich in derived meaning, the encapsulate the very notion of the essence the country (e.g. the Japanese 'Ikigai' or the Italian 'Dolce Vita')
3. *Essential travel activities*: unique cultural experiences that are felt to be possible only in that specific country, and symbolize some intrinsic quality of it (e.g. riding a gondola in Venice, celebrating a Masturi in Japan)
4. *Cultural fetishism*: distilled concept of the countries's stereotypes the encapsulate and leverage its common traits eradicating them from their proper context (e.g. Japanese people have honor and they are quite shy, Italians are passionate and loud, Germans are precise)

This cultural commodification is not new in online spaces, but it has seen a steady growth over the years with the advent of SVCs⁹¹ because it leverages on the even more widespread

⁸⁹ Cecep Ucu Rakhman. "CULTURAL COMMODIFICATION for TOURISM in the ERA of DIGITAL DISRUPTION." Proceeding of International Seminar of Culture and Tourism AKBI, vol. 1, no. 1, 2025, pp. 25–36, ojs-akbi.org/index.php/proceeding/article/view/4.

⁹⁰ Coskun, Güliz. "Authentic Experience in Tourism and Commodification." *Journal of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality*, vol. 3, no. 2, 4 May 2021, pp. 95–102.

⁹¹ Moreno, Donn Enrique, et al. "The Role of Short-Form Video Content on Online Tourism Destination Image and Travel Intent." *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Business and Information Management*, 19 Sept. 2025, pp. 147–153, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3785171.3785218>.

unprimed effect previously mentioned. This is further strengthened by the positive feed provided by the SVC algorithms: if the user positively engages with the stereotypes and resonates with them, the algorithm pushes a positive feedback on the content and further crystallizes the distorted view. At the same time this incentivizes content creators, as explained in section 1.4, to play into the ploy, pushing commodified cultural norms of the countries. And as these aspects become more culturally-coded facets of an identity of a country, ultimately, they overtake and become its perceived image online.

1.6 Japan's Cultural Commodification on SVC

Japan has long experienced the phenomenon of Cultural Commodification, since the very beginning of its popularity as an international destination⁹². Pop culture has played a pivotal role in shaping the perception of the country by selling an idealistic and, to some extent, typified vision of the country (Anime eg. Your Name, Manga, Books eg. Mishima's Golden Pavillion , Movies eg. Lost in Translation, etc.). Cultural commodification, however, is not only convened in intellectual properties, cuisine or literature. It can be spread through multimodal aesthetics such as visuals and sounds that evoke glimpses of national identity. Because social media spaces based on algorithmic systems prefer to maximize retention among users (see 1.3), the complex cultural heritage of a country has been condensed and flatted into media-coded values such as specific music or highly evocative visuals. In this way, the users instantly decode the cultural context, responding positively to the context and, ultimately, strengthening the positive loop of the algorithm. Lev Manovich, in his book 'Instagram and Contemporary Image', has dissected how social media (in his specific case, Instagram) have deeply impacted contemporary media aestheticism⁹³. Rather than selling a whole product or focusing on an action, social media shifted the focus from "*doing to being*" ⁹⁴. Within these paradigms, macro-narratives and enriched cultural contexts are dismantled in favor of curated and highly evocative aesthetics and details. Through the use of high-retention visuals and sounds that draw on the destination's identity combined with short visualization time, tourism destinations become a jigsaw of

⁹²Saito, Ai. "Japanese Aesthetics in the Age of New Media." OpenSIUC, 2016, opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/705/. Accessed 17 May 2026.

⁹³Manovich, Lev. "Instagram and Contemporary Image." Manovich.net, 2015, manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image. Accessed 17 May 2026.

⁹⁴ Ivi, pag. 95

decontextualised, hyper-curated sensory fragments, that ultimately resembles a perceived national identity. Through SVC social media this trend has only been amplified ⁹⁵.

Some of these highly evocative details-oriented visuals and audio features can be enumerated in the following non-exhaustive list of recent trends:

1. *Seasonal aesthetic visuals.* Images or videos that are associated with Japan's four seasons. Cherry blossoms in spring, autumn foliage or koyo in autumn, or even summer festivals with fireworks for summer;

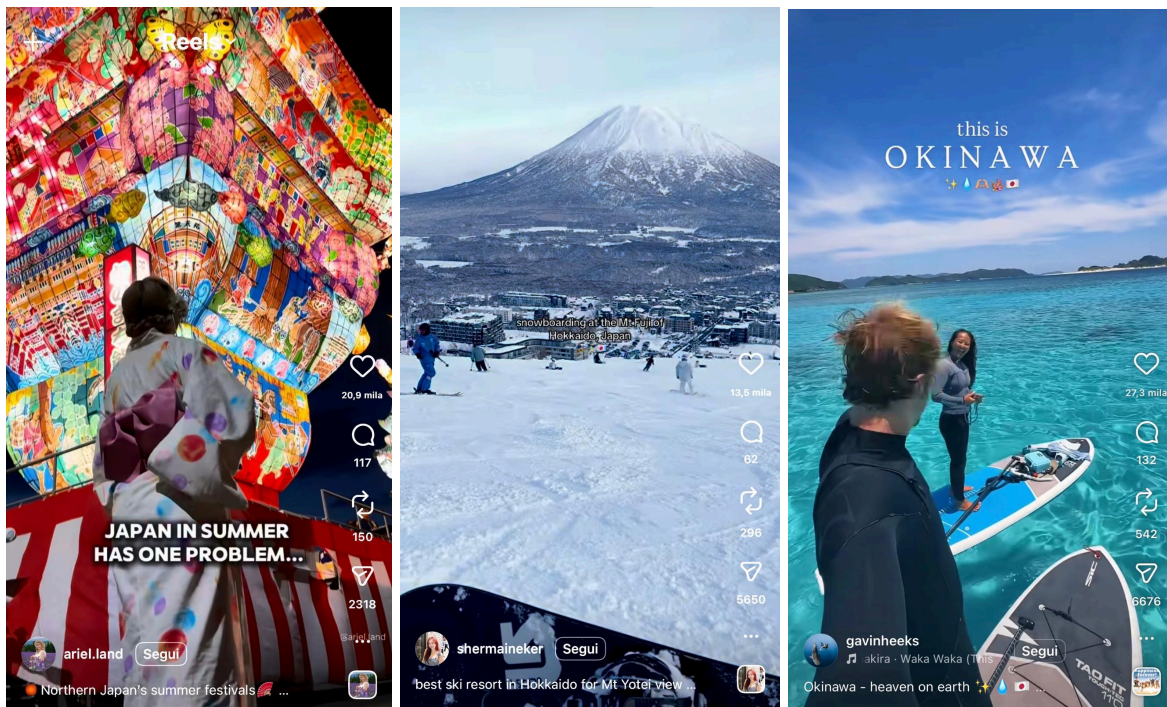


Figure 1.2. A depiction of Japanese summer festivities, Winter Activities and Island Resorts on Instagram (Source Instagram, @ariel.land, @shermaineaker, @gavinheeks)

2. *City-pop music.* City pop music is a genre originated from Japan that was born during the economic bubble growth of the country from 1970. It is often associated with Japan's roaring economic years (80's-early 90's), before the economic bubble burst. During covid-19, a relatively unknown city-pop song got viral and became the poster child of SVC regarding Japan. The song is Mayonaka no door - Stay with me by Miki Matsubara,

⁹⁵Saito, Ai. "Japanese Aesthetics in the Age of New Media." OpenSIUC, 2016, opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/705/. Accessed 17 May 2026.

singer from early 80s, who saw a resurgence in the billboard of 2020⁹⁶. Not only this song made the genre popular abroad⁹⁷, but it is now often associated with Japan, instilling a perceived nostalgic flair to the subject, and it is mostly used as the background track of many Japanese SVC;

3. *Techno-Orientalism*. It is often said online that Japan is a futuristic and modern country⁹⁸. SVC algorithms heavily use this trope of Japanese hyper-automated utopia⁹⁹. In academia this is commonly referred to as Techno-Orientalism¹⁰⁰. The term was conceived in 1995 by David Morley and Kevin Robins to describe Japan's rise as technologically advanced nation that was overtaking the decadent West¹⁰¹. In SVC, this celebration of hyper-modernity is often emphasized with sentences such as 'Japan is living in the future' or 'Japan is in year 3000'¹⁰². This visual reductionism commodifies Japanese technological infrastructure, framing the entire country not as a real society with contemporary urban challenges, but as a living amusement park of futuristic novelties designed for Western curiosity.

⁹⁶Billboard. "Global Popularity of 1979 City Pop Track "Mayonaka No Door – Stay with Me" Explained." Billboard, 21 Dec. 2020, www.billboard.com/music/music-news/mayonaka-no-door-stay-with-me-popularity-explained-9503609/. Accessed 16 May 2026

⁹⁷ Sugiyama, Satomi, and Nello Barile. "Japanese City Pop and Gen Z in the US: Happy, Calm, and Automated Nostalgia." Continuum, 21 Mar. 2025, pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2025.2471073>.

⁹⁸Kalnina, Adelina. "Techno-Orientalism: Future, Otherness, and Fax Machines." Tvērums, 4 Feb. 2026, tverums.lv/blogs/vartrume/techno-orientalism-future-otherness-and-fax-machines?srsId=AfmBOoojJNRI-jql1rzvxQAU_3We4LhPUwrIN9Scj-WgWFnNelCxVNvj. Accessed 17 May 2026

⁹⁹ Fitzpatrick, Michael. "Why Is Hi-Tech Japan Using Cassette Tapes and Faxes?" BBC News, 3 Nov. 2015, www.bbc.com/news/business-34667380. Accessed 17 May 2026.

¹⁰⁰Kalnina, Adelina. "Techno-Orientalism: Future, Otherness, and Fax Machines." Tvērums, 4 Feb. 2026, tverums.lv/blogs/vartrume/techno-orientalism-future-otherness-and-fax-machines?srsId=AfmBOoojJNRI-jql1rzvxQAU_3We4LhPUwrIN9Scj-WgWFnNelCxVNvj. Accessed 17 May 2026.

¹⁰¹Morley, David, and Kevin Robins. SPACES of IDENTITY. 1995, monoskop.org/images/3/39/Robins_Kevin_Morley_David_Spaces_of_Identity_Global_Media_Electronic_Landscapes_and_Cultural_Boundaries_1995.pdf. Accessed 17 May 2026.

¹⁰² Fitzpatrick, Michael. "Why Is Hi-Tech Japan Using Cassette Tapes and Faxes?" BBC News, 3 Nov. 2015, www.bbc.com/news/business-34667380. Accessed 17 May 2026.

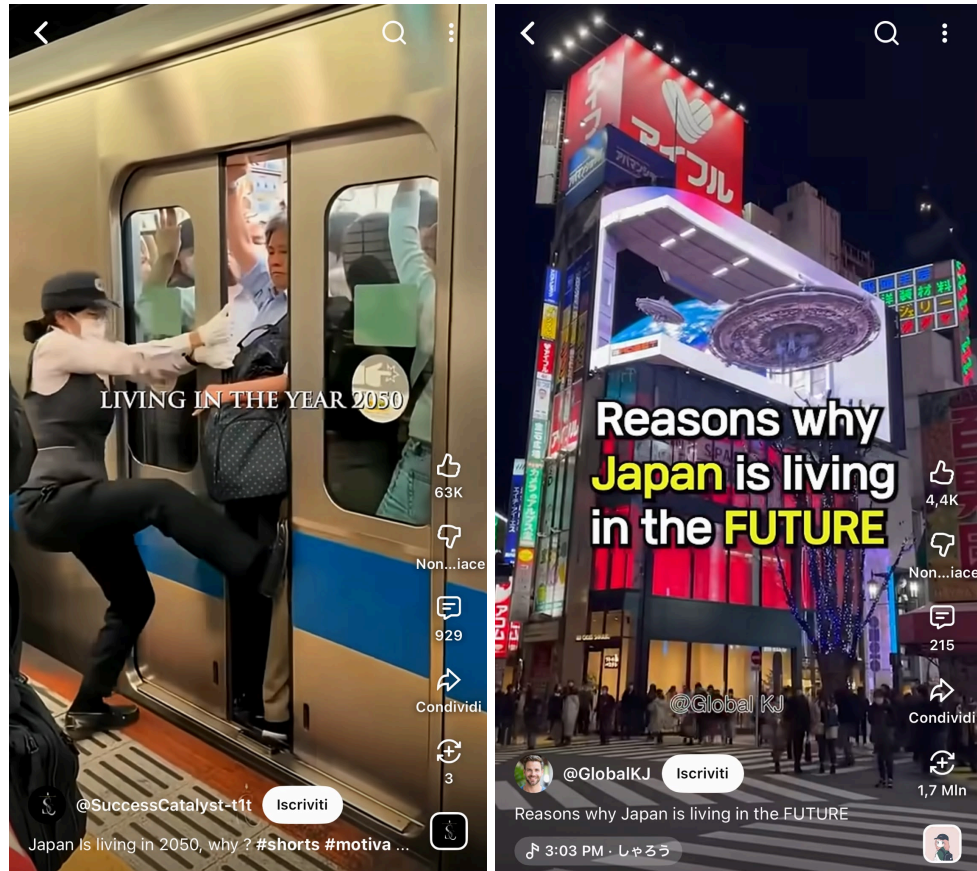


Figure 1.3. Depictions of the Japan Techno-Orientalism (Source Youtube, @SuccessCatalyst-t1t, @GlobalKJ)

4. *Japanese Perfectionism*. Another popular narrative about Japan is the fetishization of social discipline and civic respect widespread around the country. The social norms of ‘no talking on the phone while taking the train’ or ‘not eating or drinking on the streets’ have been emphasized online as telltale signs of a perfectionist and rule-abiding society. Across SVC networks, the intricate socio-cultural norms of Japanese society are routinely essentialized and packaged as a moral utopia. Concepts such as *Wa* (social harmony) or *Omotenashi* (selfless hospitality) are stripped of their historical and structural complexities; instead, they are remediated as entertaining, bite-sized spectacles of a "frictionless society."

2. Overtourism and Social Media: The Case Study of Japan

2.1 Brief history of recent tourism trends in Japan

It takes a simple glance at an analytic, decade-spanning chart, to highlight how Japanese tourism trends are, with some minor exceptions, in a constant and hastening upward trajectory. Both the local and the international travel, although never reaching the dizzying height in the sheer volume of tourists of long-time sector leading countries such as France and Spain (UN Travel)¹⁰³, are regularly reported by both national (JNTO, JTA) and international (UN, OECD) headlines to be among the virtuous of the world. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Japan has experienced an expeditious growth in terms of inbound tourism in the last decade, showing a vertigo-inducing escalation from the contained 2012's contingent of roughly 6 million international tourists to the 2018's value of 31 million. This accrued an over 500% growth and an average per annum differential of 84% thus not only ranking Japan among the top 5 high engrossing countries in the world over the decade timespan, but within the frame of the OECD, by 2023 onward, in a constant top three position by growth (OECD)¹⁰⁴.

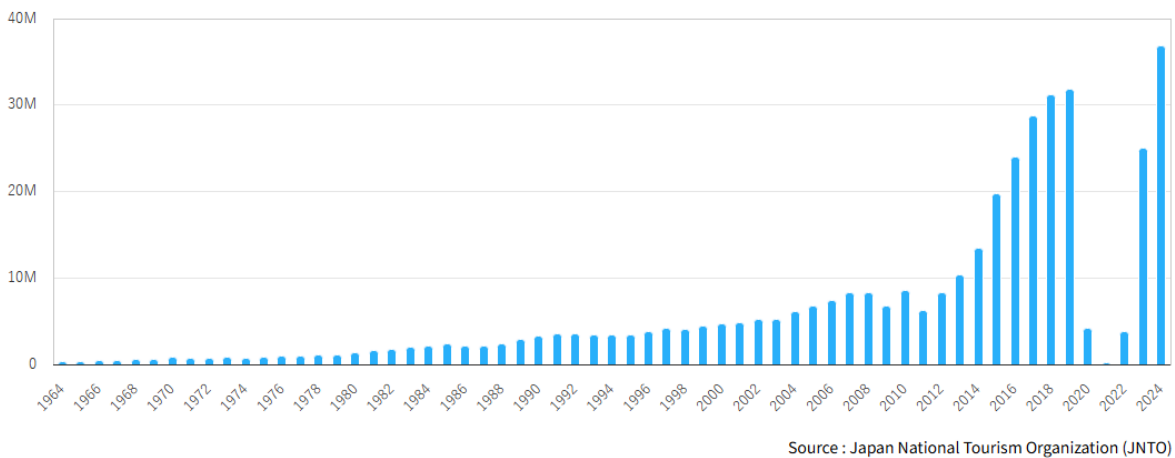


Figure 2.1. Tourist arrivals in Japan from 1953 to 2024 (Source JNTO)

¹⁰³ UNWTO. "International Tourism Highlights, 2024 Edition". 26 Nov. 2024.

<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284425808>. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.

¹⁰⁴ OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. "OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024". OECD Tourism Trends and Policies, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 6 July 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1787/80885d8b-en> Accessed 11 Feb 2026.

A major highlight in the recent trend is, of course, the deep indent in the 2020-2022 gap, due to the Covid-19 worldwide epidemic. Indeed, before the ban on international travel in 2020, more than 31 million people visited Japan in 2019 setting an, at the time, all time high record of attendances. After a 78,5% fall in tourism arrivals in 2020, and over 95% in 2021 when compared to 2019, in 2022 the recovery rate after the lifting of the international tourism ban reached 77% of 2019 levels in international arrivals. Where Japan follows in the trajectory of many OECD countries in regards to the 2020-2022 Covid-19 policies, in the following 2023 reopening strategies, some diverging tendencies can be highlighted. According to the ‘OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024’ report¹⁰⁵, OECD countries had better recovered from the health crisis compared to non-OECD countries. For instance, Italy had positively recovered, as 2022 international arrivals exceeded the 2019 figures by 2.0%, as well as other countries like Netherlands (1.4%), Norway (1.2%) and Spain (2.0%). Although the percentages may appear low, they prove that tourism is resilient in certain countries. Japan however has performed negatively, as international tourism levels in 2023 were -21% compared to 2019, After formally reopening the country in April 2023, international travels were around 25 million, showing just a few signs of recovery after the health crisis. In 2024, however, Japan's tourism industry hit 34 million inbound tourism, its current highest figure with a growth of 15.9% compared to 2019 and a 47% increase compared to 2023¹⁰⁶.

In this ever-increasing trend, some demographic and economic data may help to shed a light on the minutia behind this seemingly miraculous growth. Concerning the nationalities of the inbound trade, data show a bias toward neighbouring countries of the Asian-Pacific region (APAC). In 2024, tourists from the APAC were the dominant contingent, accounting for almost 66.5% of the overall overseas admissions. Specifically, tourists from South Korea were the most numerous among all nationalities, representing almost 23.9% of all international tourists. Then, in order, there were Chinese tourists (18.9%), Taiwanese (16.4%) and tourists from Hong Kong (7.3%). Other leading groups include people from Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Singapore, whereas for Western Countries tourists seem to come from the United States and Australia. Where the main nationalities have virtually remained the same in the last decade, the ratio among

¹⁰⁵Ivi p.14

¹⁰⁶JNTO. “Hōnichi daikyaku tōkei” “訪日外客統計 | JNTO (日本政府観光局).” 日本政府観光局 (JNTO) - Japan National Tourism Organization, www.jnto.go.jp/statistics/data/visitors-statistics/. Accessed 8 Feb. 2026

them have highlighted some wavering trends in the last 5 years, mainly around the Covid-19 pandemic. South Korea and China, while keeping their leading positions, have contended for the first spot with highly volatile ratios. In 2019 China reached a peak with 9.6 million tourists entering Japan; while the same year the Korean contingent was almost half of that, with 5.5 million. However, more recent data show an inversion of the trend with a ratio of 2:1 in 2023 for South Korea. Worth mentioning is also the steady increase over the years of tourists from Taiwan, with the third highest number of people among all nationalities. Furthermore the overall ratio between local population and international tourists is increasing throughout the years, as also the overall population of Japan is decreasing due to a demographic crisis. In 2016 the ratio was 18% (Overall population: 126.933.000; Inbound tourists: 24.039.700), than in 2019 the ratio increased to 25% (Overall population: 126.167.000; Inbound tourists: 31.882.049), and in 2024 reached a 34% ratio (Overall population: 123.802.000; Inbound tourists: 42.683.600)¹⁰⁷.

The effects of such a momentous intake of tourists can be clearly seen represented in the national expenditure allocated to the tourism sector, both in its current and past run rates. The Japanese tourism market, according to the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), is worth 8.1395 trillion Yen (\$53 billion USD), 8% of GDP. Although slightly underperforming compared to other OECD countries (eg. Italy was 10% in 2025), it is showing rising trends with 18% percent increases in 2019 and 2025, the highest among OECD countries¹⁰⁸ According to the annual fiscal reports from 2018 onward (FY 2018-2025)¹⁰⁹, excluding the 2020-2022 hiatus, there was an average annual increase of 70% of the regular budget to support both local and national tourist initiatives, falling in line with other tourist virtuous OECD countries such as UK, Italy and Norway. This is, however, without including the annual supplementary budget overdrafts which average at around 2 billion Yens a year and transdepartmental investments such as transport infrastructure and disaster prevention which are also partially allocated as “enrichment[s] of tourism content that utilize the natural environment and regional cultural resources”. The biggest leap in funding happened in 2025¹¹⁰, with an increase of 104% from 2024 (24.5 billion Yen) and

¹⁰⁷ STAT, Statistic Bureau. “Yui hate no gai kaname” “結果の概要”. 2024,

<https://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/2024np/pdf/2024gaiyou.pdf> Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹⁰⁸ MLIT, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. “Ryokō kankō shōhi dōkō chōsa | kankō tōkei hakusho | kankō-chō” “旅行・観光消費動向調査 | 観光統計・白書 | 観光庁.” 観光庁, 2026, www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/tokei_hakusyo/shohidoko.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹⁰⁹ MOF, Ministry of Finances. “Japanese Public Finance Fact Sheet”. pp 11-12, 2025.

<https://www.mof.go.jp/english/policy/budget/budget/fy2025/02.pdf> Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem

a supplemental 6.8 billion expected overdraft¹¹¹. Overall, this is an over 18% expenditure on the national budget, behind only sectors such as Social Security, and the Defense Buildup Program Expenditure. This rich strategy is part of a long term initiative to bring to total number of tourist to 60 million by 2030 (+20%) and more than doubling the national investment on the subject seen as “futureproof stable investment” by the JNTO by the same date¹¹².

2.2 Overtourism: an operative definition

Overtourism is not a recent trend. With historical reports of complaints of locals and crowds echoing through the pages of history, the often controversial topic of mass tourism has become headline news since the early conception of the modern package tours in the early 19th century¹¹³. Initially called in academia as ‘Irritation Index’¹¹⁴ or “Environmental Capacity”¹¹⁵ it loomed over the discourse as a foreboding threat to the local ways of living. However, recent leaps in the realm of tourism affordability and availability (low cost air fares, international accommodation pricing fixing)¹¹⁶. Tourism Planning and Development in Eastern Europe), have put the limelight back on the topic, urging its acknowledgment not only as a phenomenon of the contemporary experience economy¹¹⁷, but as a pressing issue that needs to be promptly solved

¹¹¹“The Fiscal 2025 Supplementary Budget for Japan Tourism Agency Amounts to 22.5 Billion Yen Including 6.8 Billion Yen for Over-Tourism Countermeasures.” Travel Voice, 2025, www.travelvoice.jp/english/the-fiscal-2025-supplementary-budget-for-japan-tourism-agency-amounts-to-22-5-billion-yen-including-6-8-billion-yen-for-over-tourism-countermeasures. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹¹²“Japan to More than Double Number of Regions Tackling Overtourism by 2030.” Japan Wire by Kyodo News, 30 Jan. 2026, english.kyodonews.net/articles/-/69563. Accessed 17 Feb 2026.

¹¹³Story of Leicester. “Thomas Cook’s Leicester - Story of Leicester.” www.storyofleicester.info, www.storyofleicester.info/city-stories/thomas-cooks-leicester/. Accessed 17 Feb 2026.

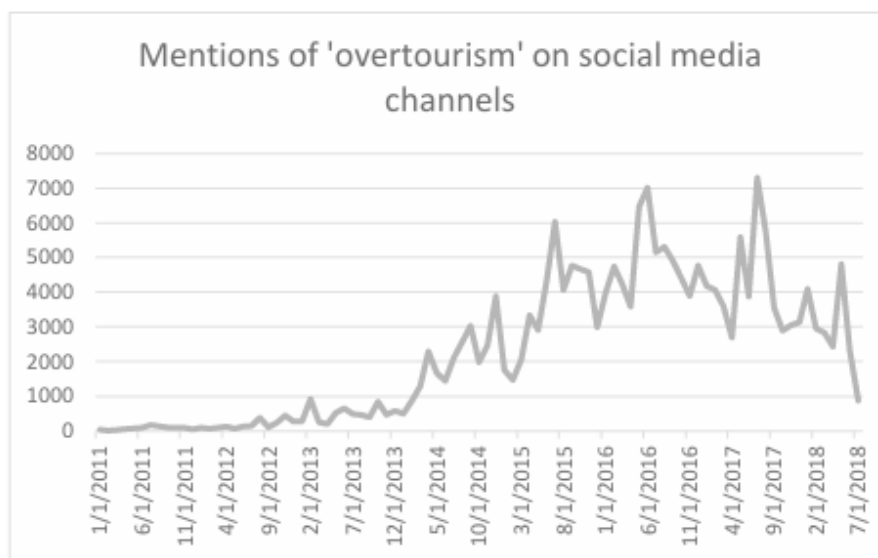
¹¹⁴ Pavlić, Ivana, and Ana Portolan. “Irritation Index, Tourism.” *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, 2015, pp. 1–2, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01669-6_564-1.

¹¹⁵ Pearce, Douglas. *Tourist Development*. pp. 23-29, Harlow, Longman Scientific & Technical, 1994.

¹¹⁶ Andriotis, Konstantinos, et al. *Tourism Planning and Development in Western Europe*. Boston, pp. 88-112, Cab International, 2022.

¹¹⁷ Dodds, Rachel, and Richard Butler. “The Phenomena of Overtourism: A Review.” *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, vol. 5, no. 4, 9 Dec. 2019, pp. 519–528, www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ijtc-06-2019-0090/full/html, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijtc-06-2019-0090>.

for the sake of current and future local populations.



Source: Coosto Social Media Monitoring Dashboard, August 2018 (Coosto.com)

*Figure 2.2. Mentions of “Overtourism” on Social Media Channels from 1/1/2011 to 7/1/2018
(Source Coosto.com)*

Let us begin with a tending definition of the concept. The travel news site *Skift*¹¹⁸ is often credited with either coining or popularizing the term in 2016. Defined as a portmanteau of traveling and excess, not too dissimilar from concepts such as overfishing, it was taunted as a phantasmagorical augur of instability and local unsustainability. According to Dodds and Richard Butler this is fundamentally the excessive number of tourists in a location that impact both the local’s livelihood and the city’s reputation¹¹⁹.

In 2016 the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) gave us an operative definition for overtourism in its annual report. The stark reality of the rising trends in tourism routes called for the definition of a tourism “carrying capacity” of a destination, predicated upon both the local (physical, economic, and sociocultural environment sustainability) and both the tourist experience (quality of visitors’ satisfaction). Overtourism, labeled as a media buzzword in the report but nonetheless accepted as a factual reality, has thus sprouted from this bedrock of

¹¹⁸ Skift. “Exploring the Coming Perils of Overtourism.” Skift, 23 Aug. 2016, skift.com/2016/08/23/exploring-the-coming-perils-of-overtourism/. Accessed 16 Feb 2026.

¹¹⁹Constantin, Margaux, et al. “Coping with Success: Managing Overcrowding in Tourism Destinations.” McKinsey & Company, 14 Dec. 2017, www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel/our-insights/coping-with-success-managing-overcrowding-in-tourism-destinations. Accessed 20 Feb 2026.

excess and it is articulated on the manifested deterioration of living standards and tourist experience¹²⁰.

In this research paper the several points that make up the UNWTO definition are going to be dissected and organized with the intent to identify an operative framework in the analysis of the data collected. The effect of overtourism can be broadly categorized in two major families of factors which can be used to assess the degree and type of mass tourism in a destination. On one hand we have the local factors that influence on a microscale the populace. These are discrete variables, not always easily quantifiable, centred around local incidents and decisions. We are going to formalize them as follows:

- ratio between local population and annual tourism flux (LQD1):

The most common complaint when it comes to overtourism is the amount and pace of tourist access to a destination. This is also a synonym of tourism overflow, seen in effects such as overcrowding and congestion. On the converse of this topic, the ratio between the arrivals and the land on which they are active (tourism density) has shown a lower degree of correlation¹²¹. Usually small but inhabited locations (such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Monaco) are more resilient to the upcoming flood of incoming traffic than wide and sparsely populated ones (Mongolia, Övre Norrland (SE)) (IPOL 2018¹²²).

¹²⁰UNWTO. ““Overtourism”? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, Executive Summary.” “Overtourism”? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, vol. 2, pp. 4-5, 17 Sept. 2018, <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420070>.

¹²¹Constantin, Margaux, et al. “Coping with Success: Managing Overcrowding in Tourism Destinations.” McKinsey & Company, 14 Dec. 2017, www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel/our-insights/coping-with-success-managing-overcrowding-in-tourism-destinations. Accessed 20 Feb 2026.

¹²²TRAN Committee. “Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: Impact and Possible Policy Responses.” Academia.edu, 2018, www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses. Accessed 20 Feb 2026.

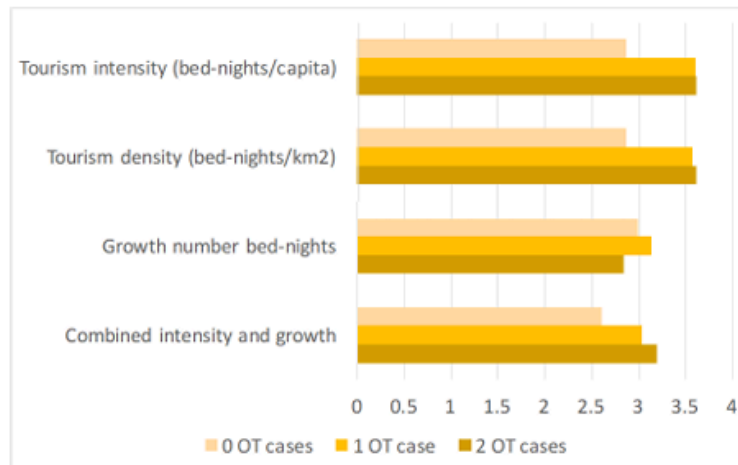


Figure 2.3. Number of Overtourism cases as a function of density (tourist arrivals/km²) and intensity (tourist arrivals per inhabitant) (Source Eurostat 2018)

- increase in the number of infrastructure aimed at tourists (LQD2):
defined as “rapid urbanization” by the UNWTO¹²³. This is articulated in two sections. Firstly in the pace of development: tourist destinations such as Samarkand, Cartagena and Johor show rising speeds in urban development in the last five to ten years, without matching the local demand¹²⁴. Secondly there is the factor of variance and utility in the built infrastructure. If the urbanistic projects are mainly aimed at a tourist crowd, this is seen by the UN as a form of urbanistic pollution since it does not provide any form of living development for the population. Related to the subject at hand is also the matter of privatization of public spaces and the commercialization of livability¹²⁵ were spaces meant to be public metamorphose into profit oriented locations.
- limiting measures to curb tourism behaviour and access (LQD3):
urban sectioning and decreases in access index for facilities and means of transportation. A rather recent topic born from the need to prevent access to the

¹²³ UNWTO. ““Overtourism”? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, Executive Summary.” “Overtourism”? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, vol. 2, pp. 10-20, 17 Sept. 2018, <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420070>.

¹²⁴ Sani, Mohomad. “The Ghost Town of Forest City.” MalaysiaNow, 16 May 2022, www.malaysianow.com/multimedia/2022/05/16/the-ghost-town-of-forest-city. Accessed 17 Feb 2026.

¹²⁵ Gössling, Stefan, et al. “Ecological Footprint Analysis as a Tool to Assess Tourism Sustainability.” Ecological Economics, vol. 43, no. 2-3, Dec. 2002, pp. 199–211, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0921-8009\(02\)00211-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0921-8009(02)00211-2).

“lived in” sections of a city, in order to guarantee pockets of local life. In “Overtourism: Excesses, Discontents and Measures in Travel and Tourism” this is highlighted as one of the most controversial tension policies between citizens and visitors, usually undermarking a mediatic and social divide in the “us vs them” narrative. Examples can be seen in the Faroe Islands with the curbing of accesses in specific weeks of the year or in Venice, with the entrance fee and the maximum entrance daily limit¹²⁶.

Another consequence of such segregation is the tourism zoning phenomenon, where urban and peri-urban environments get fragmented into tourist-generating zones, transit zones and receiving or destination zones¹²⁷ with segregation in their wealth distribution and population concentration that reflects finicky tourism trends.

- incident count (LQD4):

another major controversial topic that can be quantified over a period of time both in frequency and in severity. Incidents of any severity usually are seen as watershed moments in the approach to the mass tourism phenomenon. Policies usually follow both on a national and a local level. According to Butler (1980)¹²⁸ the participation of the political machine as a moderator between the sides, is the first step that eventually leads to an existential “antagonism between hosts and guests” and thus to overtourism.

- increase in cost of living (LQD5):

Also known as gentrification, it is defined by the EU as the ‘increasing demand for certain specific tourism goods and services and production factors causing

¹²⁶Siegel, Lauren A., et al. “Exploring Behaviors of Social Media-Induced Tourists and the Use of Behavioral Interventions as Salient Destination Response Strategy.” *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, vol. 27, Mar. 2023, p. 100765, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212571X23000045, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100765>.

¹²⁷ UNWTO, United Nation World Tourism Organization. “Report on the Draft Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code; Addendum 1”, 3 Oct 1983, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/abs/10.18111/unwtogad.1983.1.g365ug514776nq88>. Accessed 18 Feb 2026

¹²⁸Butler, R. “The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources.” ResearchGate, 2008, www.researchgate.net/publication/228003384_The_Concept_of_A_Tourist_Area_Cycle_of_Evolution_Implications_for_Management_of_Resources.

increased prices and disappearance of supply for inhabitants'¹²⁹. This puts a strain on the economic carrying capacity of a destination, upsetting the long term wealth equilibrium and livabilities of areas which become out of reach to the everyday consumer¹³⁰.

Most of these factors can be seen under the wider umbrella of a posteriori analytic data, usually local responses to the perceived “tourism congestion” factor. By the UNWTO’s account, they are competitive elements that put the strain on the availability of means, spaces, and infrastructures to be shared among the living and the visiting audiences. They are the root causes of the journalistic sensationalistic headlines that line the mediatic discourse. According to the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies (IPOL) in the EU, fluctuations of these data lead to cases of Marginalisation of residents, Criminality, Economic dependence on tourism and Loss of cultural identity. We are going to call this family, the Living Quality Data (LQD).

The second, more analytical group of factors deals with the broader governance and national level data that shape nation wide, and international traveling behaviours. We are calling them National Predictive Data (NPD), and they can be summarized as follows:

- increase in tourism investment by the central government (NDP1):

An economic focus on tourism is seen by the World Travel Monitor as a good indicator of potential high multipliers in tourism fluxes. Although usually figuring as positive in data, a rapid and uncharacteristic increase (above a 20% per annum) to accommodate quick demand changes can be seen as a risk factor. Case studies from Aiyana Napa in Cyprus or Cinque Terre in Italy show that inorganic topdown investments can lead to social and economic inequality for the living population¹³¹ that also impacts both the actual and perceived "authenticity" of a destination.

¹²⁹TRAN Committee. “Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: Impact and Possible Policy Responses.” Academia.edu, 2018, www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses. Accessed 20 Feb 2026

¹³⁰Pearce, Douglas. Tourist Development. pp. 23-29, Harlow, Longman Scientific & Technical, 1994.

¹³¹Saveriades, Alexis. “Establishing the Social Tourism Carrying Capacity for the Tourist Resorts of the East Coast of the Republic of Cyprus.” Tourism Management, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2000, pp. 147–156, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177\(99\)00044-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177(99)00044-8).

- shortening of length of stay (short vs long term) (NDP2):

The EU, in its parliamentary 2018 report on tourism in the Union defined three kinds of touristy endeavours based on length of stay. On one hand we have the Over-Night tourists and Long Term tourists, traditional travelling entities that have populated the commercial landscape in the last century or more. Their wealth producing potential is calculated on a Bed-per-Population (BPP) basis with the highest grossing potential both locally and nationally falling within the range of a 2 to 3 night overstay¹³². On the other hand, we have the Day tourists, a byproduct of the low fare traveling options allowing for quick dips into bitesized daytrips. Although overall a profitable group, the wealth they generate comes at the cost of a low degree of spread, highly localized in subzones of tourist destinations. Central downtowns, train stations, cruise terminals, high density facilities usually owned by large conglomerates, lay the path of travelling itineraries part of package deals and plans, unable to freely access to the local manufacturer and service offering. In addition to wealth concentration, these locations, due to their high footfall, tend to show an increased rate of infrastructure decadence, and social segregation from the local population.

- Decrease in purchasing power of tourists (NDP3):

often tracked on the basis of the average daily income of a location over the amount of tourists on a given timeframe. Even though high purchasing power is usually seen as desirable trait, disproportionate (both in rate and amount) capital injections is one of the leading causes of other overtourism indicators (see Increase in cost of living, Inflation). On the other end of the spectrum, crowds on a lower disposable income, have led to the rise of fast consumerism practices such as multinational, high volume restaurant chains and accommodation (see AirBnB) which have a lower rate of return on the local economy in the long term (<15%) than other kind of businesses, both local (>50%) or national (>30%)¹³³.

¹³²Europa.eu, 2026,

ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TOUR_DEM_TNW__custom_4585075/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=adc667ed-31f4-40c0-ae01-6a1d8b288357&c=1674050995197. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹³³Gössling, Stefan, and Paul Peeters. "Assessing Tourism's Global Environmental Impact 1900–2050." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 23, no. 5, 12 Mar. 2015, pp. 639–659, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09669582.2015.1008500.

- social media presence (NDP4):

a developing, multivariable topic that has gained increasing traction and relevance in a post Covid-19 world. Since the initial reports from 2016, the role of the thought leaders and influencers in shaping traveling routes has been highlighted as central to the matter at hand. The relation between Social media and tourism¹³⁴ is widely present in the academic discourse and it has been proven to show a degree of correlation, if not causation between them. Even countermovements such as “Conscious Travelling”¹³⁵ are defining trends in destination and tourist behaviours¹³⁶.

The social media exposure can be quantified over a specific timeframe showing factors such as frequency, variety in format and content, reach in language diversity and age diversity, and regional accessibility. Each can be further dissected on the basis of their effect on the population, defining pulling and pushing motions of tourist interest which are highly volatile ¹³⁷. The Goal of this thesis falls within this spectrum of analysis, with SVC and their effect being one of the most recent, thus overlooked, up and coming formats of media consumption whose effects are still actively a matter of academic discourse.

What they all share is a common fungibility, quantifiability and discrete broader breath than LQD. Their main sources are official national entities (eg. JNTO) or readily available databases (Alphabet, Meta) and they cover trends which are not necessarily directly related to the matter of a specific local tourism overflow but are related to nationwide indicators of a higher level behaviour. These indicators show an extreme variation of up to several orders of magnitude

¹³⁴ Zmysłony, Piotr, et al. “Deconstructing the Overtourism-Related Social Conflicts.” *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 4, 24 Feb. 2020, p. 1695, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041695>.

¹³⁵ Russell, Tara. “Overtourism in the Age of Social Media: How Instagram Is Shaping Travel Trends : The Independent.” *The Independent*, 14 Sept. 2024, www.independent.co.uk/overtourism-in-the-age-of-social-media-how-instagram-is-shaping-travel-trends/. Accessed 15 Feb 2026.

¹³⁶ Buckley, Julia. “Vienna Is Urging Tourists to Ditch Instagram for a Hashtag-Free Visit in a New Tourism Campaign.” *The I Paper*, 14 Nov. 2018, inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/vienna-instagram-holiday-tourism-campaign-hashtag-free-unhashtag-222507?srltId=AfmBOopqXW9iagU3GB8m-LYtwhp2OkPWVtItY9IBT9j3JAiqtdEtgjPK. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.

¹³⁷ Dredge, Dianne, and Szilvia Gyimóthy. *Collaborative Economy and Tourism*. Tourism on the Verge, Springer International Publishing, 1 Jan. 2017.

for both regions with and without cases of overtourism. Although, on their own, they are not enough to induce phenomena of overtourism, long term changes to these statistics are shown to be correlated to the Social and Environmental Capacity of travelling destinations¹³⁸.

According to IPOL, even though is impossible to use LQD and NPD as early warning signs of impending overtourism, they represent a necessary but not sufficient condition for its basis and they are frequently used as checklist to assess the stage of development of the phenomenon¹³⁹.

2.3 A Japanese case study of Overtourism: the Gion District and Tourism Ban

It is a well-known fact that Kyoto is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Japan, because of its ancient history and its sought after fusion of traditional temples and shrines, with its modern urban landscape. Out of the many must see destinations in Kyoto, the historical district of Gion stands tall as a unique crossroads case that had set the standard to the approach to overtourism both nationally and internationally. Famed for its traditional architecture and Geisha and Maiko who can freely be seen walking about, Gion is usually depicted as a quintessential fundamental Japanese experience, a must see in most itineraries across the island. Recent surges in popularity of the district have put an unbearable strain on the carrying capacity of the small block, urging radical policies to curb and contain tourism fluxes and preserving the socio-historical role of the area.

We are going to apply the analytical framework laid out in the previous paragraph to ascertain the sensitivity of the model in analyzing real case scenarios. This analysis will also identify a general baseline for the tourism trends in Japanese prime tourist destinations that will prove useful in future comparison endeavours.

Let us begin by postulating over the demographic data from the official city of Kyoto tourism board¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁸Mowforth, Martin, et al. *Tourism and Responsibility*. Routledge, 2008.

¹³⁹TRAN Committee. "Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: Impact and Possible Policy Responses." Academia.edu, 2018, www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses. Accessed 20 Feb 2026.

¹⁴⁰Kyoto City. "Rekishteki kenzōbutsudai •chiku no shūri •shūkeijyo seidō nitsute" "歴史的建造物等・地区の修理・修景助成制度について." 京都市情報館, 2026, www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/tokei/page/0000281311.html. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.

Kyoto with its population of over 1.4 million is consistently ranked among the most populated cities in Japan. Within its borders, the city district of Yasaka (弥栄) with its municipality of Gion (祇園町) has much more modest census. In 2020 the overall tally counted 464 residents in Gion, keeping relatively steady year by year. In 2024, Kyoto reached an historical high in tourism influx of 53 million yearly visitors, a 25% increase on the previous year's figures¹⁴¹, and showing a steady growth (excluding the 2020-2022 Covid-19 hiatus) in the past 20 years. The big rebound of incoming traffic from 2023 to 2024 is not unique case in Japan with several major destinations showing a similar trends

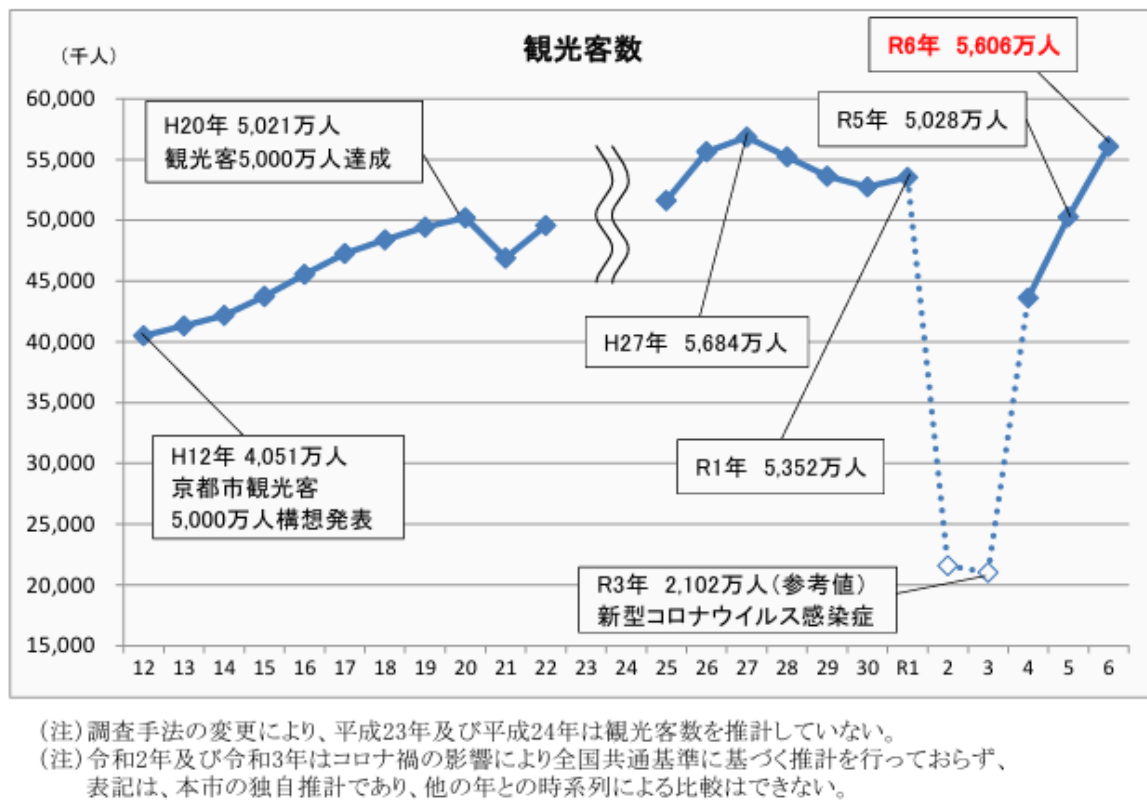


Figure 2.4. Number of tourists (as 1000 of units) in Kyoto between 2000 and 2024
(Source Kyoto Prefecture)

¹⁴¹Kyoto Prefecture. “Reiwa 6 Kyōto-fu no kankō irikomi kyakusu oyobi kankō shōhigaku nitsute” 京都府. “令和6年京都府の観光入込客数及び観光消費額について.” 京都府, 2025, www.pref.kyoto.jp/kanko/research/6report.html. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.

Out of all this footfall, the City of Kyoto estimates that in 2023 and 2024 the small city of Gion was the second major attraction in the city, visited by over 50% of the incoming traffic, only beaten by the Kiyomizudera Temple, which is located in Gion as well. This gives us an overall lower boundary ratio of 50,775 tourists per resident. Compared to the Japanese national average of 0.35 to 1, that can reach values of 1.5:1 in locations like Nara, this is several orders of magnitude above everyday standards of living. The second closest comparison point anywhere in the world is found in either Venice or the Vatican City with around 8000:1 each.

When it comes to qualifying this flux of tourists we can observe several trends related to accommodation and length of stay (NDP 2 and 3).

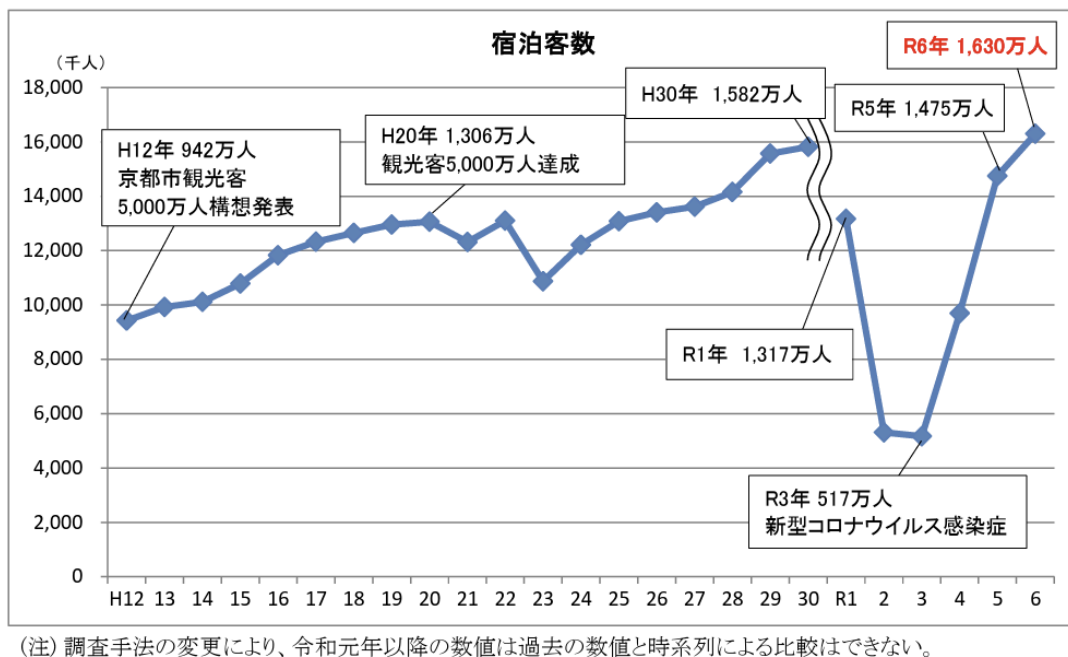


Figure 2.5. Number of overnight accommodations (as 1000 of units) in Kyoto between 2000 and 2024
(Source Kyoto Prefecture)

Of the roughly 56 million tourists visiting Kyoto, and the 27 million specifically Gion, roughly 14 to 16 million spend at least one night, roughly 26%. Western countries comprise more than 30% of the total overnight tourists with an average accommodation length of 1.3 nights.

According to Kyoto Board of Tourism, between an overnight guest and a daytime visitor, there is a ratio of 3.6 to 1 in average per diem spending¹⁴². Moreover, where a passing visitor may prefer a more limited spectrum of spending options, with less than 1 in 5 visiting a museum with entrance fee, overnight tourists not only show a more diversified spending behaviour, but in each category they spend from 35% to 380% more.



Figure 2.6. Tourism Consumption per Unit by Type in 2019 (Source JNTO)

Concerning national subsidies (NDP1), Gion has shown a quickly hiking investment portfolio from 2014 onward. The annual subsidies for the renovation of temples, historic buildings, and historic areas have been increased up to 10 million yen per year. The biggest stock public investment, however, was between 2013 and 2014 where, in accordance with the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties and the Law for the Improvement of the Historic Landscape of Kyoto, subsidy packages for the renovation of buildings in historic districts, amounting to 6 million yen each, have been instantiated. Moreover, 2015 and 2016 have shown a surge in apartment gouging by foreign investors in the district¹⁴³ highlights a slow process of un-localization of funds and infrastructures (LQD 1 and 4).

All this rapid and disproportionate growth has led to multiple incidents of private proprietary trespassing, public harassment of locals (especially Geishas), severe public loitering

¹⁴²Horie, Takuya . “A Data-Based Look at Kyoto Tourism before and after COVID | Kyoto Travel.” Kyoto Travel, 12 Mar. 2025, kyoto.travel/en/travel-inspiration/a-databased-look-at-kyoto-tourism-before-and-after-covid/. Accessed 13 Feb 2026.

¹⁴³Alexander, Lucy. “Why Foreign Buyers Are Seeking “Worthless” Wooden Homes in Kyoto.”, Financial Times, 24 July 2015, www.ft.com/content/a03d15b6-2b08-11e5-acfb-cbd2e1c81cca. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.

and even public assault from 2017 onward, particularly exacerbated in 2024 in the midst of the post Covid-19 rebound flow¹⁴⁴ (LQD 3). As an answer to social unrest, progressively more resistive measures were put into place under the request of the local population. Initially, in 2019 after a case of assault on a Maiko who had a cigarette extinguished on her collar¹⁴⁵, a photography ban and a 10,000 yen fine were introduced on “私道” (*shido*), or “private roads”, and leaflets were handed out to tourists¹⁴⁶. These measures have only become more stringent since then, with eventually the complete barring of access to most secondary streets set in place in 2024 after a video depicting a local being harassed and chased down emerged online¹⁴⁷ (LQD 2). The clear picture of a fracture between local and visitors had been portrayed time and time again on news articles and social media, making Gion the poster child of the anti-overtourism movement in Japan.

¹⁴⁴ Shimbun, The Yomiuri. “Kyoto’s Gion District Erects Signs Banning Tourists from Private Alleyway; Tourists’ Disrespect toward Geiko, Maiko Cited as Reason.” Japannews.yomiuri.co.jp, 31 May 2024, japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20240531-189134/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁴⁵ SoraNews24. “Tourist Ban Now in Effect in Kyoto’s Gion Geisha District...but Are Visitors Obeying the Rules? - Japan Today.” Japantoday.com, 31 May 2024, japantoday.com/category/national/tourist-ban-now-in-effect-in-kyoto%E2%80%99s-gion-geisha-district%E2%80%A6but-are-visitors-obeying-the-rules. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁴⁶ News from Elsewhere. “Japanese City Tries to Improve Tourists’ Manners”.BBC, 3 June 2019, www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-48496562. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁴⁷ Kitamura, Yushiko. “Gion no shidō ni “shinnyū kinshi” no kanban bakkin 1manen no hyōki mo kankōkyaku kyūzō de” “祇園の私道に「進入禁止」の看板 罰金1万円の表記も 観光客急増で:朝日新聞デジタル.” 朝日新聞デジタル, Asahi, 29 May 2024, www.asahi.com/articles/ASS5Y43GYS5YPLZB004M.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2026



Figure 2.7. An example of harassment of locals in Gion (Source YouTube, @maxintokyoo)

Summing up all the previous analysis we can outline the profile of Gion as a tourist destination and media phenomenon. High tourist flow with a rapid surge in 2014-2015 which was mirrored by a high volume of investments in accommodations and leisure activities for tourists. Local population being outnumbered by visitors by several orders of magnitude. Average short length of stay with consequent low average daily spending. Rising number of incidents of varying severity tending to cluster up in more recent years. And ultimately a deepening divide exacerbated by draconic laws that segregate sections of the town. This same trajectory can be traced in several overcrowded locations across Japan (Nikko, Kamakura, Arashiyama, etc.)¹⁴⁸, and nationally Gion has been used as a reference case study to model reactionary measures of the phenomenon on¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁸Natsuko, Fukue. "Japan's Tourism Boom Prices out Local Business Travelers." The Japan Times, 15 Jan. 2025, www.japantimes.co.jp/business/2025/01/15/economy/business-travelers-japan/.

¹⁴⁹Pipkin, Jane. "Influencers Helped Cause Overtourism. Can They Help Fix It?" The Japan Times, The Japan Times, 25 July 2024, www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2024/07/29/issues/overtourism-japan-tiktok-instagram-travel/. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

2.4 Social media and Overtourism: Must-sees vs Hidden Gems

Another approach to the classification of tourism trends can be seen through the lens of Social Media and their influence on tourist perception and planning. We are going to focus on two distinct types of social media destination labeling showing how they shape the way sites react to the incoming visitors. On one hand we have the “Must-See” destinations, which are famed, high density locales traditionally seen on most itineraries. In this family we have locations such as Seoul for South Korea, Paris for France and Tokyo for Japan. On the other hand we have the ever so popular “Hidden Gems”. They are classified as niche, perceived as authentic places which are presented with a veneer of exclusivity.

When it comes to the definition and localization of Must-See destinations on the psychogeographic map of hotspots in a country, they flow naturally from a simple glimpse at the data. Must-see locations have a tendency to possess a renown factor that professor Antonio Russo from the University of Tarragona describes as the “heritage foundation” of the city. Whether for its historical significance (World Site Heritage Attractiveness, e.g Rome, Paris, Kyoto), activity hotspots (Mallorca, Colombo), natural landscape renown (Blue lagoon, Yellowstone), or any combination of them, this fame predates the social media landscape and gets strengthened by a cycle of self-fulfilling relevance¹⁵⁰. This concept is painted as a “Vicious Circle” by Russo¹⁵¹ where positive feedback of tourist flows only leads to stronger local investments and eventually, in the later stages, to authenticity deterioration and loss of identity. However Russo (2002) assumed that large cities would always be able to cope with this problem, given both their intrinsic ever-evolving nature as the centres of modern life congregation and the high volume of infrastructure in place to curb high density people flow. In other words, in this ever self-reinforcing circle, must-see destinations such as Tokyo, Kyoto Metropolitan Area, Nara, Osaka are not victims of out of control “overtourism” but of high volume “Mass Tourism”.

¹⁵⁰Butler, Richard. “The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources.” ResearchGate, 2008, www.researchgate.net/publication/228003384_The_Concept_of_A_Tourist_Area_Cycle_of_Evolution_Implications_for_Management_of_Resources.

¹⁵¹Russo, Antonio Paolo. “The “Vicious Circle” of Tourism Development in Heritage Cities.” *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, Jan. 2002, pp. 165–182, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(01\)00029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(01)00029-9).

With the advent of far reaching Social Media trends, however, the rate of engagement with the Must-See label has shown a surge in popularity. On all the most used social media platforms, the most recurring tourism-centred searches feature terms such as Top or Best¹⁵², and among such content the recommended destinations have low variance (see chart 4). It follows then that, although big must-see destinations are indeed capable and built with the intention to withstand high footfall, larger cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona and Venice are being swept under a tide of unprecedented arrivals¹⁵³. Most users use this focused pool of options as a functional backbone for the trip planning thus reducing the journey down to a handful of sought after, high value attracting pole¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵² Soji, Lee. "Classifying Tourist Destinations in Japan for Overtourism." *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 4, 30 Oct. 2022, pp. 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.33422/jarss.v5i4.663>.

¹⁵³ TRAN Committee. "Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: Impact and Possible Policy Responses." Academia.edu, 2018, www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses. Accessed 20 Feb 2026

¹⁵⁴ Soji, Lee. "Classifying Tourist Destinations in Japan for Overtourism." *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 4, 30 Oct. 2022, pp. 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.33422/jarss.v5i4.663>.

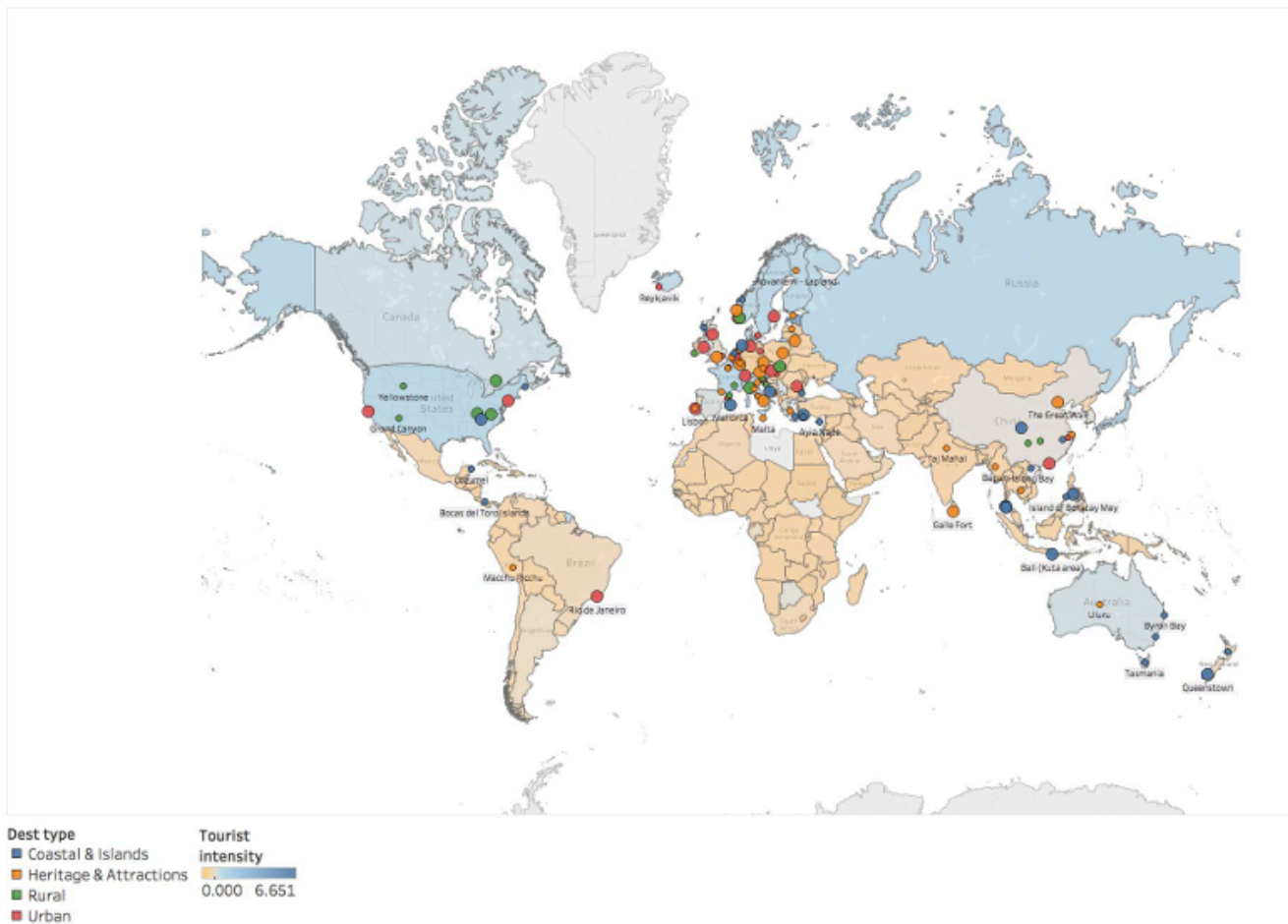


Figure 2.8. Main Tourism Destinations and Relative tourist density around the world in 2024
(Source UNWTO)

On the topic of Hidden Gems it might be useful to define the concept of Experience Economy which underlines the main driving force behind their surge in popularity. In its most simple terms it can be defined as an economic stage where consumers seek memorable experiences rather than just being sold products or services¹⁵⁵. The birth of such a trend is usually ascribed to the products industry of the late 2010's, with the augmentation of the customer experience before and after the purchase (brand bubble) through multi-media and multi-support avenues (eg. internet of things, digital twinning, and more recently Artificial Intelligence and

¹⁵⁵Beale, Melissa. "Social Media & Experience Economy: Drive Consumer Engagement 2025"
Hummingbird.agency, 2026, www.hummingbird.agency/how-does-social-media-shape-the-experience-economy/.
Accessed 18 June 2026.

Blockchain Technology)¹⁵⁶. The key words of this fifth industrial revolution (Varshneya et al., 2016)¹⁵⁷ are *personalized* and *memorable*, and their goal is the continuous engagement of the customer beyond the transactional, also known as “living the brand”¹⁵⁸. The leap to the travelling industry, according to most analytics, took place from 2015 onward, with a particular surge around the Covid-19 hiatus. In a market never before so competing for customer attention¹⁵⁹, the average tourist does not simply seek the big label destination but they want to experience a deep, personalized, memorable experience. The creation of such activities it can usually be inscribed to a multi stacking process: the humble beach trip, gets repackaged as a “beach encounter with waves”¹⁶⁰, a trip to Florence gets packed with food and wine tasting and wearing local clothing in Asia China is the “Hanfu Experience”. Several scholars have emphasized that these sought after tourist experiences are closely intertwined with their perceptions of authenticity¹⁶¹.

Social Media is undoubtedly the driving force behind experience trendsetting. The monikers of “Instagrammable” and “Aesthetic” have seen surges in usage in the last 5 years and their recurrence has led to a new way of seeing destinations more akin to the aforementioned Experience Economy.

¹⁵⁶ Garaus, Marion, et al. “Innovating the Experience Economy: How Novel Technologies Transform Customer Experiences.” *Digital Business*, June 2025, p. 34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2025.100134>.

¹⁵⁷ Sukaris, S. “Increasing Customer Satisfaction through Rural Tourism’s Quality Service, Experience, and Offered Value.” *Jurnal Minds: Manajemen Ide Dan Inspirasi*, vol. 11, no. 1, 20 June 2024, pp. 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.24252/minds.v11i1.45305>.

¹⁵⁸ Garaus, Marion, et al. “Innovating the Experience Economy: How Novel Technologies Transform Customer Experiences.” *Digital Business*, June 2025, p. 34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2025.100134>.

¹⁵⁹ Marciszewska, Barbara, and Marzena Wanagos. “Development of Tourism Products and the Concept of Experience Economy.” *EUROPEAN RESEARCH STUDIES JOURNAL*, vol. XXVII, no. Issue 4, 1 Nov. 2024, pp. 1708–1723, [ersj.eu/journal/3823/download/Development+of+Tourism+Products+and+the+Concept+of+Experience+Economy.pdf](https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3600), <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3600>.

¹⁶⁰ Renji, George Amballoor. “The Evolving Landscape of the Experience Economy: From Social Media Showcases to Personal Journeys.” *Medium*, 2024, medium.com/@amballoor/the-evolving-landscape-of-the-experience-economy-from-social-media-showcases-to-personal-journeys-d8cce3c27617. Accessed 18 June 2026.

¹⁶¹ Zhu, Peng, et al. “Experience Economy and Authenticity in the Heritage Tourism Sector: A Multiple-Dimensional Approach.” *Acta Psychologica*, vol. 257, 4 June 2025, p. 105118, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001691825004317](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105118), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105118>.

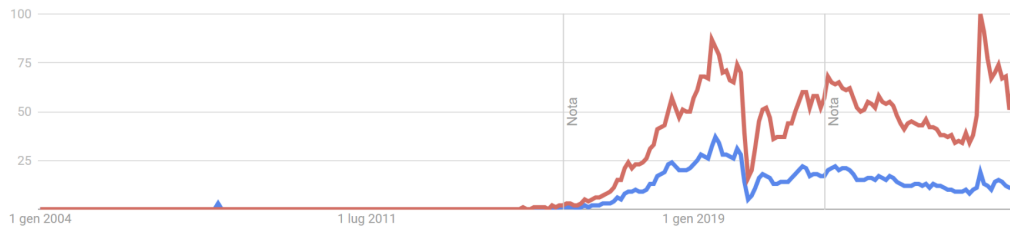


Figure 2.9. Popularity trend on Google for “Instagramable” (red line) and “Instagramable Places” (blue line) from 2004 (Source Google Trends)

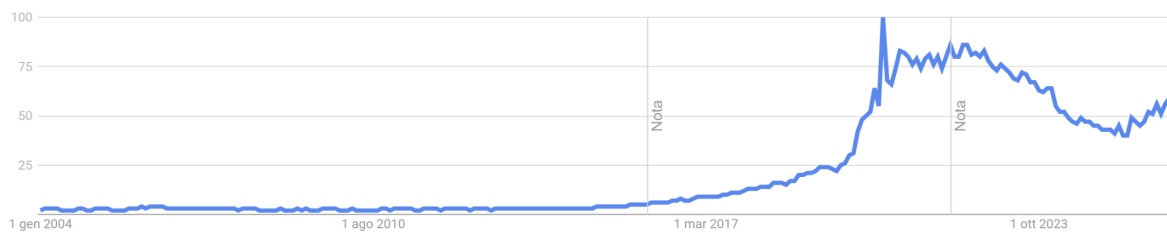


Figure 2.10. Popularity trend on Google for “Aesthetic” from 2004 (Source Google Trends)

Through the lens of social media sellability and virality, the rapidly shortening time of engagement with content has caused a condensation of information, where text and subtext are distilled into the resonant burst content (SVC)¹⁶².

Following the Pine and Golmor’s classification of media consumption¹⁶³, this Experience travelling economy is closer to an escapist attitude, with a carpe diem yet hand-on approach, preferring the subjective “feeling” of a locale (immersion) over its laboured-over exegetical meaning (absorption).

¹⁶²Garaus, Marion, et al. “Innovating the Experience Economy: How Novel Technologies Transform Customer Experiences.” Digital Business, June 2025, p. 34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2025.100134>.

¹⁶³Pine, B. Joseph and James H Gilmore. Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage. Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

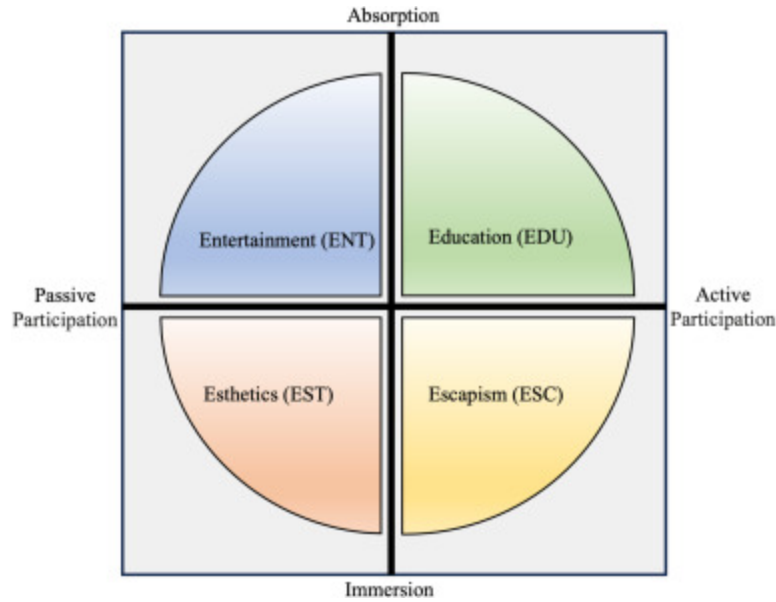


Figure 2.11. Pine and Golmor's classification of media consumption (Source: *Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*)\

Given this preamble we can attempt to find an operative characterization defining an Hidden-Gem type of destination. A-priori, 'hidden gems' need to be, or at least appear to be, on less trodden paths, away from the common routes. They need to have a veneer of uncorrupted native local culture (Cultural tourism) which is easily identifiable and in resonance with a viewer without prior knowledge (Merchification of Culture, See Chapter 1). Their striking feature needs to fall within the realm of "Instagrammability", that is to say bite-sized, picture perfect and social media ready bursts of experiences. Therefore they are usually side-trip worthy, lacking the power or even the facilities to entice tourists with spending capabilities and willingness for long term (or even overnight) engagements. High tourist presence and low retention (LQD1 and NDP2), that leads to low average spending (NDP3) and, usually, rampant incidents of misbehaving tourists (LQD4). Following the criteria of chapter 2.2 , they are prime locations for rampant overtourism.

In this group we can scribe the hidden picture spots¹⁶⁴, the cafeterias¹⁶⁵ and food markets¹⁶⁶, locally used yet scenic thoroughfares¹⁶⁷. An heterogeneous group that due to their short lived popularity, it can be anything that is fortunate enough to reach a trending status on Social Media.

This classification will prove instrumental in dissecting the data collected throughout our SVCs analysis. Since most of the social media travel content can be roughly assigned to one of the two groups, this will hopefully show overarching trends and correlations between frequency and amount of social media presence of certain kinds of locations and their effects on policies and travel trails.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, other cities are under the spotlight of overseas tourists, as their annual figures of international visitors have increased rapidly over the course of the past years. These cities can be defined as hidden gems, as they were untouched by international contamination until recent exposure. Although they are smaller cities compared to Tokyo and Kyoto, these locations are experiencing explosive growth in terms of overseas visitors; thus, they can face infrastructural problems due to a lack of extensive tourism-oriented facilities. Not enough accommodations and well-connected transportation can amplify logistics problems, as the lack of adequate infrastructure is struggling to keep up with the growing demand for tourism in these tourist destinations.

Additionally, as already mentioned with the Lawson at Fujikawaguchiko, internal problems between locals and tourists are raising concerns about the sustainability of these newly discovered tourist destinations, as the local population is showing resentment over this sudden

¹⁶⁴InTokyo. “Journey to 1000 Cities.” Journey to 1000 Cities, 29 Oct. 2025, journeyto1000cities.com/home/35-most-instagrammable-spots-in-tokyo-japan. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.

¹⁶⁵Pipkin, Jane. “7 Hidden Cafés and Bars in Tokyo.” Tokyo Cheapo, 8 Sept. 2024, tokyocheapo.com/food-and-drink/hidden-cafes-bars/. Accessed 19 Feb 2026.

¹⁶⁶The Japan Times. “Tsukiji Market Urges Tourists to Avoid Visiting at Year-End to Ease Congestion.” The Japan Times, 15 Dec. 2025, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/15/japan/society/tsukiji-market-year-end-crowds/. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.

¹⁶⁷Art and Cafe. “Top 10 Hidden Places & Unique Shops in Tokyo.” アートアンドカフェ アート体験・ワークショップ・絵画教室・ギャラリー・アーティスト, 12 Aug. 2025, artandcafe.com/en/blogs/art-and-cafe%E3%81%A8%E3%81%AF/top-10-hidden-places-amp-unique-shops-in-tokyo?srltid=AfmBOoqDHnnMvNGoGLmVWvpvHlpX0AUHZEbBmz7-9UJAxw3KOPmEtKUu. Accessed 19 Feb 2026.

¹⁶⁸Sangyo University. “Ryō wa 6-nen kuni chiiki betsu gaikoku hito kōdō tokusei chōsa kekka | kuni chiiki betsu gaikoku hito ryokō-sha kōdō tokusei chōsa”“令和6年国・地域別外国人行動特性調査結果|国・地域別外国人旅行者行動特性調査|東京都産業労働局.” 産業労働局, 13 June 2025, www.sangyo-rodo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/toukei/tourism/tourism/r6. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.

surge of tourists in their towns. Indeed, these cities were usually visited by local tourists, who have the same language and cultural backgrounds, whereas with international tourists, linguistic and cultural-behaviour barriers are felt stronger among the local and working population.

In Japan, cities like Nara and Kawaguchiko are struggling to keep up with international demand, as overseas tourists are increasing annually.

This categorization is also reflected in online spaces, as the actual terms ‘must-see’ and ‘hidden gems’ are commonly used on social media to describe tourism locations, emphasizing the presence online of these tourism destinations. Must-see locations are referred to locations that are part of the tourist backbone routes, as these cities are listed as mandatory places to visit within an itinerary. While users online refer to ‘hidden gems’ as destinations less trodden from common routes, where you can witness the uncorrupted native local culture.

For instance, Japan has many cities that social media users often define as essential to see, or alternative destinations to visit to experience the ‘real Japan’. Tokyo and Kyoto are the main poles of attraction for overseas tourists because of their significant relevance in shaping Japanese history, becoming naturally common routes among international tourists. On the other hand, cities such as Mount Koya¹⁶⁹, are described as the cradle of true Japanese culture, uncontaminated by modern architecture. Mount Koya, the birthplace of Kukai's Shingon Buddhist school, has indeed attracted the attention of foreigners, as evidenced by the 720% increase in international visitors between 2023 and 2024.

2.4.1 A Japanese Hidden Gem: the Lawson at Fujikawaguchiko case study

Located in Yamanashi prefecture, the quaint town of Fujikawaguchiko, with its less than 30.000 residents has made headline news in 2024. Behind a Lawson convenience store, a common store chain found all over Japan, the shaved mountaintop on Mount Fuji shows its snowy peak., According to locals, a picture showing the mountain looming behind the Lawson store, made its rounds through Asian social media in 2022 and since then the town has never

¹⁶⁹ Wakayama Prefecture. 観光客動態調査報告書令和4年和歌山県商工観光労働部観光局. 2022, www.pref.wakayama.lg.jp/prefg/062400/doutai2_d/fil/R4houkousho.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb 2026.

been the same¹⁷⁰. “Lawson Fujiwasan”, as it was dubbed online, quickly gained traction, earning the moniker of a hidden photography spot, especially among the crowds of retro-photography enthusiasts. A moment of “accidental Japan” that got shared repeatedly and put the previously seemingly unremarkable town on the map for many foreign visitors¹⁷¹. The virility of the vista brought with it increasingly worsening living conditions, especially for the owner of the dental clinic across from the Lawson, from which pictures are usually taken. From one of his interviews in the Mainichi Newspaper, he recalls the escalating measures taken to curb the dangerous and disrupting behaviour of the flood of tourists. From erecting a tarp to prevent illegal crossing to the clinic’s car park becoming filled with rental vehicles and tour buses parked without permission. All the town saw a degradation in public hygiene, with trash left on the ground, safety, with reports of dangerous jaywalking that have caused multiple incidents, and general living conditions with the sprouting up of tourist barriers and popup stores¹⁷². In other words, Fujigawakuguchi-ko has become a victim of the hidden gem syndrome of Overtourism.

Let us look at the timeline more closely. Like with all explosive online trends their origin is hard to identify in a single event but rather in an underground murmur in the media space. The earliest findable reports date themselves around the end of 2021, on Thai and Chinese TikTok accounts, highlighting the secret nature of the location and how much of a unique blend of modern Japan souls it represent¹⁷³. The original posts, however, didn't manage to gain much traction and for the second wave of online presence we have to wait until late 2022, when the Japan travelling restriction began untightening themselves. Posts of the now iconic picture start finding their way

¹⁷⁰Themainichi. “Town near Mt. Fuji Blocking View of Peak at Lawson Store Photo Spot amid “Overtourism” - the Mainichi.” Facebook, 13 May 2024, [mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240513/p2a/00m/0na/024000c](https://www.facebook.com/mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240513/p2a/00m/0na/024000c). Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷¹ Kira. “Why Is the Lawson Store near Mount Fuji so Popular.”” Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/DSz6mxJigN5/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷²Speed, Jessica. ““Mount Fuji Lawson” Becomes a Symbol of Japan’s Overtourism Problem.” The Japan Times, 31 Aug. 2025, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/08/31/japan/society/mount-fuji-lawson-overtourism/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷³TikTok, Various. “TikTok - Make Your Day.” Tiktok.com, 2018, www.tiktok.com/discover/how-to-go-to-lawson-from-kawaguchiko-station. Accessed 23 Feb 2026

on Instagram¹⁷⁴, several private blogs¹⁷⁵ and, more importantly on shutterstock¹⁷⁶, an online picture repository that is usually used by news outlets and media influencers as a source of visual elements. All of these share several identifiable searching terms among which words such as Hidden, Secret and Unique figure several times. With the definitive reopening of the borders for the summer 2023 the picture got picked up by several international lifestyles and travel newspapers among which the Daily Mail got probably the bigger media response in the West¹⁷⁷. Parallel to all of this, the first reports of overcrowding showed up in late 2023 on local news, with a local official telling AFP that the place had gained a "reputation that this spot is very Japanese". They added that the town in the Yamanashi region was at its wits' end over the behaviour, with some tourists even climbing on to roofs to get the perfect snap¹⁷⁸. In the matter of months the first antitourist measures had started to take place, with barriers in spring 2024¹⁷⁹, railing and parking restriction in late 2024¹⁸⁰ up to the cancellation of local festivals in 2025¹⁸¹.

We can use this trend trajectory as a prototype model of the evolution of a Hidden-Gem type of location. We can identify three main stages in the virility growth of such a destination. Initially we have the quiescent phase. The location is either unknown or in the early stages of being found out. The main traction platforms are private blogs, small private accounts on Instagram or open ended forums (Reddit, Weibo). The traction is still lacking and the posts tend to have short-lived retention and engagement. Its fame potential is still on the same level as many other attractions. In this specific case, we can see this behaviour between 2021 and 2022.

¹⁷⁴Karen, Kong. "Lawson with Mt Fuji." Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/CYTxs5qPnU2/?img_index=1. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷⁵ "The Elusive Mt. Fuji." We Wander... We Wonder!!, 6 Nov. 2022, we-wander-we-wonder.com/2022/11/07/the-elusive-mt-fuji/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷⁶Shutterstock. "Nature Background Mt Fuji behind Lawson Stock Photo 2230678575 | Shutterstock." Shutterstock, 2022, www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/nature-background-mt-fuji-behind-lawson-2230678575. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷⁷Allingham, Louise. "How to Visit the Prettiest Lawson Convenience Store in Kawaguchiko, Japan, with Mt Fuji Views." Mail Online, Daily Mail, 4 July 2023, www.dailymail.co.uk/lifestyle/article-12261301/How-visit-prettiest-Lawson-convenience-store-Kawaguchiko-Japan-Mt-Fuji-views.html. Accessed 25 Feb 2026.

¹⁷⁸News from Elsewhere. Japanese City Tries to Improve Tourists' Manners. 3 June 2019, www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-48496562. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁷⁹Khalil, Shaimaa. "Mount Fuji: Japan Blocks Iconic View to Deter Tourists." Wwww.bbc.com, 21 May 2024, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgrky897k0o. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

¹⁸⁰ "Mt.Fuji and the LAWSON Kawaguchiko Convenience Store Will Not Be Able to Take Pictures." Kawaguchiko.net, 3 May 2024, en.kawaguchiko.net/blog-en/ntfuji-and-the-lawson/. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

¹⁸¹Quinling, Chen. "Cities Cancel Summer Matsuri amid Controversial Japan-Related Incident - Global Times." Globaltimes.cn, 2022, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202207/1271585.shtml. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

The second phase we can call it the Virality stage, where a causality chain of events usually leads the location to become trending due to its perceived authentic or unique proposition. Here the news is still contained within a specific sub-section of the internet, working under the logic of tang search terms without having the widespread virility of news headlines. In our case, between 2022 and 2023 Lawson Fujisan got shared more than 2 million times on Instagram, Bili Bili, X and TikTok while still appealing to a rather secret audience of tourist and photography aficionados. We can see the first effects on the locations with the appearance of unusual flows of tourists. The last and most loud stage is born from the first local incident that starts to make headline news. In a positive feedback causality effect a rise in local pushback leads to an increased spotlight and more attention both in a positive and negative light. In our case study, after the summer of 2024, the rapid rise in tourists paired with the first ineffective strategies to curb them spelt the beginning of the downward trust trajectory.

This dissertation's goals fall within the analysis of the dynamics specific to the second stage and early first stage.

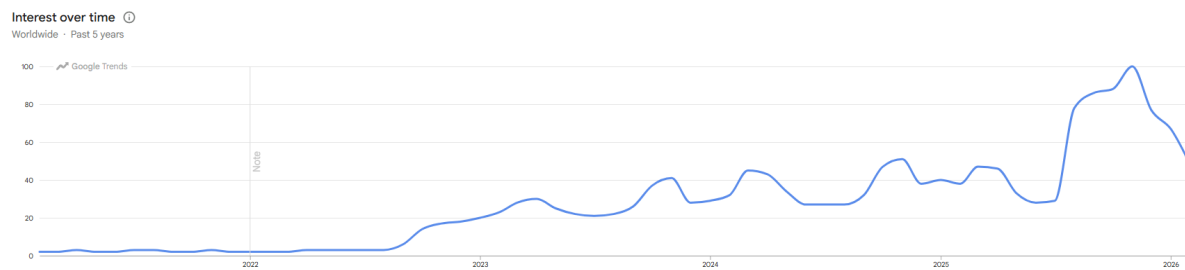


Figure 2.12. Popularity trend on Google for “Fujikawaguchiko” from 2004 (Source Google Trends)

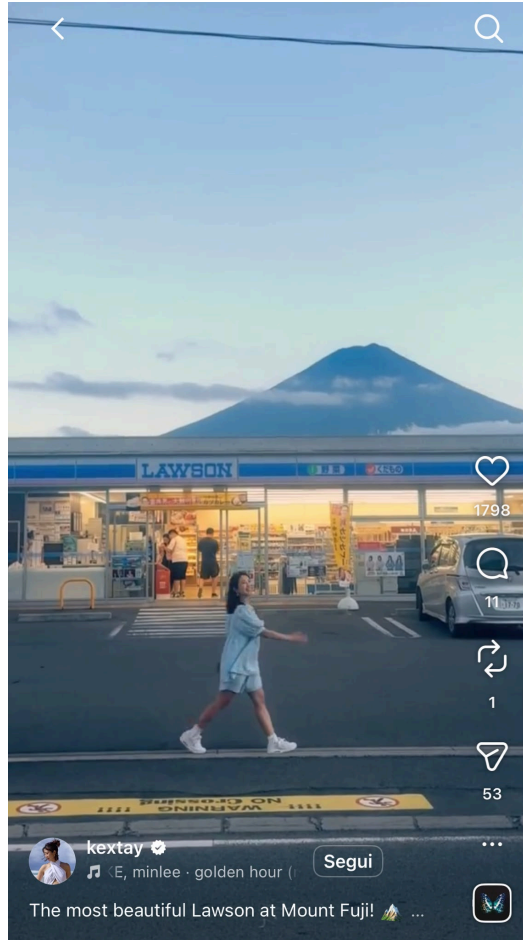


Figure 2.13. A common SVC about the Lawson's phenomenon (Source Instagram, @kextay)

3. Research Framework

3.1 Research Question and Hypothesis

This research aims to analyze the relationship between the recent developments in fast social media content, namely SVC (see chapter 1), and the increasing trends of over-tourist exposure in Japan (see chapter 2). We can define the research questions as follows:

Q. Is there a correlation between Japan's recent growth in international inbound tourism and its surging popularity on SVC algorithmic applications? If so, to what extent do SVC platforms define international Japan tourism trends?

The questions are far-reaching both in scope and definitions, it thus becomes imperative to define some practical operational goals to shape the proceedings. Following a framework of scientific falsifiability, we propose a series of testable hypotheses to be evaluated against empirical data. The first of which is the following:

H. There is a quantifiable correlation between the popularity of Japan tourist destinations on SVC social media platforms and their trends in inbound tourism.

In other words we expect to see a correlation between the governmental data of Japanese destinations and the analysis of algorithmic trends in SVC platform. What form this association might take can be hypothesised in the following manner:

H1. Popularity on SVC platforms leads to cases of overtourism in Japan.

This represents the most direct causal assumption, building upon the foundational literature regarding social media's amplification effects on tourism (see Section 2.4). Under this hypothesis, we expect that destinations experiencing high engagement spikes on SVC platforms will exhibit proportional symptoms of overtourism (e.g., overcrowding, infrastructural strain, and local pushback).

However, because algorithmic interest metrics are highly context-dependent (see Section 1.2) and the demographics of inbound tourism to Japan are highly heterogeneous (see Section 2.1), we must assume this correlation is bound by regional and linguistic variables.

Methodological Note on Data Bias: As this study is conducted from the digital locus of a European Union (EU) user, and given that EU travelers represent approximately 16% of Japan's total international tourist influx (*Japan Tourism Statistics*), the scraped algorithmic data may reflect a Eurocentric bias. Consequently, the correlation is expected to be skewed by the reality of localized platform delivery systems, requiring a weighted analysis of the data.

H2. Popular tourist destinations are more represented on SVC platforms. There is a direct causality between inbound tourist trade and SVC popularity.

This hypothesis acts as the converse to H1. Here, we posit a bidirectional causality where high inbound tourist volume naturally generates a higher density of relevant user-generated content, which the algorithm then amplifies.

Crucially, we hypothesize that the underlying recommendation engines do not merely promote established "Golden Route" hubs (Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka). Rather, the digital dynamic between "Must-See" landmarks and "Hidden Gems" (see Section 2.4) is actively balanced by platform algorithms maximizing for user retention and novelty. Therefore, the ratio of mainstream to off-the-beaten-path locations visible on SVC platforms is expected to shift dynamically based on user engagement metrics rather than real-world capacity only.

H3. Popularity on SVC platforms leads to local economic and infrastructural investments by the Japanese government and administration.

We hypothesize that sudden, viral spikes in SVC popularity cause abrupt influxes of international tourists to regions previously unprepared for high-volume inbound traffic (see chapter 2.2). This digital push might compel local municipalities and the central Japanese government to rapidly reallocate resources, thus giving us tangible data to sieve through.

This impact is expected to be most visible in rural prefectures and secondary cities outside of the traditional "Golden Route." This sudden demand might necessitate immediate infrastructural adaptation, including the expansion of multilingual signage, transportation capacity upgrades, overnight accommodation zoning adjustments, and the implementation of crowd-management or local tourism tax policies.

3.2 Operational Hypothesis: Algorithm Analysis

In order to answer the aforementioned question, some operational definitional steps need to be set. If the definition of overtourism has been highly dissected in chapter 2, what constitutes popularity in social media has been vaguely described. Hence to the study is then answering the following question:

How do we label an SVC Topic as Popular? What are the metrics that allow us to quantify SVC popularity?

Popularity of topics can be ascertained using various parameters (see 3.5), but without a doubt the most influential ones are their Frequency and User Retention. The first one refers to how often a certain topic is suggested or interacted with in an average user session. The second one highlights how strong of a staying power a certain topic has by showing the number of repeated appearances across multiple sessions. Both of these factors are driven and fundamentally determined by the social media algorithm.

As already mentioned (see 1.2), the study of social media algorithms is not a simple task, as the functionalities of algorithms are usually hidden from the public eyes. Major social media companies do not disclose their algorithm; therefore, we can refer to this type of study as a ‘black box’ analysis: it is possible to observe the input and the output, but not the in-between mechanism. Hence, the analysis will be conducted by only focusing on how the algorithms react to our given input and analyzing the kind, frequency, distribution, variability and retention of the results.

Once these data are established we can proceed with the comparative portion of the study.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Choice of platform

The choice of the platform is the first step of the study. Using the data on the user base of the SVC platforms we can reduce the choices down to two most popular (by monthly active users) SVC applications: TikTok and Instagram (see chart 1.2). Using this metric we can already see that Instagram has 1.8 times the userbase of TikTok, and this gives us a wider user-pool.

Moreover, according to public available data, the average user age on the two platforms is different¹⁸².

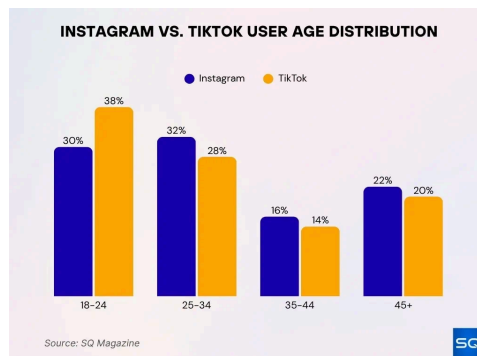


Figure 3.1. Age distribution between TikTok and Instagram (Source 6thSense)

Where the majority of TikTok users fall within the younger bracket (18-24), Instagram shows a more diverse age differential. This older Instagram demographic overlaps with the age distribution of inbound travel provided by the JNTO, stating that most of the international tourists fall within the 25-40 bracket.¹⁸³

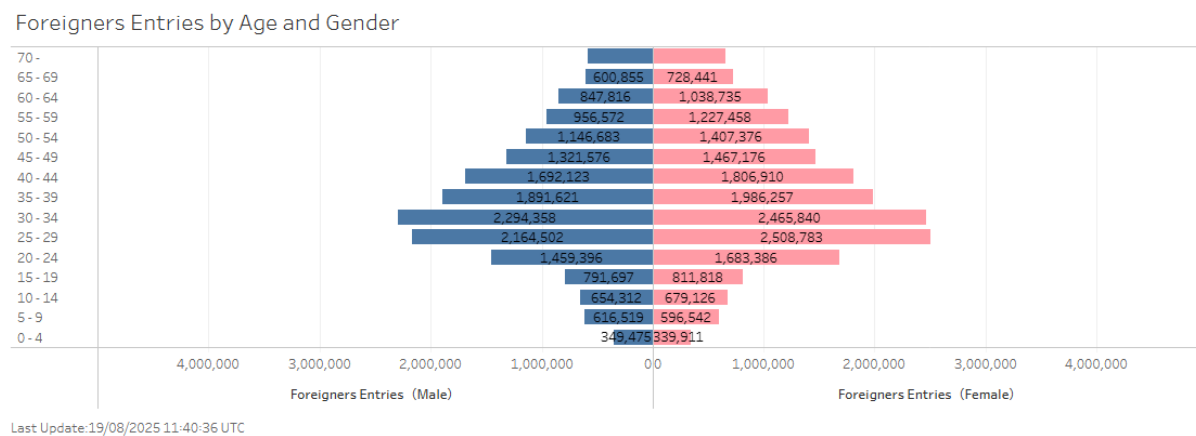


Figure 3.2. Age and gender distribution of Foreign Entries in Japan (Source JNTO)

¹⁸² Elad, Barry. “TikTok vs. Instagram Statistics 2025: Who’s Winning the Social Media Race?” SQ Magazine, 12 June 2025, sqmagazine.co.uk/tiktok-vs-instagram-statistics/. Accessed 8 June 2026.

¹⁸³ “Nihon no kankō tōkei deta” “Data List | 日本の観光統計データ.” Japan Tourism Statistics | 日本の観光統計データ, statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--foreigners--by--port--of--entry--by--age--sex. Accessed 8 June 2026.

Finally, Instagram and TikTok have different geographical distribution of user base. According to the social media tracker API “6thSense” most of TikTok users, although present all over the world, have the biggest contingent in South America (especially Brazil) and India. Instagram, on the other hand, is mostly popular in North America and Central/Western Europe¹⁸⁴. Since this analysis is made from the perspective of European users, it follows naturally that Instagram provides a more fitting choice.

The wider user base, a more proper mimicking of age distribution and geographic biases all make Instagram the most optimal choice to model the data on.

3.3.2 Defining the tool of analysis: the Likes

Once the platform (or the box, using a blackbox analysis nomenclature) has been identified, we need to rationalize the means of interaction with the system. Since the environment needs to be prodded through discrete and quantifiable metrics we can enumerate the tools given us by Instagram in the following list:

1. Likes: a form of positive one-time acknowledgment that shows a preference for a specific topic (SVC) in itself. Users tap the heart icon on a specific photo or video or double taps on the screen (low friction);
2. Follows: a stronger form of positive feedback that should lead the algorithm to heavily favour a specific content creator. Users hit the follow button on the profile (low friction);
3. Reposts: a form of topic networking, that uses in app communication (high friction) to actively recommend an SVC to other users;
4. Commenting: an interactive form of feedback where the user leaves a thought in the comment section of the SVC (high friction). Their influence is assumed to be positive in the algorithmic feedback but it is mostly speculation¹⁸⁵;

Out of these four we can already exclude the last two as autonomous metrics. Both Reposts and Comments rely on user-to-user interaction, thus increasing the degree of variability of data.

¹⁸⁴ “Instagram vs TikTok: Social Media Comparison.” 6sense, 2026, 6sense.com/tech/social-media/instagram-vs-tiktok. Accessed 8 June 2026.

¹⁸⁵ Tricomi, Pier Paolo, et al. “Follow Us and Become Famous! Insights and Guidelines from Instagram Engagement Mechanisms.” Proceedings of the 15th ACM Web Science Conference 2023, 30 Apr. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3578503.3583623>.

Moreover, they are both high friction actions, where the users have to leave the perpetual motion of the “scroll”. This goes against the attempt to replicate the low engagement environment discussed in chapter 1 which is at the base of the behaviour we are trying to simulate.

Follows and Likes, although both meaningful in our analysis, present some major differences in mainly the timescale and the strength of the feedback. Follows tend to bind the algorithm to the specific content creator and its associated cloud of related subjects¹⁸⁶. This creates biases not around the topic but around the tags and personalities. These kinds of biases are also dependent on the output of the followed creators. Since the interest is so highly focused, whatever content the creator produces is going to receive a strong bias in the algorithm but in normal operation the weight of the feedback is buffered.

Likes, on the other hand, are mostly creator independent and allow us to give topic-targeted feedback which focus on the specific area of interest. In addition, Likes are also the quickest form of recordable feedback allowing us to essentially reduce the variable into a binary one (With or Without a like). This guarantees a major degree of control over the proceedings in tabulation and analysis of data.

3.3.3 Choice of Subjects of Study: Creation of Four Different Accounts

In order to give a systemic analysis of the data we are approaching data collecting using a typical blind analysis set-up with progressive system identification. In other words, we need to establish a neutral case which identifies a system baseline, against which all the other cases are compared. Being the system highly hysteretic (the algorithm is progressive honing through recent actions), all the different subjects need to be compartmentalized, in order to prevent cross data spillage. Finally, since the data is highly context dependent we need to identify some a priori common qualities that can lead to some data overlap (common geographical location, common time of access). Hence, the Stimulus-Response model needs to be tailored to our specific necessities by setting some parameters as non-influential (or NI) in account definitions, such as demographic variables.

The four accounts chosen to mimic user behaviours are as follows:

¹⁸⁶Ibidem

1. Mute Case (MC): a no-biased user baseline. This account is set as the floor of the data, given a non descriptive framework and without any form of interaction with the system. The user simply moves through the posts without any form of feedback.
2. Tourism not specific to Japan Case (TNJ): user with an interest in travel, but without a specific bias for travelling to Japan. This case mimics an individual with an interest in any form of travel, not necessarily specific to a Japanese destination. We simulate the behaviour by leaving positive feedback on any travel related SVC.
3. Japanese Culture Based Case (JBC): a user who is interested in Japanese culture without a specific focus on travelling to Japan. They like every type of content related to Japan, regardless of topics. The algorithm will likely show content about Japanese culture with some overlap with tourism topics in Japan;
4. Tourism and Japan (TAJ): a user with an interest in travel, and also interested in visiting Japan; they live in the intersection of the TNJ and JBC and it mimics the behavior of our target subject.

Account Profile	Baseline Interest Vector	Operational Engagement Stimulus	Hypothesized Algorithmic Output
Mute Case (MC)	Neutral (Control)	Passive scrolling; zero active engagement or feedback loop.	High content dispersion; exploratory suggestions across diverse topics with occasional, random Japan-related SVCs to test user preference.

Tourism Not Specific to Japan (TNJ)	Global Travel & Tourism	Positive feedback (likes) any form of travel content.	High variability of global tourism destinations; minimal, incidental exposure to Japanese travel content.
Japanese Culture-Based Case (JBC)	Broad Japanese Culture	Positive feedback on all Japan-related cultural content, agnostic of specific topics.	Dense saturation of Japanese cultural media, with an algorithmic spillover into Japanese tourism and regional exploration videos.
Tourism and Japan (TAJ)	Targeted Niche (Intersection)	Positive feedback prioritized on Japan-specific travel and tourism content.	High concentration of targeted Japanese tourism destinations, displaying localized precision and frequency compared to other profiles.

Table 3.1. Summary of the four different accounts used in the analysis

3.3.4 Defining a Timeline for Data Collection

The next step is to define a timeline for the process of data collection of SVC. To avoid temporal bias, a progression is defined for each account, spread out according to a logarithmic scale (initially closer together and later further apart). This is in order to avoid a too strong complacency factor for the algorithm, whereas positive feedback might compile with itself producing stronger results.

Thus, the collection is fractioned over several steps. Initially the data is collected for the first seven consecutive days to create a baseline of content. This happens parallelly with all the accounts. After the first week, subsequent data will be collected on different days, with a five-day gap between each day. This is to prevent the algorithm from immediately identifying a content bias in the early days of data collection, hence ensuring an organic content flow.

3.3.5 Data Tabulation by Category

Once the initial data collection is complete, the next phase of the algorithmic analysis requires classifying the gathered Short Vertical Content (SVC) into distinct, structured categories. This taxonomic framework is organized in a hierarchical order of importance, moving from broad content themes to precise geographic and thematic variables.

Content Theme Base Line: To effectively address the primary research question regarding the correlation between social media trends and contemporary Japanese tourism, the data must first be filtered based on its relevance to Japan, tourism, or both. This macro-classification utilizes three distinct categories to map the baseline distribution of the content:

1. JC (Japan Content): this covers everything related to the country in all its forms, such as culture, interesting facts, language and much more. It casts a wide net of possibilities but it is essential in order to give a higher margin of error to the subsets included in itself (mainly JTC which is our subject of study).
2. TC (Tourism Content): this refers to all SVC that depict travelling in all of its forms. It can range from activities, restaurants, countries' overview, and accommodations, as long as a clear destination is labeled and identifiable.
3. JTC (Japan and Tourism Content): this section is the heart of our study. This group finds itself in the intersection of JC and TC, and it hones on our topic of interest: travel SVC (accommodations, destination, etc.) which are limited in scope to Japan. In order to work with a feasible margin of error, the limiting boundaries (JC and TC) have thus been chosen as wide reaching as possible.

At a glance, this baseline categorization provides a macroscopic distribution map of the dataset, establishing a clear boundary for deeper analysis.

Following the baseline thematic separation, the data undergoes a "telescopic" refinement process to log the exact geographical variables of the content. This spatial categorization is executed across two distinct layers:

1. Macro-level: Identification of the broader geographical regions, specifically organizing the data by Japanese Prefecture (e.g., Hokkaido, Sendai, Chiba, Saitama, etc) and City (e.g., Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka).
2. Micro-level: Identification of the exact Point of Interest (POI) within that city or prefecture (e.g., a specific shrine, street, or commercial complex).

3.4 Trend Analysis Metrics

Once the data and the methodology are formalized, we can proceed with the definition of the metrics of interest:

- 1) Data Relative Frequency (Rf): how often a specific topic appears in an array of data. This is the most easily quantifiable data and it highlights the short term popularity of a topic. It is also assumed that is the most variable metric since it might be highly susceptible to recent user behaviour (high hysteresis). This should show the highest degree of correlation between user behaviour and result (many likes should lead to many SVC). Frequency will be calculated per diem (nth day) as:

$$Rf_n = \left(\frac{\text{number of relevant posts on the } nth \text{ day}}{\text{total number of posts on the } nth \text{ day}} \right) \times 100$$

- 2) Data Resilience (Δ): how much a specific topic maintains its relevance across multiple days. This is usually called "User Retention" and it is an important metric to evaluate how much a specific behaviour is weighted by the algorithms when challenged by sometimes diverging short term feedbacks (high hysteresis). Resilience will prove invaluable in showing the strength of topics given varying boundary conditions (eg. Japan centred SVC given a Tourism-only biased Account, or viceversa). Resilience for the nth day (with $n > 1$) it is calculated as

$$\Delta_n = \left(\frac{Rf_n}{Rf_{n-1}} \right) \times 100$$

- 3) Data Variability (or standard deviation or σ): how much daily variation of frequencies (Δ) deviates from the overall average of data across the full collection period. This metric highlights the macro algorithmic behaviour in response to user feedback. High variability is synonymous of a topic with high sensitivity and low retention given the boundaries (eg. small variation in feedback generates big swings in daily frequencies). A low variability topic is a steady one. It does not waver due to short term feedback and it preserves an a priori frequency that is probably dictated by the algorithm itself. Variability is calculated on a per-account basis as:

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{(R_f - \mu)^2}{10}} \text{ where } \mu = \text{average}(R_f)$$

- 4) Data Clusters: how often, within a single day, relevant SVC shows conglomerated within a margin of error. In other words, by setting a margin of tolerance (e.g. one SVC) we calculate how many SVC show up as single elements isolated in the feed or, if they tend to appear in continuous series of relevant content (e.g. three relevant SVC in a row). When it comes to clusters they can be classified both in size (bigger clusters equate stronger topics) and both in frequency. Smaller but more frequent clusters can be seen as symptomatic of resilient topics with low hysteresis (we can also predict low average σ for the account). Bigger but low frequency clusters are probably the result of short term bursts of positive feedback on the algorithm. They might show topics with high hysteresis, which are highly susceptible to likes and short term retention metrics.

All these metrics can be applied to all data collected, showing in each regard the specific inner working of the algorithms in associating user behaviour with the corresponding feed. This should be a proper indicator of the degrees of popularity of the destinations.

3.5. Phi (Φ) Analysis

These are probably the most relevant metrics that bridge the qualitative analysis from the first half of the study to the on the ground-data provided by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), leading us onto the comparative side of the work.

We define two distinct magnifying factors to determine the degree to which a destination's visibility on the SVC platform correlates with data reality:

1. Φ_t (Market Share Ratio): The ratio between the relative frequency (R_f) of a destination within the SVC analysis and the actual share of the tourism market that the destination garners according to official JNTO data.
2. Φ_p (Population Ratio): The ratio between the relative frequency (R_f) of a destination within the SVC analysis and the regional population data in percentage.

A Φ value smaller than 1 indicates a destination that possesses significantly greater weight in official statistics than it does within observed Instagram trends. This negative divergence between algorithmic suggestion and official data, without additional context, can be attributed to several factors such as:

1. Demographic and Locational Bias: European and Western tourists comprise a relatively small minority (e.g., historically less than 18%) of overall visitors to Japan. Consequently, their specific digital footprint heavily underrepresents the reality of locations favored by the massive domestic tourism market or the dominant East Asian tourist contingent (such as visitors from South Korea, Taiwan, and mainland China) (see locational bias from 3.1).
2. The "Functional vs. Aesthetic" Travel Split: Many high-volume transit hubs or business districts generate high JNTO numbers due to specialized footfalls. However, they may lack the specific "instagrammable" visual markers required to trigger high relative frequency (R_f) on the SVC platform.
3. Platform Blind Spots: In locations where $\Phi < 1$, non-Western market dynamics and alternative social media networks (such as WeChat, RED/Xiaohongshu, or LINE) play a

more dominant role, leaving a significant blind spot in the Instagram-focused SVC dataset.

Conversely, a Φ value greater than 1 identifies the core phenomenon of this study. A high Φ value is the direct product of a disproportionate digital push on the SVC platform relative to actual visitation or population data. This characteristic aligns precisely with the definition of a "Hidden Gem" location as established in Chapter 2. The bigger the Φ , the bigger the algorithm bias, unsubstantiated by previous visit data, is.

3.6 Comparative results

The list of locations with high Φ Identified in 3.6 will form the backbone of the final dissertation on the topic. As discussed in chapter 2, Hidden Gem destinations, out of all kinds of tourist locations, are the ones that more directly feel the impact of advertising activity and rapid burst of popularity. In other words, if the SVC can make any impact on the tourism fluxes in Japan, no better indicator can be seen than in this kind of location. For each of them the ultimate goal is to ascertain the actual impact of SVC platforms by analyzing them on the bases of the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) criteria to quantify Overtourism (see 2.2).

Out of all the subjects identified, we will try to determine the degree of correlation between Φ and overtourism. A priori we can identify a series of supposed characteristics to be corroborated by data:

1. The Aesthetics of Isolation: High Φ locations often feature highly specific visual aesthetics, such as isolated torii gates, remote viewpoints of Mount Fuji, or empty traditional streets. The SVC platform rewards the illusion of discovery, prompting users to share locations that look untouched, even if the digital attention is highly concentrated.
2. The "Echo Chamber" Effect of Content Creation: A high Φ indicates that a destination's digital footprint is heavily inflated and unsubstantiated by historical visit data. This suggests that the platform itself acts as an accelerator. Content creators replicate successful viral formats, creating a feedback loop where a location is continuously promoted to Western audiences on social media long before physical infrastructure or official tourism boards catch up to the demand.

3. Hyper-Gems vs. Micro-Trends: By comparing Φ_t against Φ_p , we can distinguish between a location that is genuinely geographically isolated but viral (Φ_p is low, Φ_t is high) versus a highly populated urban pocket that is simply being heavily romanticized by Western tourists (both ratios are high).

3.7 Operational Challenges

Throughout this first method of analysis, some operational problems were identified.

1. Definition of Places of Interest (POI): During the data collection, categorization of some SVC proved to be ambiguous. A significant proportion of SVC were not explicitly specifying destinations, but rather nebulous token locations in Japan, that are not easily associated with any specific area. For instance, convenience stores (Lawson's) or vending machines are usually the subject of multiple SVC without specifying an actionable destination. Usually, these types of places are not considered tourist attractions as they lack fundamental historical, cultural, or sociological significance to be considered POI; however, they have become a new destination for overseas tourists, as they are part of the overall experience in Japan that has to be experienced (see 1.6). As it was already mentioned, in these cases, there is an overlap between tourist appeal and cultural marketability. Within the scope of the research question, when encountering these types of SVCs, they will be labeled as JC only because they do not promote any identifiable location in Japan or any recognizable landmarks, but rather a vague cultural destination that is considered a must-do only for the true 'Japanese experience.'
2. Content seasonality: most of the data was collected between the 2nd of October 2025 and the 28th of November 2025. This autumn timeframe exerted a pronounced influence on the themes, events, and geographic locations surfaced by the platform recommendation algorithms (such as *Momiji*, Winter Illuminations, etc.). This temporal clustering means the dataset captures a highly specific seasonal slice of tourist behavior and algorithmic promotion, rather than a normalized, year-round representation of Japanese travel culture. This might have spilled into the other accounts as well given the far reaching advertisable nature of such events.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present, analyze, and interpret the data collected from Instagram's short-form vertical content (SVC) between October 2025 and December 2025. This study traces the systemic behavior of recommendation algorithms when exposed to various user profiles, specifically evaluating how user interaction influences the distribution of tourism-centric media. The analytical framework is developed through a two-fold examination: first, a macro-level investigation into structural ubiquity of content versus active tailoring, and second, a location-based descriptive analysis. All the data referred to in this chapter can be found in the tables in Appendix A.

4.2 Tourism and Japan - Trends and Analysis

The first variable analyzed is the frequency of topic-specific SVC throughout all the accounts. The data is categorized in two major buckets: Japan related content (JC) ,which encompasses topics such as culture, travel, politics, and Travel related content (TC), which spans any travel destination and topic regardless of the subject. From these two we reach our specific area of interest, in the intersection of the two aforementioned subjects: JTC (Japanese Tourism).

Observation Bias: the issue of the first attempt at data collecting

Before discussing the data collected, it might be useful to highlight a systemic issue encountered in the first batch of data. As described in Chapter 3 and 1, the main feedback tools provided by SVC platforms are likes and follows. In order to characterize the preferences of each account it becomes natural using the likes to depict a certain user pattern that best mimics the supposed bias of the subject (tourism destinations, Japan attractions, etc.). After a first attempt at data collecting, however, the overall percentage of pertinent data (SVC focused on Japanese Travel content) showed a prevalence above any possibly inferred metric. When compared with the base case, which lacks any form of activity bias, all accounts were above a 40% pertinence and with a high degree of day by day retention as well. This was further exacerbated by the fact

that the same SVC were being recommended to accounts with different supposed preferences. Clearly there was some kind of operational faux-pas which was consistently skewing data.

From this preliminary batch of results, although unusable in the main research query, we could glimpse the inner workings of the algorithm. In addition to the aforementioned feedback tools, it seems that the algorithm uses viewing length as a strong decisional factor in cluster formation. Once the viewing time of a specific SVC would increase due to the operational need to record the data, the following SVC would show a pertinence higher than usual, with clusters of 3 to 5 SVC (with an error of 1) that would naturally form groups of relevant data. This powerful bias factor led to two major observations.

On one hand, viewing length seems to influence algorithms sensitive topics such as JC more over wider unfocused categories such as TC. Given that the limiting factor for JTC content is usually JC (see point 4.2.3), an increase to its presence is usually due to a laxing of the bounding scarcer value, Japanese Content. An increase in TC, although present, is still victim to the wider nature of the topic and the advertising trends on the platform.

On the other, more operational, hand, this observation has led us to change the methodology of data collecting. In order to prevent a temporal bias, the SVC were collected in consecutive clusters of 10, followed by exiting the platform all together. This would guarantee a more uniform time distribution, as shown in the data collected.

4.2.1 TC content

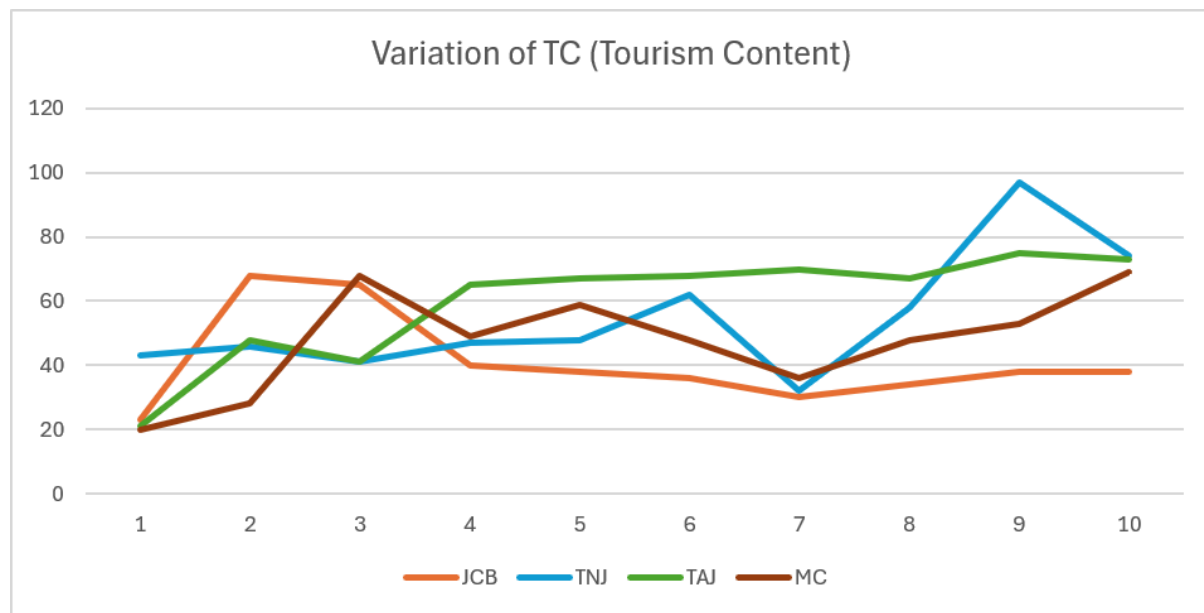


Figure 4.1. Variation of Tourism Content on an account basis

We can generalize the following observations based on the data collected:

- 1) Tourism content (TC) is unpromptedly presented by the platform since the very beginning. Without biases, all accounts are presented with TC on a similar basis ($\mu Rf=22\%$ on day 1). The outlier is in the TNJ case showing an expected dominance on the proceedings ($\sim 50\%$ more than the average).
- 2) Active user feedback had a negligible impact on the algorithmic bias of TC. With a lack of diverging input, the data converged to a plateau on a mute case ($<5\%$ error). The only unaligned case, the JBC, is a product of an active reinforcement against TC and it still shows a smaller deviation (42% from the average $\mu Rf(JBC)=38$ vs Day 10 $Rf(JBC)=71$) than the comparable case on the convex (66% of TNJ vs $\mu(\text{Day 10-TNJ})$ see point 4). This shows the ubiquity of TC on the feed.
- 3) TC seems resilient to diverging feedback. The main unaligned case is the JBC one and it still shows a pattern of convergence towards the daily average (with 27% deviation). Interestingly, JBC shows a higher sensitivity than its counterparts in the first couple of days, perhaps in exploratory capacity. The algorithm was probably probing the degree of affinity of the account on the topic before plunging the bias to a lower, but still relevant, 30% presence.
- 4) TC is not cluster biased. All accounts show a slow convergence (25% , $\mu error=26\%$) to a predominantly 2 cluster bias. Unlike JC, all accounts still show a 1 cluster sporadic content presentation independently from the type of reinforcement. Moreover the high cluster bias (5 or more), is not impacted by the type of account, appearing with a similar prominence to the mute case. The biggest divergence (the 5+ cluster in the JBC case) still falls within one standard deviation of the average.

A few preliminary conclusions can be inferred from the above observations. First, TC is a wide-spread topic on SVC platforms, even without algorithmic biases. Both in the base case and in the initial day (the day with the lowest user input) around a quarter of all results are TC oriented. Second, TC shows high retention and low variance: it is constantly present at all points and at roughly constant amounts ($\mu Rf=23\%$ per diem). This could be due to a multitude of factors. On one hand, TC is a cross topic subject which can be associated with multiple interests (food, fashion, art, etc.), guaranteeing it a sort of bias-refractive propriety. No matter the account preference, tourism destinations find their relevance, for example in Wine tasting (3% in TNJ),

Nature viewing (12% in TAJ) or Holiday related activities (14% in MC around Halloween). On the other hand, TC is a highly commercial topic. A statistically significant amount of the overall TC (roughly 43% out of all of them but highly weighted toward TNJ and JBC in a ratio of 1:3) is advertising, which by EU regulation¹⁸⁷ needs to be disclosed as such (known as ad-reads or sponsored content). This is also reflected in the resilience of the single cluster till the later days. Their presence is nothing else but isolated Instagram promoted advertising posts which fall in line with the frequency disclosed by Instagram itself in its reel ranking algorithm¹⁸⁸, roughly one in four.

In conclusion, Tourism Content is widespread, and it gives the perfect baseline for the mark of a popular and far-reaching subject on SVC platforms.

4.2.2 JC Content

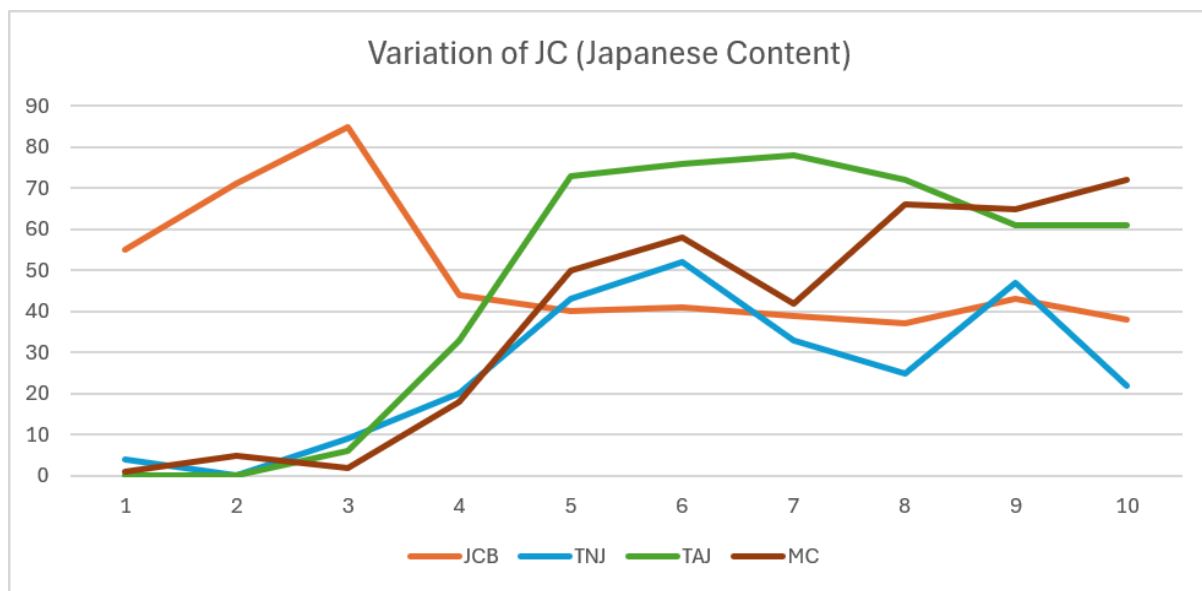


Figure 4.2. Variation of Japanese Content on an account basis

- 1) JC is less ubiquitously present than Tc content. The base case (MC) and all users lacking strengthening feedback, show a low percentage of JC at the beginning ($\mu Rf(TNJ)=4\%$ $\mu Rf(TAJ)=15\%$ $\mu Rf(MC)=0\%$). On the first day each account shows a meandering trend

¹⁸⁷ "LEGAL BRIEF #6: HOW to DISCLOSE ADVERTISING on SOCIAL MEDIA" Eu Commission, 2025. Accessed 12 June 2026.

¹⁸⁸ Mosseri, Adam. "Instagram Ranking Explained." About.instagram.com, 31 May 2023, about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/instagram-ranking-explained/.

of unrelated data. On JC, the average is 6,3% of related content. Without the proper induction the algorithm does not seem to hone on the topic.

- 2) User feedback does not act as a particularly effective strengthening factor for JC growth. We can see an unprompted benchmark of the phenomenon in the trend of MC: after three days, the increase appears in a rapid two day burst ($\Delta_{3rd\ day}=+600\%$ $\Delta_{4th\ day}=+270\%$) to then average out around 59% with a daily variance of $\sigma=\pm 20\%$. All other accounts (with the exception of JBC) show a similar growth pattern although with slightly lower daily peak numbers. Active synergic feedback does not equate to a particularly significant algorithmic bias showing.
- 3) Accounts with a focus on JC exhibit a higher retention rate. As discussed in bullet point 2, both JBC and TAJ do not present explosive growth patterns that significantly deviate from the average. Where they excel is in preventing high daily percentage losses and in keeping daily variance to a minimum. As seen in the data, after day 3, JBC has a daily variance of $\Delta=\pm 4\%$ (the lowest of the data) and TAJ has $\Delta=\pm 9\%$ (the second lowest). Moreover, the highest daily trough is significantly lower than the average ($\mu\Delta=14\%$) for both of them. JBC's biggest dip, after the rebound of the second day ($\Delta=-23\%$) which can be ascribed to the out of the norm day one, is less than 2%, which shows the high resilience of the topic.
- 4) JC is cluster oriented and the clusters are bias sensitive. After a first day which is in line with the TC analysis, cluster behaviour can be categorized based on the initial bias of the account. The topic neutral MC and TNJ show a distribution skewed toward 2-3 clusters with a day 9 and 10 gaussian distribution centred around 2-sized clusters with σ of 2.3 (highly concentrated). Where TC was mostly in the form of single posts which would appear spread out evenly throughout a day, JC appears in discrete clusters which are in themselves concentrated at even intervals. This is seen even better in another kind of cluster behaviour in the topic biased account, JBC, . The clusters not only are highly densely packed ($\mu Rf= 3$ for days 6 through 10) but their size is slightly skewed toward higher values, which are present here unlike in the TC case. The 5-cluster is the most common cluster in the JBC account (42% out of all cluster types), and it is the most frequent type in Days 3-4-5-9. So much so that it exhibits a highly polarized behavior for two or three values (E.g. Day 4 $[4,3,2]=[3,6,3]$).

Finally TAJ, exhibits a pattern in between the two behaviours described. It is still polarized toward a mean value but it has a high standard deviation ($\sigma=4.3$). It figures the high clusters of 5 or 4 together with some single elements in between. This might show how the two conflicting tendencies in the algorithm (Japan and tourism) manifest both a highly focused behaviour in high frequency clusters (which is pushed by the positive feedback bias of liking Japan content) and both show the scattershoot approach (26% of 1-Cluster) of a diverging preference coming from tourism. This will be further analyzed in the discussion of the intersection case.

On the surface Japan focused content (JC) exhibits all the marks of an algorithm driven, user tailored content. Its presence might seem contingent on user preferences and highly dependent on account feedback. However cases lacking in direct biases for the topic (MC) not only show an overall trend similar to the others, but they boast higher yields per diem. Where preference comes into place is the retention rates. Highly synergistic accounts (TAJ, JBC) show low variance with high retention (clustered in high high frequencies) where unfocused and diverging profiles show the converse. In other words, we can initially see in the hockey stick trajectory the algorithm attempts to introduce the topic in an exploratory capacity to all accounts. It takes 3 days to align the results with account specific trends and from there the retention is proportional to the account bias.

This high variability in content retention and availability makes JC an example of a popular yet algorithmic based topic. It is not uniformly introduced, keeping in line with base preferences, but once shown it maintains average yield which is resistant to swaying feedback.

4.2.3 JTC content

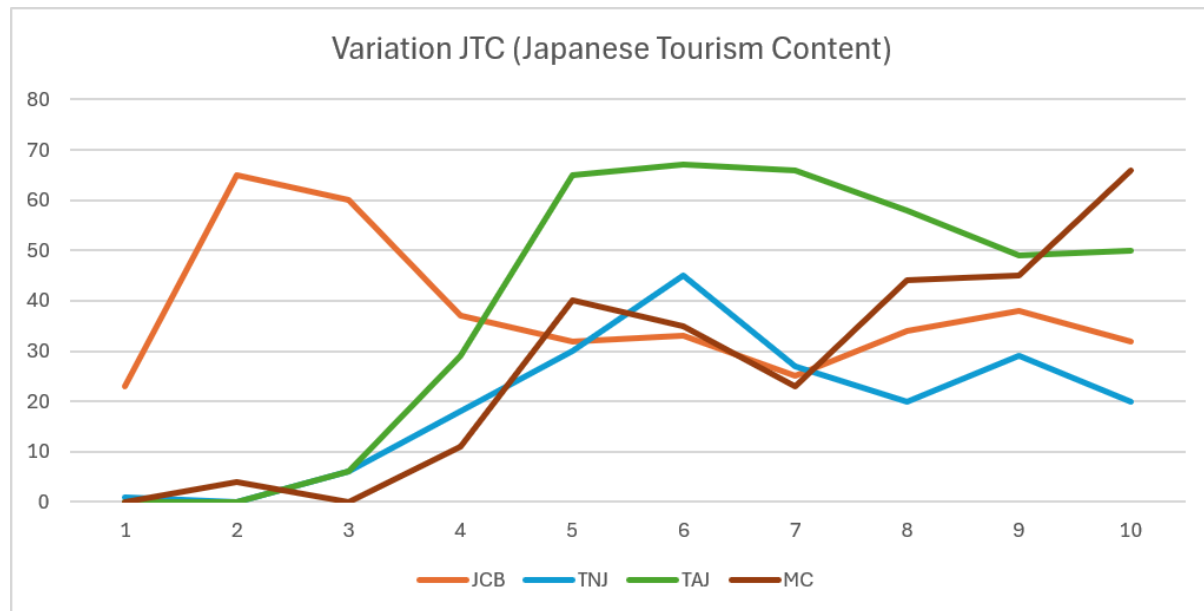


Figure 4.3. Variation of Japanese Tourism Content on an account basis

- 1) JTC follows a similar trend as with JC. Given that it is the intersection case, the ratio is upper bound by the rate limiting value of the intersecting data (in this case JC). On this foundation we can observe that JTC is even more scarce than JC on the first day with its highest presence in a ratio of roughly 1:2 in favour of the JBC case. In all accounts data is almost completely lacking (0%). This has to be expected given that in the first two days JC has an average frequency of $\mu Rf=1,6\%$. Until day 4, JTC is strongly bound by JC with a percentage divergence of 5% maximum.
- 2) From day 5 onward, when JC and TC are within a margin lower than 10% for all accounts, the intersection space allows for a proper day by day observation of retention trends. On a macroscopic level, all accounts have a daily variance variable within a margin of 20%, with one exception of the MC account on the very last day of 47%. The highest retention retention ratio figures in the TAJ account. This can be explained by the doubly reinforcing feedback provided by this account. Accounts with only one bias (TNJ and JBC) show a higher variability but still strong retention. When compared with their corresponding limiting factors (for JBC is TC, for TNJ is JC), they show a mimetic quality of 23% for TNJ and 12% for the JBC. This reiterates the observation from the JC section showing the higher feedback strength of JC.

It follows naturally that the account lacking in biases (MC) shows the highest variability.

- 3) Clusters seem bias dependent with low per diem variability of the most common types. The cluster analysis exhibits a high degree of differentiation between the various accounts when it comes to the sizes and frequency. When the topic is hit, it seems to keep its relevance for several SVC. With the exclusion on the first days, JTC prefers high density clusters, with low distribution and quick bursts of pertinence. This is especially prevalent in low specificity accounts (such as MC) where single clusters disappear on day 6 and keep low profiles from then on (<15%). Unlike JC, which also eventually pivoted toward 5 cluster groupings, their variability is low.

JTC analysis lives in the intersection of JC and TC. As such, most of its qualities are bound by and inferred on the trends of the aforementioned cases. In the first 4 days, JTC is proportional to the slowest growing and most algorithms sensitive trends, JC. With a high correlation (see bullet point 1) it exhibits qualities of slow growth and bias dependence, typical of fast trends as discussed before (JC). After day 4 the daily behaviour is closer to TC (see point 2), and it proceeds with the ubiquitous, steady quality of algorithm favored topics.

However, some specific statistical quirks can be singled out from the data.

MC, being the mute case, exhibits the predicted low and unsteady growth of a meandering exploratory pattern. However, where the other accounts show a waning trend in the final days, MC has a rapid growth (Day 8= +97%, Day 10 = + 50%) and it ends up being the highest final value. This honing in on the topic shows a convergence of TC and JC as evidenced by the high cluster frequency (point 3).

The algorithm seems to compartmentalize the travel topics on a roughly daily basis: on the first day mostly beaches in Europe and low cost journeys (probable location bias) on the fourth day China and southeast Asia (Thailand and Singapore) and finally on the last couple of days, Japan. Whether this progression is influenced by the observation bias previously discussed (see chapter 3 and Eurocentric bias) and it is up to interpretation. Nonetheless, even if by simple sheer random progression through travel destinations, Japan figures spontaneously among the top 5 up-promoted suggestion to an European based account (in order Spain: 13%; Bora Bora, Maldives and other Indian Pacific island destinations: 13% Turkey: 9%; China:7%; Japan: 7%). This highlights a natural algorithmic bias for Japan.

Another quality of JTC SVC is the unusual cluster distribution which seems skewed toward repeating high density groups regardless of account preferences (see point 3). This could be due to the combination of chance of repeating strengthening patterns in the algorithm.

The above collected data depict our topic of interest as indeed a social media niche, but a highly competitive one at that. The rise to prominence of the topic is mostly chance based or highly influenced by user factors. Although part of a popular topic, tourism content (high frequency and high retention on average TC), it has to contend with many other travel destinations for a spot on the algorithm. As shown by the data, JTC is highly influenced by user bias and previous activity suggesting both a filtering and an amplifying effect. It operates not as a static destination catalog, but as a dynamic tension between organic cultural affinity and hard commercial pushing.

4.2.4 Final Observations on Content Behaviour

1. **Structural Ubiquity vs. Active Tailoring:** TC operates as a baseline organic presence on the platform, exhibiting high retention and low variance across all accounts regardless of user input. This is driven largely by cross-topic adaptability and a heavy reliance on commercial advertising structures (roughly one in four posts). Conversely, JC acts as a highly responsive, user-tailored niche that requires deliberate induction, exhibiting a "hockey stick" growth trajectory.
2. **Feedback Resilience and Retention:** While active negative feedback shows limited capability to fully suppress ubiquitous topics like TC, positive reinforcement serves primarily as a retention mechanism rather than an explosive growth factor for specific niches like JC. Accounts with established biases (e.g., TAJ, JBC) demonstrate an ability to stabilize daily variance and minimize content drops, cementing the topic within their feeds.
3. **The Intersectional Convergence (JTC):** As a hybrid niche, JTC initially tracks the restrictive, slow-growing, and bias-dependent traits of JC. However, upon clearing initial thresholds, it adopts the steady, high-retention characteristics of TC. The spontaneous emergence of Japan-focused content even in topic-neutral accounts (MC) underscores an

underlying, unprompted algorithmic bias for the destination within European-based feeds.

4.3 Location based Analysis

When it comes to the discussion about the specifics of what kinds of destinations get recommended by the algorithm the discussion becomes more nuanced. Although some trends are shared among all the accounts, some case specific frequencies can be underlined. The data available can be broadly subdivided in four distinctive categories, each one of them encompassing a different behaviour both on the algorithm and both in the official data:

1. The Golden Route (GR): the three major destinations, Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. They are the data sets with the highest frequency, retention and cluster density in all four accounts. They show high variability, with low sensitivity to user behaviour, further expressed in the high cluster frequencies. The major difference between the accounts resides in which location results dominant in the proceeding and the relative ratios between them.
2. The Subpath hubs: this group is more heterogeneous, showing several Golden-path adjacent destinations. In this set we identify locations such as Chiba, Wakayama, Kanagawa which are either located along major tourist traveling routes (mainly the Tōkaidō shinkansen line) or are part of the metropolitan area of the major metropolis. Their average R_f , although high, has high variability across the accounts, showing high algorithmic sensitivity. Moreover, their Φ s are comparable to the statistical average (0.4 on average from the major locations) of the GR group showing similar levels of algorithmic biases.
3. The isolated destination: this group encompasses most of the off-the-beaten-path destinations, from Hokkaido to Tottori. These destinations have very low relative frequencies, usually none. Their share of the overall data is almost negligible but their relative behaviour can represent some sought after trends.
4. The statistical outliers: this is the most significant group. Here we highlight a group of locations with an average R_f , retention and variability low across all the accounts. However, where the previous group failed to show any presence at all, these outliers

show clusters of extremely dense relevance on a few days on most accounts, thus pushing them into statistical relevance. Moreover, all these destinations have the highest Φ recorded in the study constantly represented across all users behaviours. In the group we find places rather untapped by the western market such as Ehime, Fukui, Akita and Iwate.

We can already notice how the sections have a distinctive geographical ranking. The higher frequency is found in locations in central Honshu with a gradual decrease the further away we get from them (GR, SubPath, Isolated). The Φ shows instead a sub-path predilection, having high clusters around locations accessible through main connecting arteries but distant from the big metropolitan tourist hub (“Hidden Gems”).

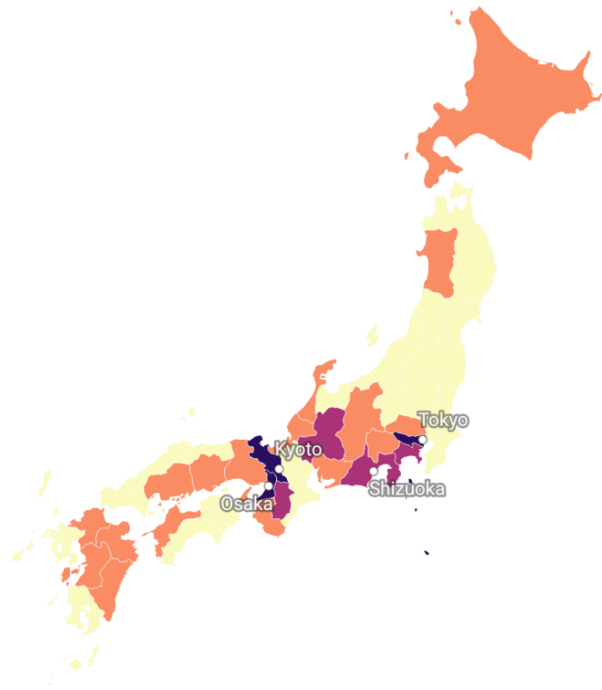


Figure 4.4. Average Rf per Prefecture. Deeper colour shows higher concentration, notice the concentration around the major tourism arteries

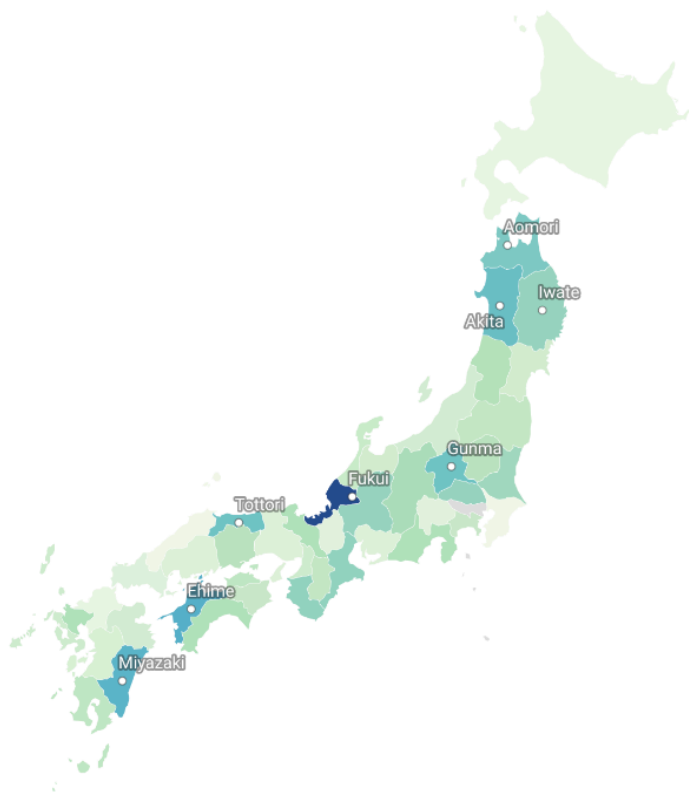


Figure 4.5. Average Φ_t per Prefecture. Deeper colour shows higher concentration, notice the scattered distribution across the country

Share International Tourist By Province

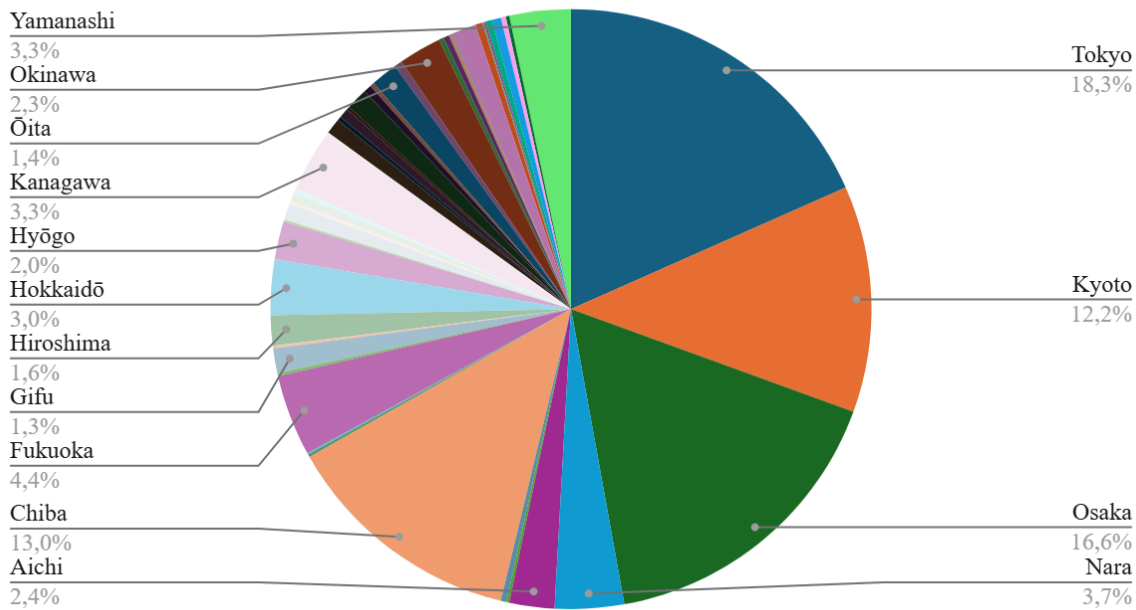


Figure 4.6. Distribution of International Tourists by Prefecture in 2025 (Source JNTO)

The mute case analysis Observation.

The mute case (MC) shows some major divergences from the other account when it comes to recording travel destinations in Japan. As visible in the TJC analysis of MC, this type of content struggles with finding a foothold in the unbiased algorithm (Day 1=0%, Day = 4%). Moreover, although most of the content eventually plateaus around the golden path line (Tokyo 22% Kyoto 18%) some statistical outliers here present are unique to this batch of data. From the first day of data availability (Day 2) we can notice how location like Okinawa (Day 2 Rf = 66%, delta 12%) or Kanagawa (Day 6 Rf = 17%) take precedence over the major destinations (Tokyo and Osaka have no presence in the first 4 Days and Kyoto had only a Day 2 Rf of 33%). This suggested a skewed recommendation bias. All these locations show low Phi (average 2.4) being nonetheless popular destinations.

4.3.1 The Golden Route destinations

Tokyo and Kyoto and Osaka demonstrate high overall retention across all accounts, meaning they capture sustained attention daily. However, they also yield the highest standard deviations ($\sigma(\text{TKY}) = 5.233$, $\sigma(\text{KYT}) = 5.082$). Rather than indicating instability, this variance indicates daily influxes driven by specific biases, usually associated with more culturally specific events or themes (Matsuri and Anime/Manga trends). Moreover this is an indicator of algorithmic uncertainty, giving us a chance to identify with type of content is more likely to sway the platform preferences on the topic

During the initial two days, the SVC distribution reflects an unprompted, exploratory baseline on most accounts. Content representation, outside the major destinations, is sparse and geographically scattered. On Day 1, dominant tourist hubs exhibit subdued baseline numbers (Tokyo = 9, Kyoto = 5, Osaka = 3 in JBC) compared with their averages [Tokyo ($\mu\text{Rf} = 16.90$, $\sigma = 5.24$) Kyoto ($\mu\text{Rf} = 12.30$, $\sigma = 5.06$) Osaka ($\mu\text{Rf} = 6.70$, $\sigma = 3.95$)], while the remaining 44 prefectures generate either singular entries or zero values.

The ratio of retention and frequency seem to be bias dependent. The account (JBC) that heavily favours JC shows earlier appearances of the destinations (Average in D1-3 $\text{Rf}(\text{JBC}) = 25$) where usually the average first day when the relative frequency of these data sets becomes relevant is usually day 4. By Day 4 and Day 5, all the accounts display a flaring up of the average Rf for the Golden Route destination albeit at different speeds. From the baseline of MC ($\text{Rf}(\text{D4}) = 4$ $\text{Rf}(\text{D5}) = 13$ and $\mu\text{Rf}(\text{D4-D10}) = 10$) we do not notice high deviation in tourism based accounts. TNJ is slight below baseline in frequency for the days 4 and 5 but higher in the overall dataset ($\mu\text{Rf}(\text{D4-D10}) = 13$). Where it excels is in very high retention (average $\Delta(\text{D4-D10}) = +47\%$) which trumps the other JC based accounts. The deviation is also poor ($\sigma = 5.3$), suggesting high peaks and deep lows. This is further reiterated in the cluster distribution showing a predominant 1-cluster spectrum where above 75% of data are incidental algorithm driven SVC, akin to the TC analysis.

JBC and TAJ show similar trends. Both have the highest relative frequency (JBC $\mu\text{Rf}(\text{D4-D10}) = 24$; TAJ $\mu\text{Rf}(\text{D4-D10}) = 15$) for the main locations with small deviations in later

days. However, their daily gains plateau quite early (average Δ (D4-D10)=+26.4%) showing an algorithmic tendency to adhere to the data more.

When it comes to the Φ analysis all profiles show converging behaviours with one small statistical outlier (JBC). All accounts have a small Φ_t and Φ_p , lower than 0.3, with even JBC hovering within a margin of 0.3 ($\Phi(\text{JBC})=0.55$). It follows that Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, not only are underrepresented on the algorithm (roughly by half), but they are refractory to specific boosting metrics with even the account with the strongest correlation (see JC analysis, JBC) showing low prevalence metrics. By looking at the data this is to be expected however. Algorithm behaviour seems to dictate exploratory and scattershot, suggesting a variety of destinations in order to gauge the specific user preferences. And although the Golden Route are still the prevalent set, they are not as polarized as in official data.

It is interesting to notice a clear hierarchy of popularity on the platform among the Golden Path destinations. Osaka is systemically the least popular of the three. Its Φ_t is constantly half of the leading value ($\Phi_t(\text{JBC})=0.24$) with frequencies halved but retention doubled. As an example we can see the TAJ account which boasts a μRf of 8 (compared to a Kyoto μRf of 16) but a low σ of 3 (compared to a Kyoto σ of 5.3), one of the smallest among the data. By looking at the official data we can see why: Osaka is a constantly recommended destination (low σ) due to its sheer popularity (43% of all tourists visit Osaka, higher than even Kyoto), but most of the crowd is from far-asian countries (60% from South Korea, China and Taiwan) with an important contingent of business travellers (12%), thus explaining the low Φ_t ¹⁸⁹. It is also worth noting that neither a TC or a JC bias equate to higher Rf of Osaka content.

The title of most popular is contented by either Tokyo or Kyoto, depending on the specific user biases. With the excursion of TNJ, all accounts show the highest Φ_t among the golden route with Kyoto, by an average magnitude factor of 1.7 with Tokyo. If we look at the actual frequencies, however, we can notice that Tokyo, with the exception of TAJ, has the higher presence by a margin ranging from 17% in MC, to 35% in JBC with comparable standard deviation (Tokyo $\sigma=5.21$ Kyoto $\sigma=5.3$). This makes Tokyo often being pushed by the algorithm

¹⁸⁹ JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. “Japan-Bound Statistics - Tourism Statistics.” JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co., 2025, www.tourism.jp/en/tourism-database/stats/inbound/.

by the simple fact that it is the most known locale. Tokyo also shows a noticeable negative correlation to JC.

Summing all the observations up we can qualify the role and perception of the Golden Route (GR) destinations of the SVC platforms:

- 1) The algorithm always recommends GR destinations regardless of bias. First in exploratory capacity, but nonetheless they keep relevancy. User preference increases the amount but not their relative frequency (low bearing). A specific interest in JC has a higher magnifying power than in TC (1.33:1), although not really swaying in the overall data. The base line given by MC is around 10% for Tokyo and Kyoto and 4% for Osaka, showing an unprompted interest in GR with high unbiased staying power.
- 2) Tokyo is the most recommended destination by sheer volume, however Kyoto has the highest relative preponderance (double Φ_t). Although Kyoto is less represented in the JNTO data (Tokyo is 1.57 times as visited as Kyoto), its frequency on the feed is comparable to Tokyo, thus increasing its data relevance. The ratio between Tokyo and Kyoto is preference dependent, showing medium correlation of TC with Kyoto and JC with Tokyo: Kyoto appears more broadly appealing, where Tokyo is more favoured for an audience already primed for Japanese content.
- 3) Osaka has the lowest values in terms of frequency, and relevance but the highest in retention. With the smallest presence among all GR data, Osaka is relegated to low values not really sensitive to any form of bias but highly consistent between the different days. It is always present, at small constant values. This reflects simultaneously the low relevance of Osaka in the overall travel itinerary of westerners, as shown by the JNTO, and the popularity of the location in the overall discourse and general knowledge. This is shown in the low Φ_t where the small R_f is put against the higher official numbers propped up but the Asian contingent not figuring in our data collected.

Average μRf vs. Prefecture

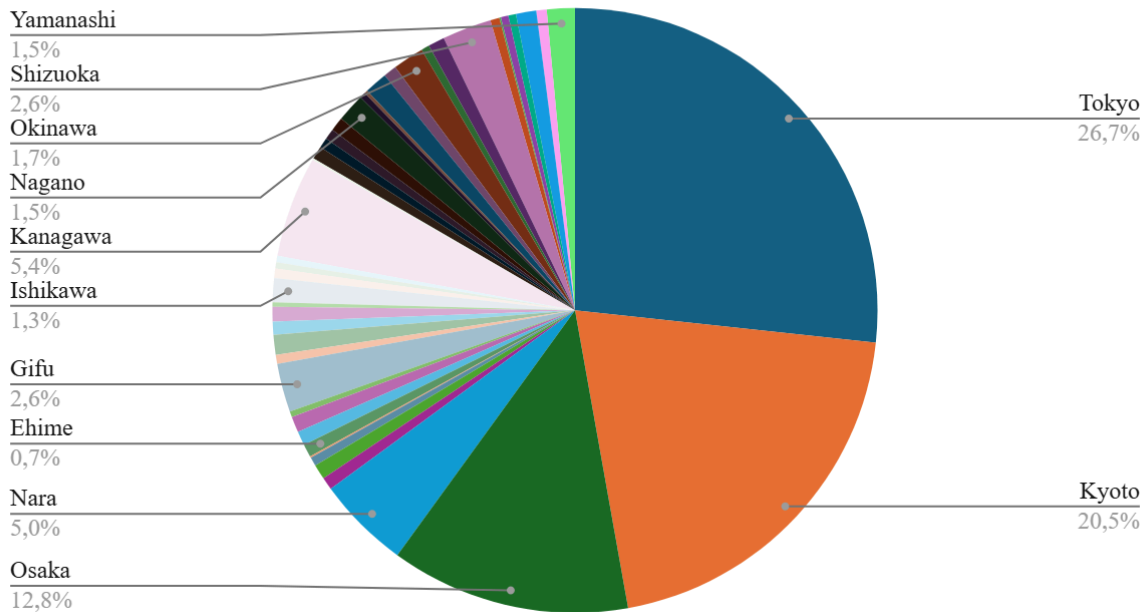


Figure 4.7. Rf Share per Prefecture.

4.3.2 The Lower Frequency Data: Subpath and Isolated Destinations

When we look at the data outside the Golden Route we can see a general trend of sporadic, low frequency sets, with high variability both in a per diem and a per account basis. From this group we can isolate a cluster of locations that seem to show higher Rf compared to the average: the SubPath collection.

The Subpath destinations are locations with a high degree of geographical correlation with the Golden Route. They are either close to a major municipality, within their railway network or along the major connecting arteries between them. These regions benefit from globally recognized singular attractions (e.g., Nara Park, Itsukushima Shrine, Hakone Onsen) that ensure steady posting rates. Within this family we have the following prefectures worth discussing:

1. Nara - Nara proves to be constantly the fourth most popular destination across all data. Its Rf is roughly a third of that of Osaka ($\mu Rf(Nara)/\mu Rf(Osaka)=0.36$), with the exception

of TAJ where it is half. Its average frequency across all the accounts is $R_f = 2.90$ with a small sigma of $\sigma = 1.45$, showing very low numbers (peak at 11 in D10 of TAJ) but steady retention that usually gets an algorithmic boost in the last three days. Some crucial differences can be highlighted between the users. In accounts without a JC bias (MC and TNJ) Nara's R_f gets halved, having mostly small clusters of single SVC and whole days without a single case (both TNJ and MC have three null days). Although low in value, its presence has high perseverance with small bursts of content in the second half (D5-10) with $\Delta(D6)$ an $\Delta(D9)$ of +200% in TNJ and $\Delta(D9)=+900\%$ in MC . On the converse, it seems that JC has an amplifying effect on the numbers showing higher peaks (Cealing(JBC)=14 Cealing(TAJ)=11) but also more null days (JBC has a null day on day 10). This makes Nara highly volatile and susceptible to player feedback with high correlation between JC and on platform popularity. When it comes to Φ_t , its values are comparable to those of Kyoto ($\mu\Phi_t=0.3684$). This might be due to the fact that Nara has a higher percentage of Western tourists than Osaka, shown in a closer mimicry of Instagram trends to the official data.

2. Kanagawa - Kanagawa finds itself as the fifth major destination for all the data sets. Most of the previous analysis from the section about Nara applies to Kanagawa as well, with some differences in frequency and data distributions. Kanagawa appears to be the strongest in accounts with high correlations with JTC, with strong metrics above the average in TAJ ($\mu R_f=2.5$). Kanagawa is also highly clustered, showing multiple appearances (especially in the last days) grouped up in high retention clustered mostly oriented around the topic of Onsens and Mount Fuji's vistas. In TAJ, Kanagawa sports a Φ_t higher than the GR destinations, showing high levels of platform interest. The reasons behind this is to be found in the type of on platform advertising done on this kind of destination. Kanagawa is recommended as short daily trips from Tokyo focusing on mountain excursions on Mount Fuji. High-aesthetic geographical markers naturally generate higher user retention and sharing metrics, explaining the steep climb in data points toward the end of the tracking cycle.

Next to the subpath destinations we can identify the Isolated cases. These are SVC locations which are barely represented in some, or even all, of the account. Most of them have relative frequency lower than 1 (less than 1 a day on average) with the following retention

metrics not meaningful in the analysis (either a full increase or decrease). These destinations are usually not on main well trodden tourist routes, being either hubs of more local travel or lacking major ticket destinations that might attract international trade. Nonetheless, some cases might be worth highlighting since they showcase some behind the scenes in algorithmic behaviours:

1. The majority of the Northern Coast of Japan lacks meaningful representation. Almost in all accounts, the north side of Honshu does not figure in any capacity amongst the data. Shimane is the only prefecture without a single data entry, and this is corroborated by the JNTO data ranking it as the least touristy destination in Japan (CIT).
2. Okinawa has very low average frequency in all accounts, however it seems to be highly influenced by TC bias, more than any other destinations. Together with Shizuoka, they are unpromptedly recommended to accounts with low JC preferences, so much so that Okinawa has the highest relative frequency outshining even GP destinations in the first 4 days in MC. The type of content shown is mostly of seaside activities, hiking and sunbathing, with a big overlap with advertised content. It could be inferred that without specific indicators, the algorithm prefers general scenic destinations, even unprompted. The low Φ_t across all accounts ($\mu\Phi_t = 2.32$) suggests that this kind of destination is not the first port of call of many users on the SVC platform, being relegated to a failsafe measure bundled up with generic paid-for travel SVC from across the globe (Okinawa is usually found clustered with seaside locations such as Maldives, Philippines and Indonesia). This can also be seen in the official tourist data by the Prefecture of Okinawa¹⁹⁰ showcasing an overwhelming majority of far-east Asia arrivals comprising over 90% of the overall travel population.
3. The *Seichi Junrei* effect. Some destinations, although being null in most accounts, still manage to have a small presence in the account biased toward JC. On the JBC profile, locations such as Tokushima ($\max R_f = 2$), Miyazaki ($\max R_f = 2$) leave a passing impression in the data set, when compared to their absence in all the others. A possible explanation might be the online phenomenon known as *Seichi Junrei* (“pilgrimage to sacred places”). *Seichi Junrei* is a form of highly specialized content tourism, which refers to the practice of visiting locations tied to pop-culture production such as Animes

¹⁹⁰ “Okinawa Tourism Statistics - How Many Tourists Visit? (2023).” Road Genius, 2023, roadgenius.com/statistics/tourism/japan/okinawa/.

and Mangas. From famous staircases to vistas in the background of melodramas, some of these locations are propped up only by a transversal wave of cultural relevancy that seems to permeate cases of extreme JC attunement. As an example we have the Iwate prefecture. It figures as a null case in both TAJ and TNJ, and it has a single data entry in MC. In JBC, however, it figures seven times. This is due to the type of content depicted: a themed train service inspired by the Pokemon franchising run by the JREast Company¹⁹¹. This single activity comprises six of the seven counts of SVC and it is a clear example of how JC can warp the data. Similarly, Tokushima has risen to prominence because of a local cultural event called MACHI★ASOBI¹⁹² which attracts a similarly interested crowd.

Destination Category	Primary Qualifying Proprieties	Algorithmic Behavior	Core Demographic Drivers
SubPath Collection (e.g., Nara, Kanagawa)	Geographical proximity to GR; singular landmarks (<i>Onsens</i> , Mt. Fuji vistas, Nara Park).	High longitudinal perseverance; late-stage temporal clustering (D5-D10) driven by itinerary saturation rules.	Western international tourists; high baseline affinity matching global curation trends (e.g., Nature Vistas, Wellness centres, cultural landmarks).

¹⁹¹ “Joyful Trains Portal > POKÉMON with YOU Train JR EAST.” JR-EAST - East Japan Railway Company, 2025, www.jreast.co.jp/en/multi/joyful/pokemon.html.

¹⁹² “マチ★アソビ” マチ★アソビ Vol.30, 2026, www.machiasobi.com/. Accessed 14 June 2026.

Isolated Cases (e.g., <i>Okinawa, Shizuoka</i>)	Non-contiguous geography; domestic travel hubs; low organic baseline density.	Failsafe or generic algorithmic pushing; highly clustered with international resort lookalikes.	Non-biased cohorts; East Asian regional arrivals requiring aggressive paid advertising conversion.
Pop-Culture Anomaly (e.g., <i>Iwate, Tokushima</i>)	Hyper-specific media properties relation; promotional novelty campaigns (<i>Seichi Junrei</i>).	Highly volatile; zero-sum distribution except when triggered by deep Japanese Culture (JC) bias.	Niche, culturally attuned subcultures.

Figure 4.8. Summary of Lower Frequency Destinations

4.3.3 Statistical Outliers: the Φt analysis

This last group of destinations is our target of analysis. These are the locations with a high discrepancy between data from the official sources and the our collected frequencies. They would easily be within the parameters of the previous section showing low average numbers, low retention and high variability. However, they show the highest value of Φt among all the data, outshining the major destination on the Golden Route. A high Φt ($\Phi t > 1$, and especially $\Phi t > 3$) means a destination's visibility on the social media platform is disproportionately larger than its actual market share of visitors reported by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO). The reason for a such a disproportionate overexposure can be due to a multitude of factors and in order to evaluate their significance we are first going to categorize them on an account basis:

Account	1<Φt<2	2<Φt<3	3<Φt
MC	Ehime (1.20) Miyazaki (1.20) Tottori (1.07)	Fukui (2.40)	None
JBC	Gunma (1.60) Ibaraki (1.07) Kagawa (1.07) Mie (1.07) Saitama (1.22) Shizuoka (1.04) Tokushima (1.60) Tottori (1.07) Wakayama (1.23)	Akita (2.41) Ehime (2.00) Iwate (2.25)	Fukui (4.01)

TNJ	Fukushima (1.14) Miyazaki (1.15)	Akita (2.28)	None
TAJ	Ehime (1.20) Fukushima (1.20) Miyazaki (1.60) Tottori (1.07)	None	Fukui (3.21)

Figure 4.9. Account distribution of high Φt destinations

From a first look at the data we can already highlight some major trends:

1. Accounts with higher JC affinity (JBC and TAJ) show higher average and a higher range of values for Φt . This is due to the previously discussed (see 4.2.2) propensity of JC affiliated accounts to have a more varied degree of suggested destinations, pooling from often secondary locations for a Western Audience. These accounts also show a high degree of subcultural dipping, increasing the chances of introducing in an exploratory capacity more esoteric destination (see 4.2.2 and 4.3.2 *Seichi Junrei*).
2. The locations are mostly constant across the accounts regardless of user preference. All users show the same baseline of destinations, magnified through different biases. This shows a fundamental algorithmic baseline for the destinations, which are recommended with relatively similar rates to all accounts, and making them highly resilient to user feedback once proposed. This cross-account trend can be seen in Fukui, which is represented in all accounts with various rates and strong Φt metrics in all of them.

3. The Aesthetic Factor. Most of these locations share similar characteristics, in so far as being highly visually captivating and remarkable. Due to a seasonal factor as well, we have an abundance of shareable SVC about winter vistas and Matsuri. Akita, which figures twice with a relatively high Φ_t , is promoted through simple visuals of snowed wooden sceneries. Tottori is represented by Tottori Snow Dunes: cold beaches covered in snow and sold by using visuals only. Miyazaki is framed by a SVC of the island of Aoshima with its picturesque sand bridges and subtropical vegetation.
4. The Evocative Experience Economy. Unlike the SVC targeting the GR and related destinations, which are usually highly specific in location, these high Φ_t SVC lack explicit specifications of ticket attractions, focusing on mostly evocative slideshows. These prefectures capitalize on highly contrasting, easily digestible visual tropes, such as Fukui's juxtaposition of rural landscapes with prehistoric iconography (the Dinosaur Museum) or Akita's snow-laden ancient aesthetics, which seem to be favored by the recommendation algorithm, especially in the later days. Where they lack in named destination make up for in evocative imagery. These locations are systematically marketed as "crowd-free alternatives" creating a contrasting imagery to GR locations which are usually clustered together with.

Out of all the destinations with high Φ_t , we can single out the following as the most pervasive examples in the data set. One of these destinations will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 5, in order to highlight the supposed correlations between SVC popularity and Overtourism.

Fukui - Fukui's divergence between its digital frequency and actual market share can be attributed to a confluence of viral pop-culture branding and specific visual esthetic. With overtourism reaching critical levels in neighboring Kyoto, Western content creators heavily market Fukui as the premier "crowd-free alternative." Videos highlighting Eihei-ji Temple emphasize quietude, ancient cedar forests, and authentic Zen meditation. The Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum is touted as a hidden gem. On social media platforms, aesthetic SVC of highly stylized videos of massive dinosaur statues standing in the middle of rural Japanese countryside provide a stark, surreal juxtaposition. And finally, the dramatic, jagged basalt cliffs of Tojinbo provide intense visual contrast against the Sea of Japan. Creators capture drone footage of these

treacherous, striking coastlines, tapping into the "sublime and dangerous nature" trope that fits within cinematic travel format (part of TC).

Ehime - Ehime's statistical overrepresentation (Φt ranging from 1.20 in MC and TAJ up to a notable 2.00 within the Japanese Culture-biased JBC profile) demonstrates how hyper-specific aesthetic tropes can dramatically inflate a region's algorithmic footprint relative to its actual physical visitor volume. The prefecture's prominence on SVC platforms is anchored in an ethereal, nostalgic narrative that seamlessly feeds into the platform's "Evocative Experience Economy." This digital footprint is primarily driven by short-form videos centering on Dogo Onsen, which are routinely framed around the bathhouse's legendary status as a visual muse for Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away*. This romanticized isolation is further amplified by viral content covering the Shimanami Kaido cycling route and the coastal vistas of Shimonada Station, where the evocative imagery of lonely train tracks meeting the horizon is packaged as a poignant, melancholy escape. By stripping away practical travel logistics and focusing entirely on cinematic pacing, panoramic drone footage of the Seto Inland Sea, and ambient audio tracks, the recommendation engine successfully positions Ehime as a dreamlike, time-suspended alternative to the congested Golden Route, ensuring high algorithmic transmissibility among users exhibiting both general Tourism Content (TC) and deep cultural (JC) affinities.

4.4 Closing Remarks

At the end of the chapter we can answer the question of “**What defines popularity on SVC platforms?**” by summarizing our observations about SVC behaviour on Instagram. In broad terms, what constitutes widespread appeal varies wildly by the theme. Tourism Content is universally pushed by the algorithm suggesting a widespread appeal, regardless of preferences. In such categories popularity needs to be measured by niche and our topic of election, Japan focus Travel (JTC), seems to be not only competitive but highly crowded in terms of destinations. Surprisingly, the main travel destinations along the Golden Route (Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka) are not the spearheading ticket attractions that could have been imagined as. They show high presence on the feed, and they permeate SVC with content beyond mere travel topics, but they lack in high retention. Popularity in official data is undeniable, but when it comes to Instagram they show a market share of 20% of their real-life counterparts. Kyoto is the contested

leader in the niche of JTC but if we expand to a more wide bracket of Japanese Content (JC) which includes pop topics and general cultural hooks, Tokyo is the unchallenged presence. Popularity in these terms is purely in frequency, disregarding concepts such as variability and high algorithmic biases given by advertising (broader categories seem to be more targeted by ads). This might not be enough, however, since some destinations can get strong bursts of attention to then disappear from the feed, see Okinawa, giving skewed perception of what really is popular on a day to day basis.

If we follow our metrics of high retention, the main “popular” destinations on the applications fall within a group of sideline attractions, usually associated with the Golden Route by proximity. These destinations, first amongst them Nara, show strong day by day average presence which is balanced by a lower than average median. It seems that they are harder to be spontaneously recommended by the algorithm but, once shown, persevered without much care for biases. They could be defined as products of the progressive honing of the Algorithm, giving them a statistical advantage in pursuit of popularity. This appeal, however, is highly sectorial, giving them the moniker of “popular” only within circles of highly specialized themed preferences, such accounts with a high bias for Japanese content a priori.

Where we could find a more poignant analysis is probably in the Φ_t , allowing us to bridge the gap between frequency and real data. Regardless of how often a specific destination appears, if its popularity online can be inferred by the official statistics, it must be framed through the lens of structural divergence rather than raw volume. The Φ_t index ultimately exposes a profound decoupling between a location's physical footprint and its digital prominence. It demonstrates that the platform's recommendation engine does not merely echo real-world tourist flows, but actively constructs an autonomous, hyper-aesthetic travel geography. By elevating otherwise untrod prefectures into viral, "crowd-free" sanctuaries, the algorithm reshapes consumer desire independently of a region's traditional infrastructure or historical market share. Consequently, this location-based analysis reveals that digital popularity on Short Video Content (SVC) platforms is not a passive reflection of where travelers actually congregate, but an active metric of how successfully a landscape can be commodified into a high-retention, evocative visual narrative, a dynamic whose real-world consequences and direct correlations to overtourism will be critically unpacked in Chapter 5.

5. Φt Case Study Analysis: Ehime Prefecture

5.1 Introduction to the Prefecture

Ehime Prefecture is part of the Shikoku Region, and it is located at north-west of the island, bordering Kagawa Prefecture to the northeast, Tokushima Prefecture to the east, and Kōchi Prefecture to the southeast. The prefecture is divided in three main areas: Eastern Ehime (Tōyo), Central Ehime (Chūyo) and Southern Ehime (Nanyo). According to the official Tourism Center Website *Visit Ehime Japan*, every part of the prefecture has its own unique charm and own history¹⁹³.

Tōyo can be reached by the Shimanami expressway from Onomichi in the Hiroshima prefecture. It is home to the main industries of the prefecture, and the largest production of towels in Japan is concentrated in this area. The website advertises as the main spot of this area the above mentioned Shimanami expressway, nine connected bridges linking six islands between Ehime and Hiroshima over the Seto Inland Sea, with a total length of 70 km, perfect for observing the nature of the archipelago while cycling.

Chūyo is the central part of the prefecture, accessible by sea from Hiroshima and Kure in Hiroshima prefecture. The capital, Matsuyama, is located in this central part, and it is home of the main tourism spot of the prefecture, the Dōgo Onsen bathhouse. According to *Visit Ehime Japan*, “[Dōgo Onsen] is said to be the oldest hot spring in Japan, with a 3,000-year history. Over the years, emperors and ordinary people alike have recuperated in its soothing alkaline water”¹⁹⁴. It is the perfect place to fully embrace the most traditional side of the prefecture, while riding a rickshaw or wearing a yukata.¹⁹⁵

Last but not least, the southwest part of the prefecture, Nanyo, is reachable by sea from Beppu in Ōita prefecture, and it is enriched by the natural beauty of the sea and the forest that surrounds it. The most notorious tourism destination is Uchiko, a 19th century traditional town

¹⁹³“About Ehime | Visit Ehime Japan.” *Visit Ehime Japan*.com, 2026, www.visitehimejapan.com/en/discover/about-ehime/. Accessed 9 June 2026.

¹⁹⁴“Dogo Onsen Honkan | Things to Do | Visit Ehime Japan.” *Visit Ehime Japan*.com, 2026, www.visitehimejapan.com/en/things-to-do/spots/0055/. Accessed 9 June 2026.

¹⁹⁵“About Ehime | Visit Ehime Japan.” *Visit Ehime Japan*.com, 2026, www.visitehimejapan.com/en/discover/about-ehime/. Accessed 9 June 2026.

that is home of the homonym kabuki and bunraku (Japanese puppetry) theater, which is still active today.

5.1.1 SVC Analysis Summary

Following the analysis from chapter four, we can highlight the reasoning for choosing this particular prefecture as a topic of study, by showcasing its media presence on Instagram during the data collection across the different accounts. Ehime prefecture appeared (see Figure 4.9) with the following frequency:

- MC: Ehime prefecture only appeared on D9 and D10 of the data collection, twice on D9 and only one time on the last day;
- TNJ: Ehime did not appear at all;
- JBC: Ehime prefecture figured 5 times, the first time on D3 and the last four times on D10;
- TAJ: Ehime prefecture figured on D7, D8 and D10, only one time per day.

We can notice that the Ehime prefecture has figured more in accounts that have an interest towards Japan, such as in TAJ and JBC, whereas in tourism only focused account TNJ the prefecture did not figure at all. We can further categorize the types of points of interest (POI) recommended by the algorithm in SVC about Ehime. They can be summarized as follows:

- MC: Shimonada Station and Oyamazumi Shrine;
- TNJ: no data;
- JBC: Shimonada Station and Aoshima;
- TAJ: Shimonada Station, Oyamazumi Shrine and Dōgo Onsen.

We are going to briefly introduce them to the reader in the following passages:

Shimonada Station is an isolated abandoned train station of the JR Shikoku Yosan Line, which connects the major cities of the island of Shikoku. It was known to be Japan's closest

station to the sea until the construction of national highway¹⁹⁶. Located in the outskirts of Iyo in the Nanyo area, it is featured in many movies and TV dramas, and is a popular place to take photos with its iconic backdrop.

Ōyamazumi Shrine is the region most important and sacred shrine¹⁹⁷. Located on Ōmishima Island, it is dedicated to Ōyamazumi-no-Okami, a deity associated with mountains, the sea, and warfare, the shrine treasures a collection of samurai armors and swords from notorious historical samurais from the Minamoto and Taira clans.

Aoshima is a small island located in the Sento Sea, almost completely de-populated, as according to the Ehime Prefecture Remote Islands Promotion Council it is only inhabited by 5 people. Instead, this island is populated by almost 200 cats, and due to this characteristic it is colloquially known as ‘the cat island’. According to the Council, Aoshime became popular for its feline population 30 years ago, and every year more than ten thousand people visit the island to meet the local cats¹⁹⁸.

Although it might seem that the data does not show a particularly varied or numerous set of POI, it is crucial to highlight the fact that broadcasting named and pinpointable locations as SVC is in itself a matter of importance. Most of SVC of the less trodden locations highlight broad, unspecific visuals meant to entice by sheer appeal. Even more famed destinations in Golden Road locations (e.g. Shibuya) tend to have the “aesthetic” tendency to hook on general themes only. The fact that the majority of Ehime themed content is location specific to such an extent suggests an advertising campaign, either planned or organically developed by SVC platform dynamics, to direct the viewer attention toward planned destinations that might work as ticket attractions for the whole region.

¹⁹⁶Shikoku Tourism Agency. “JR Shimonada Station.” Tourism SHIKOKU, 2023, shikoku-tourism.com/en/see-and-do/10020.

¹⁹⁷Visit Shimanami. “Oyamazumi Shrine - Visit Shimanami.” Visit Shimanami, 25 Mar. 2026, visitshimanami.com/attractions/536/. Accessed 18 June 2026.

¹⁹⁸Ehime prefecture. “Aoshima | Ehime ken ritō shinkō kyōgi-kai” “青島 | 愛媛県離島振興協議会.” Ehime.jp, 2024, ritou.ehime.jp/guide/aoshima/. Accessed 22 June 2026.

5.2 Overtourism analysis

Following the methodology explained in Chapter 3, the next phase of the research is to analyse the chosen location following the criteria for overtourism (see 2.2). If the data shows the inception of recent rising abnormal trends, we can highlight them as meaningful indicators of possible overtourism tendencies in the region. As discussed in chapter two, we are categorizing Ehime as an Hidden Gem, and as such it lives on the cusp of being a popular destination, still on the upper trajectory of fame gathering and cementing its role as a “must-see” attraction. In the analysis we are thus focusing on the tell-tale signs of the things to come, seeing them as warnings of out of control future growth.

5.2.1 Ratio between local population and annual tourism flux (LQDI)

Ehime prefecture's overall population is 1,247,692 people, according to the last census of May 2025¹⁹⁹.

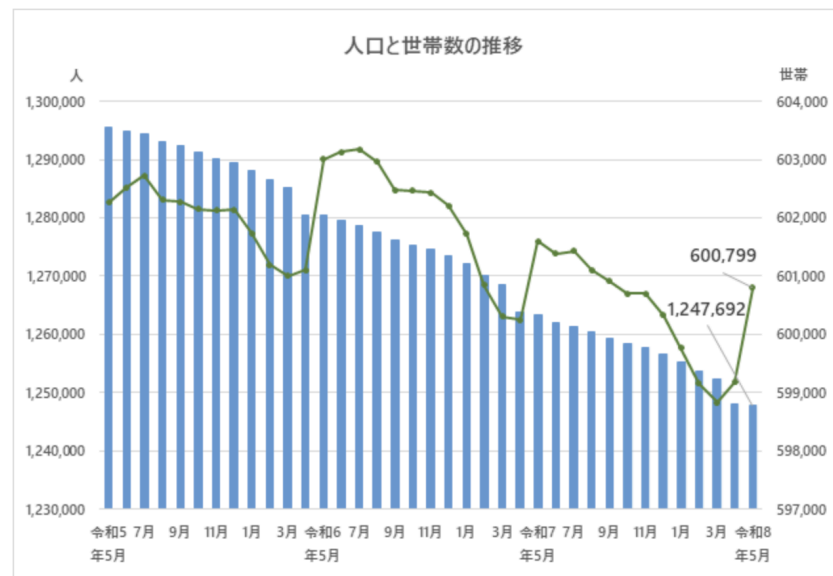


Figure 5.1. Demographic trends in Ehime in 2023-2024 (Source: Ehime Prefecture)²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹Ehime prefecture. “Ehime ken suikei jinkō - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji” “愛媛県推計人口 - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ.” Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/3340.html. Accessed 16 June 2026.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem

Following the overall demographic decline in Japan, the population of the prefecture has been steadily diminishing with a recent decrease of 3.2% in 2023. Although the number of households have seen a slow increase in the last year (almost 600.799 in May 2026), the population does not show signs of rebound due to a combination of emigration and low birth rates.

Evaluated against this contracting demographic foundation, the influx of visitors presents a striking contrast. According to the annual tourism statistics of Ehime Prefecture, the overall tourism flux was 22.782.000 people in 2023, with an increase of 13,3% compared to the previous year. In 2023, the annual ratio of total tourists to the local population stood at 17.64:1. This signifies that for every permanent resident, the prefecture processed over 17 visitor-trips annually.

The distribution of this tourist load was highly uneven across regional administrative jurisdictions. The Matsuyama block and the Imabari block absorbed the highest absolute pressures, recording volumes of 922 thousand and 904 thousand visitors, respectively. Eastern Toyo grew by 426 thousand. Conversely, peripheral regions like the Yawatahama-Ozu block grew by 301 thousand, and the rural, demographically fragile Uwajima block experienced a modest increase of only 121 thousand. This shows a progressive concentration of tourism flux around the major arteries.

観光客数の推移

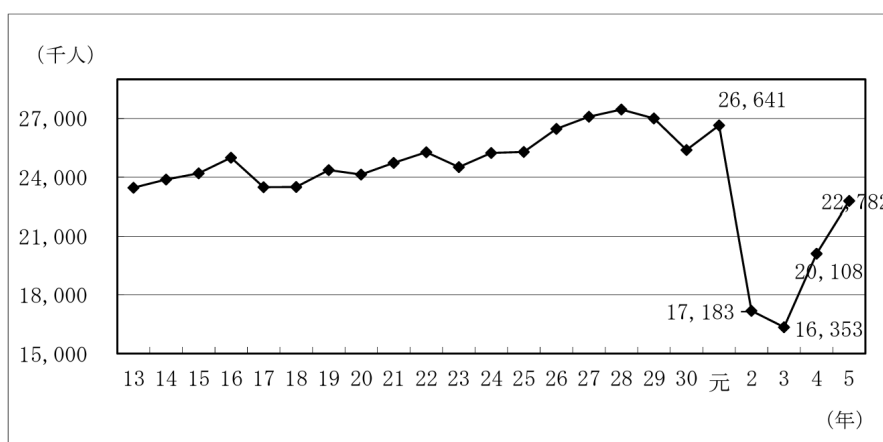


Figure 5.2. Tourism trends in Ehime prefecture in 2001-2023 (Source: Ehime Prefecture)²⁰¹

²⁰¹Ehime prefecture. “Ryō wa 5-nen Ehime ken kankōkyaku-sū to sono shōhi-gaku.” “令和 5 年 愛媛県 観光客数とその消費額.” Ehime.jp, 2024, <https://www.pref.ehime.jp/uploaded/attachment/160230.pdf> Accessed 16 June 2026.

Of the total 22.78 million visitors, out-of-prefecture tourists accounted for 9,785 thousand (with a 15.1% year-on-year increase), while intra-prefecture local tourists comprised 12,997 thousand (with a 12.0% increase). The higher growth rate among out-of-prefecture visitors indicates an expanding external footprint relative to the local demographic foundation. According to the 2026 analysis of inbound tourists by the Shikoku Bank, the number of international tourists in the prefecture has seen a growth in the latest years, ranking the prefecture as the one with the highest growth rate in the country between 2019 to 2025²⁰². In 2025, 580,000 international overnight tourists visited Ehime prefecture, with a growth rate of 38% compared to 2024 (420,000 people). Even though it remains drastically lower when juxtaposed against macro-destinations like Tokyo (19,538,000 people in 2023) or Kyoto (8,354,371 people in 2024) its relative yearly growth surpasses them by a margin of 15%.



Figure 5.3. Annual influx of foreign tourists in Ehime (Source Shikoku Bank)

Out-of-prefecture tourists show stronger phenomena of localized aggregations, mostly centred around the aforementioned destinations close to the capital city (e.g Dogo Onsen is close

²⁰²Japan Society for International Tourism Studies. “Inbaundo kankōkyaku to desutinēshonroi-yariti ni kansuru ichikōsatsu — miyakoshi o rei ni” “インバウンド観光客とデスティネーションロイヤリティに関する一考察 —京都市を例に—.” 日本国際観光学会論文集, vol. 30, 2023, p 2, https://www.shikokubank.co.jp/ser/resources/image/pdf/report/thinktank-news/2026_05.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2026.

to Matsuyama). The nationality distribution of international inbound tourists in Ehime is heavily dominated by East Asian short-haul markets, which directly correlates with regional flight availability. Out of the 476,540 international overnight stays recorded in 2025, South Korean nationals comprised the largest market share at 42.8%, followed by Taiwanese tourists at 26.6%, Chinese tourists at 7.0%, and Hong Kong tourists at 3.4%. Concurrently, Western long-haul markets maintain a smaller but statistically vital footprint, with United States citizens making up 3.3% of the total share. Isolating this out-of-prefecture tourist cohort, which introduces external economic capital but places high infrastructural demand on accommodations and localized transit, the annual volume was documented at 9,785,000 people. The ratio of pure inbound tourists to the local population thus corresponds to 7.58:1.

These 2023 travel metrics for Ehime Prefecture depict an expanding disparity between locals and visitor pressures. With a global inbound tourist-to-population ratio exceeding 7.5:1, and a total movement index (domestic and internationals) nearing 18:1, the regional economic dependency on visitor capital must be continuously reconciled with spatial distribution. The disproportionate concentration of out-of-prefecture inbound volumes in urbanized (Matsuyama) and structurally specialized transit nodes (Imabari), contrasted against the domestic self-containment of peripheral spaces like Uwajima, proves that strategic structural dispersion is necessary to mitigate tourism congestion and bolster carrying capacities across rural Japan in order to avoid rampant overcrowding.

5.2.2 Increase in the number of infrastructure aimed at tourists (LQD2) and Increase in tourism investment by the central government (NDPI)

An empirical evaluation of international visitor volume demonstrates a fast upward trajectory in local developments over the past decade and a half. Statistical analysis reveals an exceptionally strong correlation coefficient of 0.918 between international flight passenger traffic and total foreign overnight stays within Ehime Prefecture²⁰³. This demonstrates that direct

²⁰³ Roughly anyone who flies into the province, also spends a single night there (Source MILT. “Chihō ni okeru kō fuka kachina inbaundo kankō-chi-dzukuri kentō iinkai | hōnichi ryokō de no kō fuka kachi ryokō-sha no yūchi sokushin” “地方における高付加価値なインバウンド観光地づくり検討委員会 | 訪日旅行での高付加価値旅行者の誘致促進.” 観光庁, 2025, <https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/content/001860216.pdf>. Accessed 16 June 2026)

infrastructure deployment behaves as the primary causal driver of inbound market volume. As of April 2026, major expansion of the Matsuyama Airport had made it the principal international gateway for the province, operating a total of 17 weekly international flights. This infrastructure includes daily round-trips to Seoul and Busan (South Korea) and three flights per week to Taipei (Taiwan). With this new infrastructure, Ehime Prefecture plays a primary role as a transit hub and geographical entry and exit artery within the broader Shikoku regional tourism corridor. According to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism's Data (MILTT), international visitors cross-utilize Ehime heavily when touring adjacent prefectures²⁰⁴. For instance, looking at international tourists who visited neighboring Kochi Prefecture, 28.9% of East Asian tourists and 15.5% of Western tourists utilized Ehime Prefecture as their immediate point of origin. Upon departing Kochi, 22.8% of East Asian tourists and 14.9% of Western tourists selected Ehime Prefecture as their subsequent destination.

Despite the substantial volume of inbound arrivals, severe regional variations and structural bottlenecks characterize Ehime's local tourism infrastructure, particularly regarding hotel capacity and transport accessibility. A comprehensive analysis reveals a stark geographical disparity in accommodation and visitor distribution; while the prefectural capital of Matsuyama and the historic Dogo Onsen district possess highly concentrated lodging infrastructure, capturing the lion's share with 9,467 thousand tourists in 2023 (up from 8,545 thousand in 2022), a critical deficit of hotels and accommodation facilities persists across outlying municipal jurisdictions. Accommodation usage patterns further emphasize structural rigidity, as business hotels absorb 63.24% of overnight stays and traditional ryokan account for 20.73%, while city hotels comprise 8.16%, simple lodgings or hostels make up 5.63%, and luxury resort hotels lag at a minor 1.66%. In tandem with these lodging constraints, the local transportation network exhibits considerable spatial fragmentation and poor regional connectivity among separate municipalities. Regular route public transport infrastructure, including railways, scheduled buses, ferries, and regular domestic flights, accommodates only 16.34% of visitors. Conversely, private and vehicular transit options dominate the landscape, with private cars accounting for 64.19% and chartered buses taking 16.36%²⁰⁵. Consequently, international tourists face steep difficulties

²⁰⁴ Ibidem

²⁰⁵ Japan Society for International Tourism Studies. "Inbaundo kankōkyaku to desutinēshonroiarity ni kansuru ichikōsatsu — miyakoshi o rei ni" "インバウンド観光客とデスティネーションロイヤリティに関する一考察 —京都市を例に—." 日本国際観光学会論文集, vol. 30, 2023, p 2,

navigating the prefecture unless they rely heavily on rental car networks, a trend that is disproportionately high across the Shikoku region, amounting to roughly 4% of overall foreign tourists, compared to a national average of just 2%. This reliance on vehicular transit is further complicated by systemic soft infrastructure deficiencies, as local public transport services, small-scale lodging facilities, and retail systems frequently lag behind in cashless payment terminal adoption, public Wi-Fi telecommunication setups, and adequate multilingual signage²⁰⁶.

In response to these operational imbalances, recent hospitality trends and future administrative frameworks have actively pivoted toward high-value, decentralized tourism models. To capture and sustain higher-spending international demographics, recent corporate and municipal strategies have successfully leveraged localized infrastructure advantages; this includes maximizing the prefecture's dense suburban golf course distribution to attract South Korean sports tourists on weekdays, and partnering with international platforms like Airbnb to revitalize vacant traditional folk houses (*minka*) into luxury, decentralized boutique hotels, such as the scattered-hotel infrastructure model deployed in Ozu Castle Town²⁰⁷. Looking toward future policy horizons, the Third Ehime Prefecture Tourism Promotion Basic Plan outlines comprehensive frameworks to systematically upgrade the regional acceptance environment for high-value-added tourist experiences. Central to this future blueprint is the implementation of targeted countermeasures addressing the secondary transportation network to ensure smooth transit and physical dispersion for inbound travelers outside central metropolitan zones. Furthermore, future transport strategies prioritize expanding regular international routes and increasing total flight frequencies at Matsuyama Airport to enhance bi-directional connectivity, paired with institutional support to resolve acute human resource and staffing shortages currently impeding local hotel and transport services. Through this deliberate transition toward "circular tourism," local authorities plan to eliminate regional infrastructural over-concentration while spreading inbound economic capital equitably across the prefecture.

According to the official plan, the prefecture had established a strategic plan to boost international and local tourism in the quinquennium 2023 - 2027 under four main key points in tourism promotion²⁰⁸:

https://www.shikokubank.co.jp/ser/resources/image/pdf/report/thinktank-news/2026_05.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2026.

²⁰⁶ Ibidem

²⁰⁷ Ivi, pag 9

²⁰⁸ Ivi, pag 11

- Strategic tourism initiatives that leverage local resources and digital technology
- Tourism initiatives that generate synergies not only within the tourism industry but also with other industries
- Tourism initiatives aimed at building a sustainable region for the future
- Initiatives aimed at establishing area management organizations dedicated to regional revitalization

The central government of Ehime prefecture has been allocating support funds to improve tourism quality in the prefecture in recent years. For 2026, Ehime prefecture allocated up to 5 million yen in support initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable visitor numbers through measures such as enhancing the appeal of the prefecture's local resources and strengthening visitor reception facilities²⁰⁹. In April 2026, 15,000,000 yen have been allocated to support initiatives by tourism organizations and private companies aimed at attracting inbound tourism through the development and opening of lodging facilities that utilize old buildings and vacant housing within the prefecture²¹⁰. Beyond prefectural strategies, localized public entities have mobilized to support local hospitality. Yamatahama city, located at the base of the Sadamisaki Peninsula close to Oita prefecture, has deployed for 2026 fiscal year a financial stimulus of 100 thousand yen per accommodation to improve tourism facilities²¹¹. Projects eligible for this subsidy goes from building renovation to adding services such as language support. Acknowledgement from local municipalities in support of improving services for inbound tourism is very significant, as it signifies a shift from centralized spending towards a bottom-up grassroots support for tourism.

Although highlighting an awareness for decentralized investments across the region, the current reality shows a pattern of focused building and modernization that mostly conglomerates

²⁰⁹Ehime Prefecture. "Ryō wa 8-nendo Ehime ken kankō shūkyaku-ryoku kōjō shien jigyo no jisshi ni tsuite - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji" "令和8年度愛媛県観光集客力向上支援事業の実施について - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ." Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/103213.html. Accessed 18 June 2026.

²¹⁰ Ehime Prefecture. "Ryō wa 8-nendo Ehime ken ko minka-tō o katsuyō shita inbaundo yūkyaku shien jigyo no jisshi ni tsuite - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji" "令和8年度愛媛県古民家等を活用したインバウンド誘客支援事業の実施について - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ." Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/143363.html. Accessed 19 June 2026.

²¹¹ Wakayama City. "Ryō wa 8-nendo Yawatahama-shi shukuhaku shisetsu miryoku appu kaishū jigyo hojo-kin no go an'nai." "令和8年度 八幡浜市宿泊施設魅力アップ改修事業補助金のご案内." Ehime.jp, 2026, www.city.yawatahama.ehime.jp/doc/2026031100036/. Accessed 18 June 2026.

around the regional capital, Matsuyama. The high volume investments in the airport renovation and the recent construction of railway lines mostly in the Chūyo region, are symptomatic of a still concentrated tourism flow. In a discussion about overtourism, it can be seen as a tell-tale sign of local imbalances that can lead to congestion and tourist overflow.

5.2.3 Limiting measures to curb tourism behaviour and access (LQD3) and incident count (LQD4)

Currently, there is no official statement about the number of incidents that are related to tourists' behaviour. Given the relative rather recent popularity of Ehime in the western market, major international dangerous fluxes of tourists have yet to leave a mark on the region. However, recent developments in tourism flux management measures have shown inceptions of the phenomenon of tourism congestion in certain high density areas.

Shimonada Station has been recently under the spotlight of the media because of tourism congestion. The station has gained popularity over the years thanks to social media (see SVC) and to PR campaigns in the official tourism web site of the prefecture, and people are rushing to the station to recreate the aesthetic picture by the sea seen on social media. As a result, the station has been flooded with tourism from outside the prefecture and from overseas, causing inconvenience to local residents and creating traffic congestion. Many tourists have entered private areas without permission, climbed over the train barriers, and left trash around the station²¹². This has forced the local authorities to step in and bring the situation under control, by managing traffic jams and removing cars that were parked nearby. To resolve the situation, Iyo city implemented a parking lot approximately 15 minutes away from the station, in order to not let people park on the edge of the street to reach the station²¹³.

Similarly, the notorious Aoshima in the Seto Inland Sea was forced to take some containment measures due to the high influxes of daily visitors on the island. As already

²¹² Yomiuri Shimbun Online. "Yūhi no zekkei-eki de ōbātsūrizumu, ichi ga senzoku no taiō-in o setchi e... jūtai ya poisute `ressha ga kuru no ni senro ni nyūrō to suru hito sae iru'." "夕日の絶景駅でオーバーツーリズム、市が専属の対応員を設置へ... 渋滞やポイ捨て「列車が来るのに線路に入ろうとする人さえいる」." 読売新聞, 22 Mar. 2026, www.yomiuri.co.jp/local/kansai/news/20260322-GYO1T00035/. Accessed 15 June 2026.

²¹³ Iyo City. "Iyoji/ JR Shimonada-eki raihō-sha-muke no chūshajō ni tsuite" "伊予市／JR下灘駅来訪者向けの駐車場について." Iyo.lg.jp, 2025, www.city.iyo.lg.jp/keizaikoyou/kanko/shimonadaeki_parking.html. Accessed 18 June 2026.

mentioned, the island is only populated by 5 people, whereas the cats were almost 200, with a ratio of 40 cats for 1 person. The reason of this increase of the feline population was caused, according to Kobe Shinbun, by the visitors who often nourish the local cat with food²¹⁴. This forced the remaining people of the island to carry out mass sterilization of all cats, so that their numbers would not increase even more. Although the measurement was taken to limit the number of animals, the fact that visitors were the main cause of the increase in the number of animals means that overtourism affected people's lives on the island. Additionally to this, in 2021 a local from the island posted on Instagram a post inviting visitors to not come to the island during Golden Week to not spread the Corona virus on the island²¹⁵.

5.2.4 Increase in cost of living (LQD5) and decrease in purchasing power of tourists (NDP3)

While post-pandemic tourist volume has recovered steadily, aggregate and per capita tourism expenditures have failed to keep pace, demonstrating a clear erosion of average tourist purchasing power. In 2023, the total tourist volume in Ehime Prefecture expanded to 22,782 thousand tourists, representing a robust 13.3% increase compared to the 20,108 thousand presences recorded in 2022. In stark contrast, total tourism consumption during the same period reached 105.4 billion yen, which translates to a much slower growth rate of only 6.4% compared to the 99.1 billion yen generated in 2022. This widening elasticity gap indicates that a higher volume of visitors is spending less money per trip. When evaluated against the pre-pandemic benchmark of 2019, the structural decline becomes even more pronounced; total tourism consumption in 2023 represents a net contraction of 12.0 billion yen, or a 10.2% decrease from 2019 levels, despite the fact that overall tourist volume has clawed back to within 4.5% of its 2019 peak of 24,641 thousands.

²¹⁴ Kobe Shinbun. “GW ni konaide!” “Neko no shima” de yūmeina Chintao `neko o shien suru kai' ga SNS de yobikake shingata korona kansens o keikai.” “「GWにこないで！」「猫の島」で有名な青島「猫を支援する会」がSNSで呼び掛け 新型コロナ感染を警戒.” Kobe-Np.co.jp, 神戸新聞NEXT, 2026, www.kobe-np.co.jp/rentoku/omoshiro/202105/0014290600.shtml. Accessed 16 June 2026.

²¹⁵ Ibidem

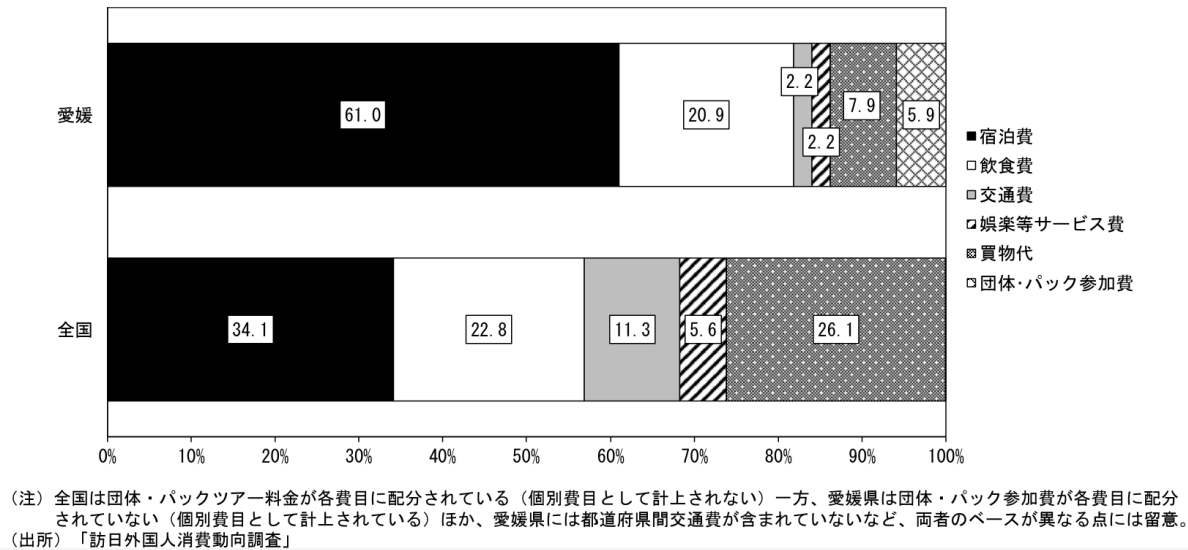


Figure 5.4. Distribution of purchases by tourists in the Ehime Prefecture compared to the national average
(Source Ehime Prefecture)

This deflation in individual purchasing power is closely tied to shifting consumer intentions and budget-conscious behavioral trends among visitors. A comparative analysis of inbound consumption components shows that foreign visitors in Ehime allocate an outsized share of their budget to non-discretionary baseline costs; accommodation accounts for 61% of their total expenditure in the prefecture compared to 34.1% nationally, and food and beverage consumption demands 20.9% compared to 22.8% nationwide.²¹⁶ This shows low levels of discretionary budget left for diversified granular purchases such as souvenirs. Local transportation is also at a very low 2.2%, victim of the aforementioned necessity to use rental cars and low average number of nights spent in the province. With the proportion spent on souvenirs decreasing, underlying visitor motivations reflect a cooling retail environment, as the percentage of tourists identifying "shopping" as their explicit primary purpose fell significantly from 39.66% in 2022 to 13.00% in 2023.²¹⁷ Furthermore, accommodation data reveals an overwhelming preference for low-cost, commercial options, with budget-oriented business hotels dominating the lodging landscape at 63.24% of all utilized facilities, far eclipsing traditional Japanese ryokans at 20.73% and standard city hotels at 8.16%. This reliance on highly

²¹⁶ Ehime Prefecture. "Ryō wa 8-nendo Ehime ken ko minka-tō o katsuyō shita inbaundo yūkyaku shien jigyo no jisshi ni tsuite - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji" "令和8年度愛媛県古民家等を活用したインバウンド誘客支援事業の実施について - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ." Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/143363.html. Accessed 19 June 2026.

²¹⁷ Ibidem

economical lodging alternatives establishes an institutional ceiling on overnight spending, cementing the ongoing compression of individual tourist purchasing power in the region.²¹⁸

Together with an overall decrease in average spending, we can also notice effects of progressive centralization of spending around the capital city (capital diffusion inequality). According to Uchiko City's official reports, the average spending per person in the provincial city of Uchiko is roughly a fifth of the regional average, barely one thousand yen. Moreover, the average spending in the city actually decreased by 26,6% compared to pre-pandemic conditions, further exacerbating a dwindling local economy that does not seem able to capture tourist capital retention.²¹⁹

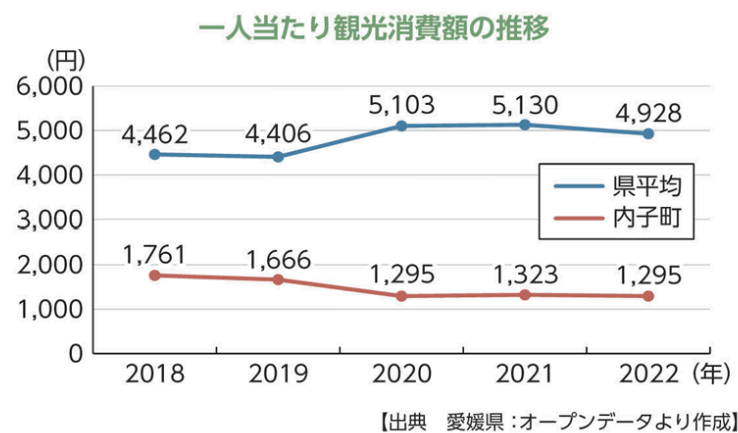


Figure 5.5. Average daily spendings in Uchiko City compared to the Ehime Prefecture (Source Uchiko City's Official Reports)

In comparison, at Matsuyama City, the capital city of the prefecture, the figures shows a different situation.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Japan Society for International Tourism Studies. "Inbaundo kankōkyaku to desutinēshonroiarity ni kansuru ichikōsatsu — miyakoshi o rei ni" "インバウンド観光客とデスティネーションロイヤリティに関する一考察 —京都市を例に—." 日本国際観光学会論文集, vol. 30, 2023, p 2, https://www.shikokubank.co.jp/ser/resources/image/pdf/report/thinktank-news/2026_05.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2026

²¹⁹ Uchiko Township. "Uchikochō kankō shinkō keikaku" "内子町観光振興計画." Ehime.jp, 2025, p. 5, https://www.town.uchiko.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/142763_304501_misc.pdf Accessed 20 June 2026.

²²⁰ Matsuyama City. "Reiwa 7nen Matsuyama-shi kankōkyaku suiteihyō" "令和7年松山市観光客推定表." matsuyama.jp, 2024, <https://www.city.matsuyama.ehime.jp/shisei/keikaku/kanko/suitei.files/reiwa7kankoukyaku.pdf>. Accessed 20 June 2026

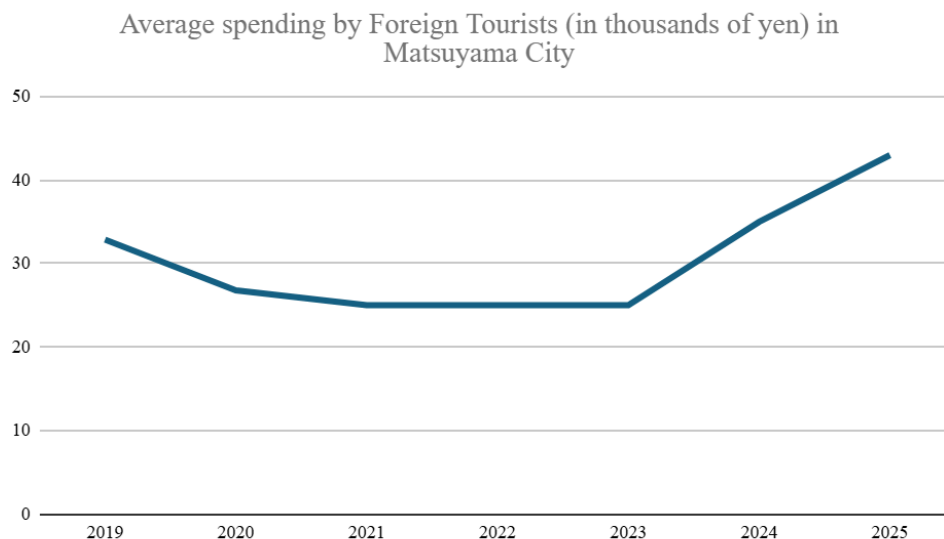


Figure 5.5. Average daily spendings in Matsuyama City (Source Matsuyama City)

In 2025 the average expenditure per person by an international tourist in Matsuyama City was 45 thousand yen, representing an increase of 8 thousand yen from pre previous year (5,6%) and almost 10 thousand yen from 2019. The overall expenditure by tourism is higher compared to the more local tourism destinations such as Uchiko, and it is also increasing compared to the pre-pandemic era. With overall spending not equally distributed across the prefecture, the central Prefectural Administration of Ehime, with support of the Japanese Travel Agency, is currently activating an action plan to bring the so-called “High-Value-Added Travelers” from major cities to local realities, as their spending represents approximately 11.5% (550 billion yen) of the total²²¹, in order to distribute wealth among prefectures.

This trend in increasing in purchasing by international tourists was also commented by the Development Bank of Japan (DBJ) in a report on tourism trend in Shikoku, Chukoku and Kansai region²²². According to them, the quiet increase of 8 thousand yen in purchases compared from 2023 to 2022 was also affected by the rising of prices caused by the weak value of yen. Moreover, they underline the fact that the smallest contingent of international visitors in Ehime,

²²¹MILT. “Chihō ni okeru kō fuka kachina inbaundo kankō-chi-dzukuri kentō iinkai | hōnichi ryokō de no kō fuka kachi ryokō-sha no yūchi sokushin” “地方における高付加価値なインバウンド観光地づくり検討委員会 | 訪日旅行での高付加価値旅行者の誘致促進.” 観光庁, 2025, <https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/content/001860216.pdf>. Accessed 16 June 2026.

²²²DBJ. “Kansai Chūgoku Shikoku tōgō-ban” “関西・中国・四国統合版” DBJ・JTBF, p. 21, <https://www.dbj.jp/upload/investigate/docs/9074e0222143b4b02b27e11c962f31a8.pdf> 5 Mar. 2025,. Accessed 17 June 2026.

the western, Australian and American markets, are by far the highest contributor to the overall increase to average purchasing power. The comprehensive economic yields generated from Western international arrivals remain structurally high due to their extended stay duration (see 5.2.4), which multiplies fixed nightly expenditures on accommodation and dining inflating the numbers of an already highly polarized wealth distribution (most of overnight accommodations are in Matsuyama). However, recent currency dynamics, specifically the historic depreciation of the Japanese Yen, have shown that while international travelers across Japan predominantly directed this surplus capital toward high-end gastronomy and lodging accommodation enhancements, localized analysis of the Matsuyama sub-markets demonstrates unique consumption adjustments. In Ehime, and Matsuyama specifically, travelers showed a distinct propensity to reallocate their financial windfall directly into booking specialized experiential activities, such as localized guided tours. This is related to the image of the prefecture that is perpetuated online: the verdant natural experience depicted in the SVC.

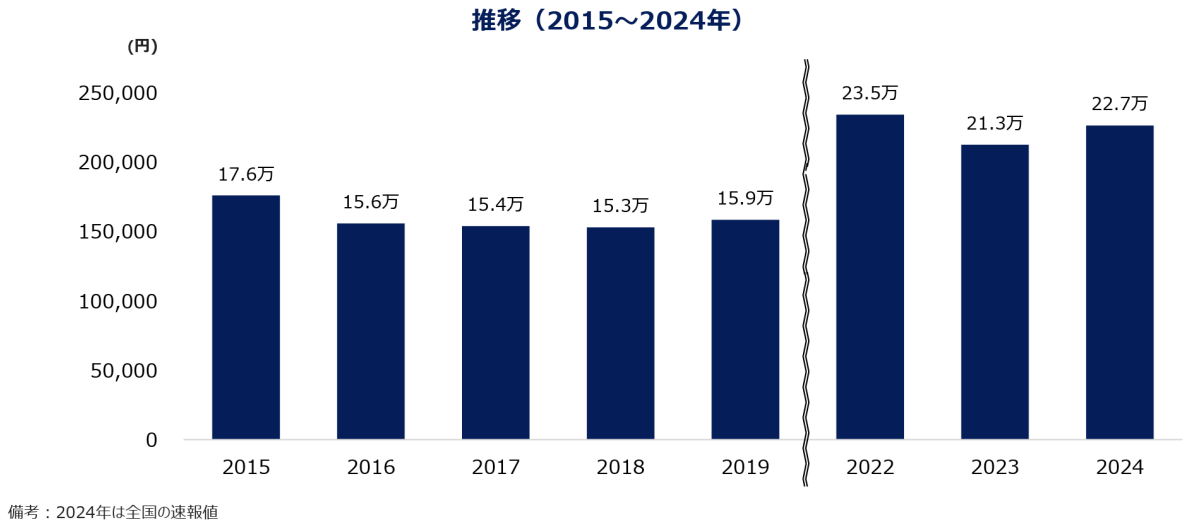


Figure 5.6. Average spending by Tourists in Shikoku region from 2015 to 2024 (Source Development Bank of Japan)

5.2.5 Shortening of length of stay (NDP2)

Total overnight stays by foreign nationals at accommodation facilities with 10 or more employees escalated from 45,210 in 2010 to 101,100 in 2015, climbed to 203,890 in 2019, and ultimately culminated in a record high of 476,540 in 2025. Broad-scale statistics reflecting aggregate foreign overnight stays across all lodging types show a surge from 58 thousand in 2019 to approximately 580 thousand in 2025, representing an absolute tenfold increase in capacity. However, this increase in logging capacity is not uniformly diffused across the entire region both in terms of volume and number of nights²²³.

According to the Development Bank of Japan (DBJ) nationalities differ in average length of stay. Tourists from adjacent East Asian nations, notably South Korea and Taiwan, exhibit a preference for shorter, condensed itineraries. South Korean tourists demonstrate a lower average duration of stay, with approximately ninety percent remaining within Japan for less than a single week, while Taiwanese itineraries show a similar concentration in the four-to-six-day range²²⁴. Conversely, inbound travelers from Western countries demonstrate significantly longer residency footprints. European and Australian visitors split almost evenly between stays under two weeks and journeys extending past fourteen days, while approximately seventy percent of North American tourists sustain trips up to two weeks. Within the localized framework of Ehime and the Matsuyama market, this longitudinal variance dictates that Western demographics contribute a higher volume of overnight stays per visitor, despite representing a smaller share of overall tourist arrivals (9%) compared to the numerically dominant Asian demographic.

According to the Uchiko Town Tourism Promotion Plan, in 2024 almost 99% of international overseas tourists only visit Ehime main areas without staying overnight since simply there are that many infrastructures aimed for tourism such as hotels²²⁵. However, in order to achieve the targets set for 2027 regarding the increase in the number of foreign visitors (12.4

²²³ Japan Society for International Tourism Studies. “Inbaundo kankōkyaku to desutinēshonroiarity ni kansuru ichikōsatsu — miyakoshi o rei ni” “インバウンド観光客とデスティネーションロイヤリティに関する一考察 —京都市を例に—.” 日本国際観光学会論文集, vol. 30, 2023, p 2, https://www.shikokubank.co.jp/ser/resources/image/pdf/report/thinktank-news/2026_05.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2026.

²²⁴ DBJ. “Kansai Chūgoku Shikoku tōgō-ban” “関西・中国・四国統合版” DBJ・JTBF, p. 21, <https://www.dbj.jp/upload/investigate/docs/9074e0222143b4b02b27e11c962f31a8.pdf> 5 Mar. 2025,. Accessed 17 June 2026.

²²⁵ Uchiko Township. “Uchikochō kankō shinkō keikaku” “内子町観光振興計画.” Ehime.jp, 2025, p. 5, https://www.town.uchiko.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/142763_304501_misc.pdf Accessed 20 June 2026.

million people) and overstays (430,000 people)²²⁶, it is necessary to increase the number of infrastructure in order to attract more international tourists to stay in the prefecture. Hence, The prefecture is organizing several calls for proposals to renovate various areas in an effort to increase the number of accommodations.

According to the previously mentioned plan about revitalization of Uchiko City, the 1% of tourists that visit the area stay overnight, whereas the rest of people simply visit the area on the same day. Uchiko City, home of the traditional Japanese puppetry theatre Uchikoza, is located just 42,6 km from the capital of the prefecture, reachable in just less than 30 minutes with the Yosan Line operated by JR Shikoku company, making perfect same-day excursions. Hence, some destinations in Ehime prefecture are suffering from shortening of length of stay, since not only the lack of lodging facilities prevents tourists from staying, but also some locations are struggling to attract tourists compared to the main areas of the prefecture.

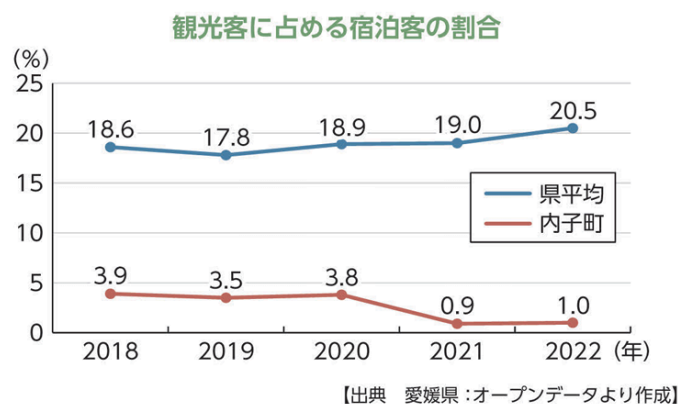


Figure 5.7. Average number of nights spent in Uchiko City compared to the Ehime Prefecture (Source Uchiko City's Official Reports)

This graph shows the difference in stay in Uchiko city compared to the rest of the prefecture. The already mentioned 1% figure of Uchiko city is a significant consideration about the current state of Uchiko tourism, however even in the rest of the prefecture the percentage of

²²⁶ Ehime Prefecture. “Dai 3-ki Ehime-ken kankō shinkō kihon keikaku no gaiyō” “第3期愛媛県観光振興基本計画の概要.” Ehime.jp, 2024, https://www.pref.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/68717_85460_misc.pdf. Accessed 20 June 2026.

retention of tourism is still lower²²⁷. In 2022 only 20.5% of the overall tourism in the prefecture do overnights, meaning that only one out of five tourists. The overall percentages are significantly lower compared to other cities in the prefecture, where tourism is more concentrated. For instance, in Matsuyama city the number of foreigners overnights is growing in the recent years, according to Matsuyama City Tourism and International Exchange Division²²⁸.

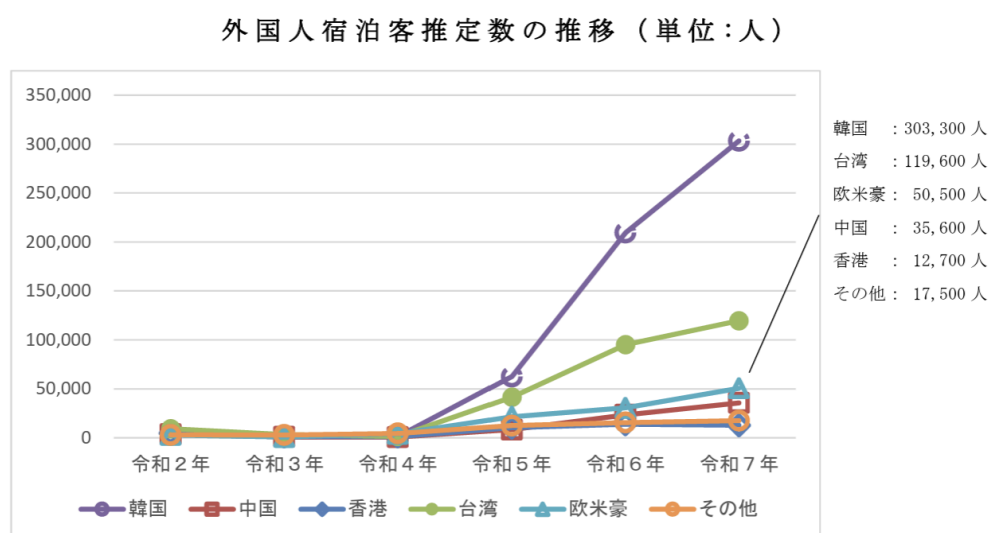


Figure 5.8. Nationalities distribution amount overnight tourists (Source International Exchange Division)

In 2025, approximately 538.900 foreigner guests did indeed stay in an accommodation in the capital city of Ehime prefecture, almost the 72,3% of the overall tourism visitors in the city (total of visitors in 2025: 744.500)²²⁹.

Although it is not possible to quantify the average number of days spent by foreigner tourists in the prefecture, it is possible to say that the major city of the prefecture have shown an increase in tourism overnights in the last year, whereas in the remaining part of the prefecture are still struggling in retention of tourism in hospitality infrastructure.

²²⁷Uchiko Township. “Uchikochō kankō shinkō keikaku” “内子町観光振興計画.” Ehime.jp, 2025, p. 5, https://www.town.uchiko.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/142763_304501_misc.pdf Accessed 20 June 2026.

²²⁸ Matsuyama City. “Reiwa 7nen Matsuyama-shi kankōkyaku suiteihyō” “令和7年松山市観光客推定表.” matsuyama.jp, 2024, <https://www.city.matsuyama.ehime.jp/shisei/keikaku/kanko/suitei.files/reiwa7kankoukyaku.pdf>. Accessed 20 June 2026

²²⁹ Ibidem

5.2.6 Social media presence (NDP4)

During the pandemic, Ehime prefecture (as overall Japanese tourism) suffered from the restriction of inbound tourism by the government, in order to prevent the spread of the virus. After the ban was lifted, Ehime prefecture had to recover from the situation, and revitalize the tourism sector in the region. Hence, the prefecture planned a five year recovery plan (from 2023 to 2027) that included various strategies to boost tourism.

The plan is based on 3 pillars, that are as follows²³⁰:

- Branding Ehime to attract visitors and improving hospitality infrastructure
- Refining regional resources with a focus on ‘experience-based consumption’, based on scientific data analysis, and promoting intra-regional mobility and consumer behaviour
- Promoting the creation of sustainable tourist destinations that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals);

In order to achieve these objectives, further initiatives were implemented. The initiative are as follows²³¹:

- Strategic tourism initiatives utilising regional resources and making full use of digital technology (digitalization or DX)
- Tourism initiatives that generate synergies not only for the tourism industry but also for other industries
- Tourism initiatives aimed at shaping a sustainable region for the future
- Initiatives aimed at forming area management organisations with the objective of regional revitalisation

The first pillar of the plan is further explained, including providing information that tailors tourists preferences through DX²³². This particular focus by the prefecture in proposing special focus on digitalization to meet customer preferences is pivotal as it means that the prefecture is deeply aware of the increasing reliance on technologies by tourists.

²³⁰ Ehime Prefecture. “Dai 3-ki Ehime ken kankō shinkō kihon keikaku no gaiyō” “第3期愛媛県観光振興基本計画の概要.” Ehime.jp, 2024, https://www.pref.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/68717_85460_misc.pdf. Accessed 20 June 2026.

²³¹ Ibidem

²³² Ivi, pag 26

This DX process is not only limited to websites to retrieve information, but also to social media presence to attract inbound tourism. For instance, Ehime prefecture has made a call for applications to propose content for international travelers and the aforementioned high-net travelers from US, Europe and Australia.

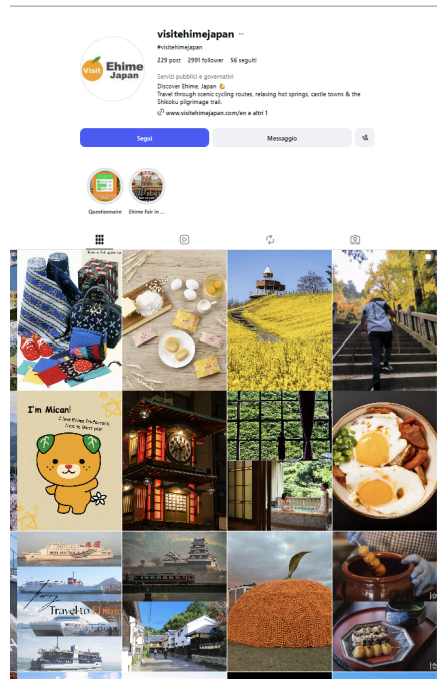


Figure 5.9. Official Visit Ehime Instagram Account (Source: Instagram, visit Ehime)

In order to understand the effort of the prefecture in tourism expansion, it is necessary to analyze social media presence and communication of the prefecture. The official social media english based Instagram account of Ehime Prefecture (@visitehimejapan) currently has almost three thousand followers, and it posts on daily bases about local activities and products, such as cycling routes and tangerines²³³.

If we take a closer look at one of the Reels posted on the page, it is possible to analyse further what type of destination they are trying to promote.

²³³“#Visitehimejapan (@Visitehimejapan) • Instagram Photos and Videos.” Instagram.com, 2026, www.instagram.com/. Accessed 19 June 2026.

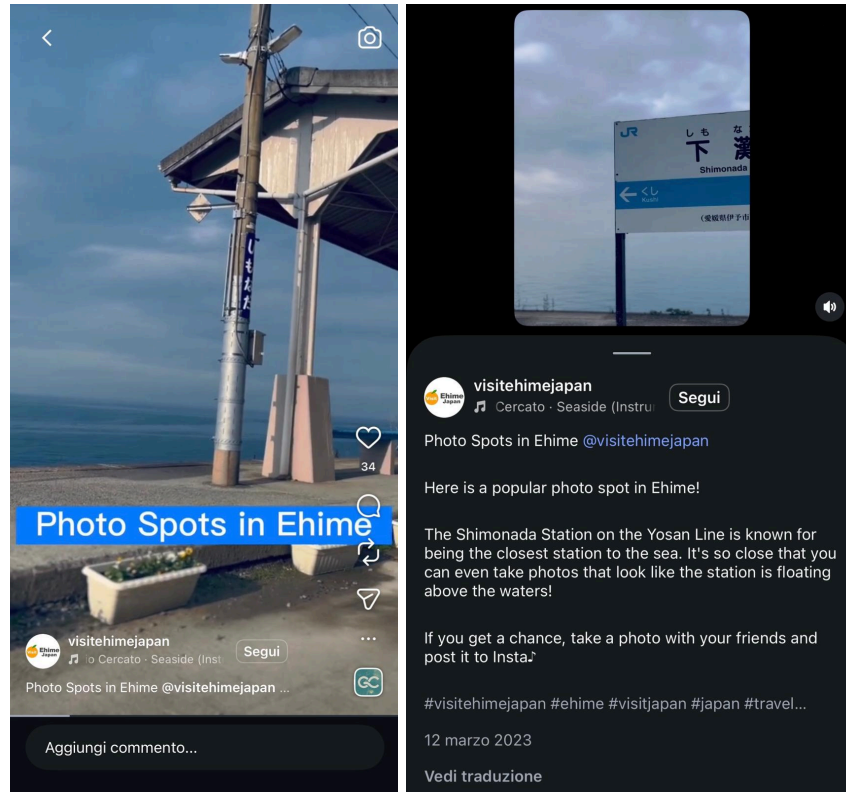


Figure 5.10. Examples of Aesthetic typification of Ehime's vistas (Source: Instagram, visit Ehime)

The SVC of March 12th 2023 is about the perfect photo spot on the most notorious station in the prefecture, Shimonada Station in Iyo City. The short video showcases different poses and angles that a tourist can do while taking a picture with the sea in the background. It is very simple yet significant, since it leverages not only on a popular tourist spot, but also on the aesthetic and replicable visuals that can instantly capture users attention.

Local realities such as Uchiko City are implementing digitalization in their plan of tourism promotion for overseas tourists as well. In their revitalization plan, Uchiko is planning to post

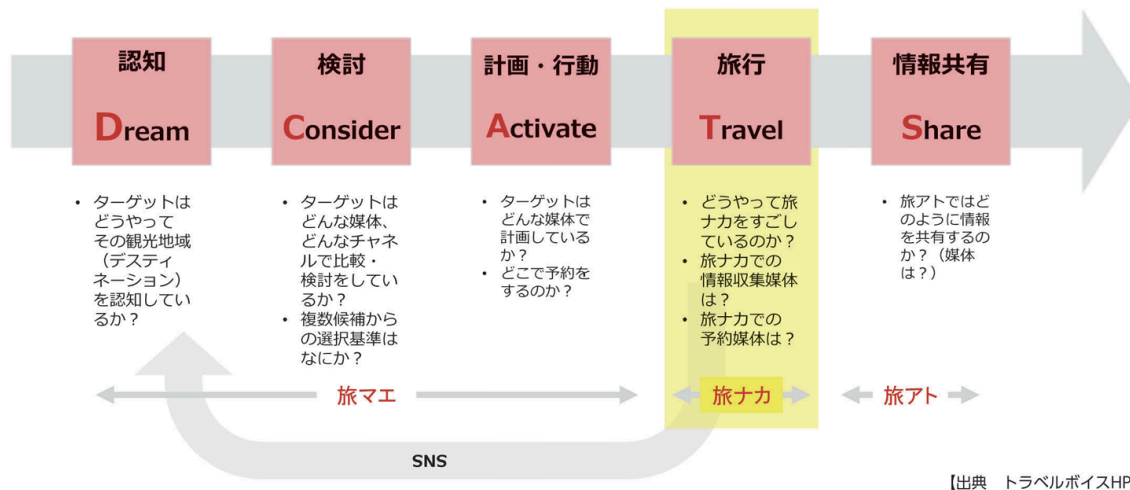


Figure 5.11. Social Media Initiative in three years by the Ehime Prefecture (Source: Ehime Prefecture)

content targeting specifically western and Australian tourism that are keen to be more interested in Japanese culture and nature. The plan is to active social media campaigns focused on the aesthetic side of Uchiko city that highlight the Japanese authenticity experiences that are only possible in the area²³⁴. By using images that are highly evocative and that tap into the foreign tourist's image of Japan, Uchiko City is trying to establish a hyper-aesthetic imagery of the city in order to attract prospective international tourists to the town.

²³⁴Uchiko Township. “Uchikochō kankō shinkō keikaku” “内子町観光振興計画.” Ehime.jp, 2025, p. 23, https://www.town.uchiko.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/142763_304501_misc.pdf Accessed 20 June 2026.

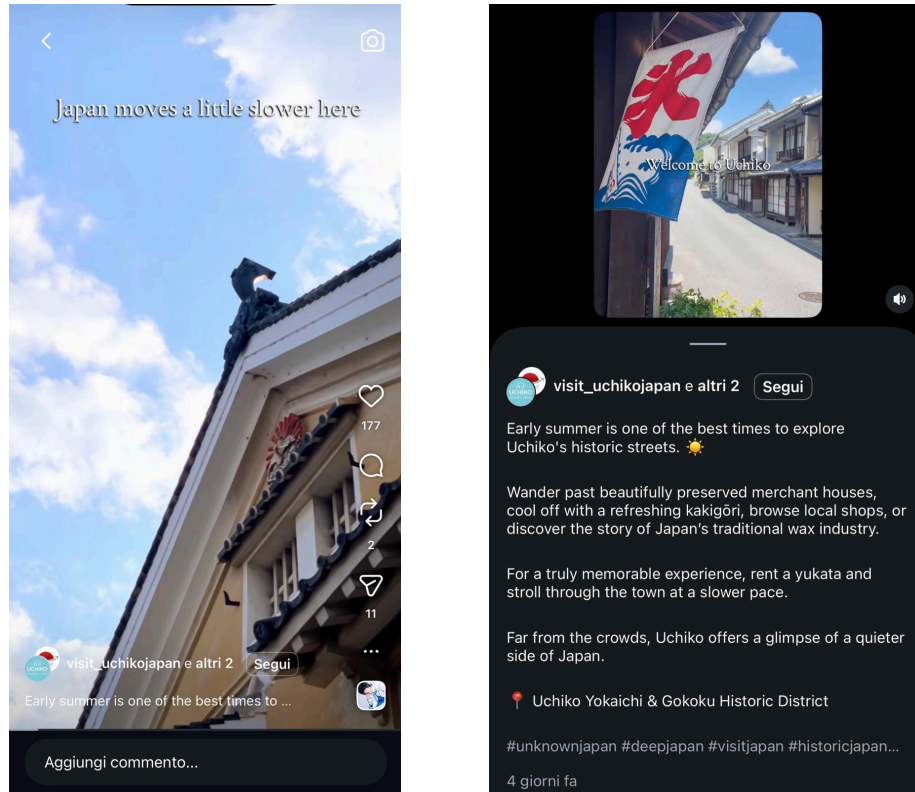


Figure 5.12. Social media slogans shared by the Visit Uchiko Instagram accounts (Source: Instagram, @visit_uchikojapan)

One of the posts on the official English Instagram page of Uchiko City (@visit_uchikojapan)²³⁵ is an example of social media strategies that the city is implementing. The SVC is focused on the aesthetic and hyper-visualized images of the most notorious tourist spot in the city, Gokoku Historic District. Sentences such as “*Japan moves a little slower here*” or “*rent a yukata and stroll through the town at a slower pace*” are conveying the idea of a more authentic and relaxing side of Japan, away from the busy streets of the major cities, that immediately capture the user's attention. All of this over the background soundtrack from the Ghibli movie “Howl's moving castle”, which is one of the most common virtue markers on SVC platforms when it comes to a-priori ideas of what Japan is (see 1.6).

²³⁵Uchiko Tourism Association. “Early Summer Is One of the Best Times to Explore Uchiko’s Historic Streets.” Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/DZjyTyZJOtq/. Accessed 19 June 2026.

5.3 Final Observations

The evidence compiled across the designated indicators reveals that while Ehime Prefecture retains its structural designation as a "Hidden Gem", it is actively manifesting the diagnostic baseline symptoms of early-stage, highly localized overtourism. Synthesizing these metrics demonstrates that the core challenge facing the region is not merely a problem of absolute volumes of tourists, but rather a profound geographical and economic asymmetry in resource allocations and tourist fluxes directives. The widening demographic divergence between a contracting resident population and an exponentially increasing visitor-to-local ratio unveils a structural unsustainability. Because this tourist pressure is deeply concentrated within the Matsuyama and Imabari transit blocks, the macro-level indicators of positive trends mask severe micro-level carrying capacity strains. This systemic polarization is reinforced by centralized government investments and transit infrastructure configurations that feed the primary urban hub while leaving peripheral municipal jurisdictions with severe lodging and secondary transportation bottlenecks.

Economically, the prefecture displays a classic overtourism paradox where rising visitor volumes correlate with compressed individual purchasing power and shortened lengths of stay. The divergence between the 13.3% surge in tourist influx and the lagging 6.4% growth in total tourism consumption highlights a gap driven by budget-conscious travel behaviors, such as the overwhelming reliance on low-cost business hotels. This financial compression is compounded by capital diffusion inequality; while the capital city of Matsuyama successfully leverages weak-yen dynamics and international activities to expand its economic yield, peripheral destinations like Uchiko experience a contraction in visitor spending. This economic imbalance is directly linked to the day-tripper or excursionist phenomenon, where high-speed rail connectivity around the capital city only permits rapid spatial consumption of rural areas without local overnight capital retention. Consequently, destinations outside the urban core endure the physical footprint of tourism, such as transit strain and resource consumption, without receiving the compensatory economic yields necessary to sustain local hospitality frameworks.

Ultimately, the localized social frictions and infrastructural containment measures documented at Shimonada Station and Aoshima confirm that overtourism is transitioning from a

theoretical trajectory into an active operational disruption. These disruptions are heavily accelerated by modern digital marketing and social media strategies. The deliberate implementation of digital transformation blueprints that leverage hyper-aesthetic, highly replicable short video content effectively creates a homogenized, romanticized imaginary of the prefecture. The resulting overcrowding, trespassing, environmental degradation, and demographic disruptions on fragile rural populations serve as clear warnings. Left unchecked by aggressive structural dispersion and decentralized administrative interventions, these compounding indicators suggest that Ehime's upward trajectory as a premier destination will inevitably culminate in widespread carrying capacity failures and the degradation of both resident welfare and visitor experience.

6. Conclusions

In an attempt to summarize the analytical praxis dissected throughout this paper, we are going to answer the research hypothesis introduced in chapter 3. By inferring on the specific cases introduced (Ehime, Fujikawaguchiko, Gion District) we can attempt a tentative resolution to the crux of the research question, whether there is a correlation between SVC platform popularity and phenomena of Overtourism in Japan.

H1. Popularity on SVC platforms leads to cases of overtourism in Japan.

The empirical data and case studies presented in this paper support Hypothesis H1, showing that high engagement spikes on SVC platforms can lead to direct catalysts for localized overtourism in Japan. The diagnostic symptoms of early-stage, highly localized overtourism (see 2.4) are clearly visible in the case study of Ehime Prefecture. Despite its broader regional status as a "Hidden Gem", the prefecture is experiencing a growing demographic divergence driven by a contracting local resident population alongside a rapidly increasing visitor-to-local ratio. This localized pressure manifests in specific indicators of overtourism, including overcrowding, infrastructural strain, and community friction. Because SVC algorithms prioritize highly visual, decontextualized aesthetic tropes while omitting practical travel advice and local cultural context, incoming tourists often arrive without an understanding of regional norms. This lack of context can lead to a rise in localized incidents, such as trespassing, environmental degradation, overcrowding on public transit, and the commercialization of residential spaces. This crowding can create an "us versus them" dynamic between residents and visitors, causing urban fragmentation where regional environments split into rigid tourist transit zones and strained community spaces (see Gion in 2.3).

National cross-referenced cases within the text further confirm that algorithmic popularity on short video networks can lead directly to overtourism. Clear examples include the strict infrastructural interventions required at the Fujikawaguchiko Lawson photo spot and the cancellation of traditional summer matsuri festivals due to visitor-related friction and overcrowding. These cases show that when a location becomes a viral template on SVC networks, the resulting influx can quickly outpace local carrying capacities. Therefore, the correlation in Hypothesis H1 shows a certain degree of support by the evidence: popularity on

SVC platforms acts as a vector of localized overtourism across both urban centers and regional Japanese landscapes.

H2. Popular tourist destinations are more represented on SVC platforms. There is a direct causality between inbound tourist trade and SVC popularity.

When it comes to the converse Hypotesys H2, the data supports a complex, bi-directional causal loop: existing popular destinations naturally maintain a large digital presence because high visitor volumes generate a steady stream of user-generated content. As physical travelers visit famous sites, they document their experiences through short videos, which feeds back into recommendation engines and reinforces the destination's visibility. This dynamic creates a self-perpetuating cycle where physical presence directly drives digital saturation, which in turn funnels subsequent waves of inbound tourism to the exact same spots.

However, the empirical findings also reveal a major structural asymmetry in this causal relationship, showing that SVC platforms do not simply mirror physical tourist volumes in a direct, linear fashion. Instead, the "Evocative Experience Economy" (see 1.6, 2.4 and 4.3.3) causes an overrepresentation of certain locations based primarily on how well they fit hyper-specific visual tropes. Ehime Prefecture serves as a clear example: its disproportionately large algorithmic footprint, with a Φ_t metric of up to 2.00 within culture-biased profiles, stands in stark contrast to its modest share of actual long-term overnight stays, as only one out of five visitors chooses to stay overnight across the province (see 4.3.3). This indicates that a destination's digital footprint can be heavily inflated by visual tailoring, rather than reflecting its actual current physical visitor capacity or lodging infrastructure.

This causal loop operates through the replication of content templates by visitors. When a location offers highly visual assets, such as the scenic drone views of the Seto Inland Sea or the nostalgic, lonely train tracks of Shimonada Station, it lowers the barrier for content creation, due to repeatability and serialization. Visitors naturally replicate these viral poses and angles to capture audience attention on their own feeds. This process establishes a direct link where physical visitor trade fuels digital content production, which then guides the next wave of inbound travelers to the same precise spots. However, this causality seems heavily biased toward destinations that can be easily compressed into short, striking visual formats.

As a result, while a relationship might exist between inbound tourist trade and SVC popularity, it remains highly asymmetric and influenced by algorithmic curation. Cultural sites, historical locations, or regional areas that require deeper context, longer engagement, or complex travel logistics are often marginalized by the quick-consumption format of short video algorithms. Thus, the direct causality noted in Hypothesis H2 is verified but bounded: SVC platforms over-represent specific locations based on aesthetic and format compatibility, creating a distorted digital landscape that prioritizes romanticized visual tropes over a balanced representation of Japan's diverse geographical and cultural regions.

H3. Popularity on SVC platforms leads to local economic and infrastructural investments by the Japanese government and administration.

The macroeconomic data and administrative case studies examined in this paper shows supporting but not resolute evidence for Hypothesis H3. The rapid growth of inbound tourism has made the visitor economy a key focus of national economic strategy, with Japan's tourism market valued at 8.1395 trillion Yen, representing roughly 8% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To protect and leverage this economic resource, public administrations have systematically adjusted their fiscal spending and policy initiatives in response to shifting digital travel trends and the spatial challenges they create.

This administrative response is clearly visible when analyzing national budget trends over recent fiscal years. Excluding the pandemic period, the Japanese government maintained an average annual increase of 70% in regular budgets dedicated to supporting local and national tourism initiatives. This proactive stance culminated in a major fiscal expansion in 2025, where the Japan Tourism Agency's regular budget increased by 104% to 24.5 billion Yen. This was further supported by a 22.5 billion Yen extraordinary supplementary budget, which explicitly allocated 6.8 billion Yen for overtourism countermeasures (see 2.1). These public funds are frequently directed into transdepartmental projects, such as upgrading regional transit networks, enhancing regional cultural resources, and funding localized infrastructure improvements to manage high visitor concentrations.

Local administrative strategies mirror these central funding initiatives, with municipalities adjusting their revitalization frameworks to capitalize on digital visibility while

managing its spatial impacts. For example, Uchiko City has integrated digital promotion and targeted social media campaigns directly into its regional development strategy (see 5.2). The city's revitalization plan outlines targeted campaigns designed to appeal to high-value long-haul markets, such as Western and Australian travelers who show an interest in cultural and nature-based tourism. By producing short-form content that highlights the authentic and visual elements of regional landmarks like the Gokoku district, the local administration seeks to create an evocative digital image that converts online attention into sustainable overnight stays.

In summary, the data supports the validation of Hypothesis H3 by showing a clear connection between digital tourism trends and state-level investment. Government administrations operate reactively and proactively, using public investment both defensively to mitigate the infrastructural strains of localized overtourism and offensively to deliberately distribute tourist fluxes away from oversaturated transit blocks. By expanding regional transportation capacities, funding targeted promotional campaigns, and implementing localized overtourism countermeasures, the Japanese government demonstrates a clear link between algorithmic popularity on SVC platforms and structural economic and public investments.

Q. Is there a correlation between Japan's recent growth in international inbound tourism and its surging popularity on SVC algorithmic applications?

In conclusion, this dissertation highlights an ongoing paradigm shift. The contemporary trends of international inbound tourism in Japan can no longer be evaluated or managed through the lens of traditional physical geographies alone, but must instead be recognized as a highly digitized, hybrid space. In such an environment, the autonomous curation of short vertical content (SVC) algorithms recommended by engines plays a small but structural role. By constructing an independent, hyper-aesthetic travel geography that values visual compatibility and the illusion of isolated discovery over actual structural capacity, these algorithmic frameworks contribute to actively decoupling of consumer trends from a region's historical market share. This decoupling precipitates a profound structural asymmetry: while it possesses the capability to elevate under-represented regional spaces into global digital phenomena, it simultaneously compresses volatile tourist fluxes into narrow, highly concentrated geographic nodes, as empirically witnessed within the early-stage localized overtourism and carrying

capacity strains of Ehime and Fujikawaguchiko. The resulting demographic divergence between expanding visitor pressures and contracting regional populations highlights a long-term risk of localized carrying capacity failure that threatens regional sustainability. Consequently, the aggressive fiscal adaptations enacted by national and municipal administrations, evidenced by substantial tourism budget expansions and targeted funding for overtourism countermeasures, reflect a crucial institutional shift from reactive management toward circular tourism and physical dispersion to answer the call. Ultimately, as Japan targets aggressive macro-level growth within a highly heterogeneous global travel market, the long-term survival of its regional socioeconomic systems depends on its capacity to systematically reconcile the evocative experience economy of the digital landscape with sustainable physical infrastructure.

7. Bibliography

- Alexander, Lucy. “Why Foreign Buyers Are Seeking “Worthless” Wooden Homes in Kyoto.”, *Financial Times*, 24 July 2015, www.ft.com/content/a03d15b6-2b08-11e5-acfb-cbd2e1c81cca. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.
- Allingham, Louise. “How to Visit the Prettiest Lawson Convenience Store in Kawaguchiko, Japan, with Mt Fuji Views.” *Mail Online, Daily Mail*, 4 July 2023, www.dailymail.co.uk/lifestyle/article-12261301/How-visit-prettiest-Lawson-convenience-store-Kawaguchiko-Japan-Mt-Fuji-views.html. Accessed 25 Feb 2026.
- Andriotis, Konstantinos, et al. “Tourism Planning and Development in Western Europe”. Boston, pp. 88-112, Cab International, 2022.
- “Top 10 Hidden Places & Unique Shops in Tokyo.” アートアンドカフェ アート体験・ワークショップ・絵画教室・ギャラリー・アーティスト, 12 Aug. 2025, artandcafe.com/en/blogs/art-and-cafe%E3%81%A8%E3%81%AF/top-10-hidden-places-and-unique-shops-in-tokyo?srltid=AfmBOoqDHnnMvNGoGLmVWvpvHlpX0AUHZEbBmz7-9UJAxw3KOPmEtKUu. Accessed 19 Feb 2026.
- Beale, Melissa. “Social Media & Experience Economy: Drive Consumer Engagement 2025” *Hummingbird.agency*, 2026, www.hummingbird.agency/how-does-social-media-shape-the-experience-economy/. Accessed 18 June 2026.
- Bankable. “How Teen Twins Lisa & Lena Became Musical.ly’s Most Followed “Musers.”” *Forbes*, 17 May 2017, www.forbes.com/sites/levelup/2017/05/17/how-teen-twins-lisa-lena-became-musical-lys-most-followed-musers/. Accessed 21 April 2026.
- Barak, Mark. ““Quarantini.” “Doomscrolling.” Here’s How the Coronavirus Is Changing the Way We Talk.” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Apr. 2020, www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-11/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-changes-how-we-talk. Accessed 15 May 2026.
- Bhandari, Aparajita, and Sara Bimo. “Why’s Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media.” *Social Media + Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 22 Mar. 2022, pp. 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086241>

- Billboard. "Global Popularity of 1979 City Pop Track "Mayonaka No Door – Stay with Me" Explained." Billboard, 21 Dec. 2020, www.billboard.com/music/music-news/mayonaka-no-door-stay-with-me-popularity-explained-9503609/. Accessed 16 May 2026
- Boyd, Danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210–230, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x, Accessed 21 April 2026
- Buckley, Julia. "Vienna Is Urging Tourists to Ditch Instagram for a Hashtag-Free Visit in a New Tourism Campaign." *The I Paper*, 14 Nov. 2018, inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/vienna-instagram-holiday-tourism-campaign-hashtag-free-unhashtag-222507?srsId=AfmBOopqXW9iagU3GB8m-LYtwhp2OkPWVTltY9IBT9j3JAiqtdEtgjPK. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.
- Butler, R. "The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources." ResearchGate, 2008, www.researchgate.net/publication/228003384_The_Concept_of_A_Tourist_Area_Cycle_of_Evolution_Implications_for_Management_of_Resources.
- Cassidy, John. "Mark Zuckerberg and the Making of Facebook." *The New Yorker*, 7 May 2006, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/05/15/me-media. Accessed 23 April 2026
- Cecep, Rakhman. "CULTURAL COMMODIFICATION for TOURISM in the ERA of DIGITAL DISRUPTION." *Proceeding of International Seminar of Culture and Tourism AKBI*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2025, pp. 25–36, ojs-akbi.org/index.php/proceeding/article/view/4
- Cheng, Xu, et al. "Understanding the Characteristics of Internet Short Video Sharing: A YouTube-Based Measurement Study." *IEEE Transactions on Multimedia*, vol. 15, no. 5, Aug. 2013, pp. 1184–1194, <https://doi.org/10.1109/tmm.2013.2265531>. Accessed 14 April 2026.
- Cinelli, Matteo, et al. "The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 118, no. 9, 23 Feb. 2021, pp. 1–8. PNAS, www.pnas.org/doi/epub/10.1073/pnas.2023301118, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>.
- Constantin, Margaux, et al. "Coping with Success: Managing Overcrowding in Tourism Destinations." McKinsey & Company, 14 Dec. 2017,

- www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel/our-insights/coping-with-success-managing-overcrowding-in-tourism-destinations. Accessed 20 Feb 2026.
- Coretti, Lorenzo, and Daniele Pica. Facebook's Communication Protocols, Algorithmic Filters, and Protest. 7 Dec. 2018, pp. 72–85, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315107066-6>. Accessed 9 May 2026.
- Crompton, John L. "Motivations for Pleasure Vacation." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, Oct. 1979, pp. 408–424, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(79\)90004-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(79)90004-5)
- Coskun, Güliz. "Authentic Experience in Tourism and Commodification." *Journal of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality*, vol. 3, no. 2, 4 May 2021, pp. 95–102.
- DBJ. "Kansai Chūgoku Shikoku tōgō-ban" "関西・中国・四国統合版" DBJ・JTBF, p. 21, <https://www.dbj.jp/upload/investigate/docs/9074e0222143b4b02b27e11c962f31a8.pdf> 5 Mar. 2025,. Accessed 17 June 2026.
- Deshmukh, Rahul Kalyanrao, and Anil Shahaji Phatak. From Static Pages to Emotional AI: Comparing Web 1.0 to Web 5.0. 12 Jan. 2025, www.researchgate.net/publication/391190398_From_Static_Pages_to_Emotional_AI_Caomparing_Web_10_to_Web_50
- DeVito, Michael. A. "From Editors to Algorithms." *Digital Journalism*, vol. 5, no. 6, 12 May 2017, pp. 753–773, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1178592>.
- Dodds, Rachel, and Richard Butler. "The Phenomena of Overtourism: A Review." *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, vol. 5, no. 4, 9 Dec. 2019, pp. 519–528, www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ijtc-06-2019-0090/full/html, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijtc-06-2019-0090>.
- Dredge, Dianne, and Szilvia Gyimóthy. *Collaborative Economy and Tourism. Tourism on the Verge*, Springer International Publishing, 1 Jan. 2017.
- Ehime prefecture. "Aoshima | Ehime ken ritō shinkō kyōgi-kai" "青島 | 愛媛県離島振興協議会." Ehime.jp, 2024, ritou.ehime.jp/guide/aoshima/. Accessed 22 June 2026.
- Ehime prefecture. "Ehime ken suikei jinkō - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji" "愛媛県推計人口 - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ." Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/3340.html. Accessed 16 June 2026

- Ehime prefecture. “Ryō wa 5-nen Ehime ken kankōkyaku-sū to sono shōhi-gaku.” “令和 5 年 愛媛県 観光客数とその消費額.” Ehime.jp, 2024, <https://www.pref.ehime.jp/uploaded/attachment/160230.pdf> Accessed 16 June 2026.
- Ehime Prefecture. “Ryō wa 8-nendo Ehime ken kankō shūkyaku-ryoku kōjō shien jigyō no jisshi ni tsuite - Ehime kenchō kōshiki hōmupēji” “令和8年度愛媛県観光集客力向上支援事業の実施について - 愛媛県庁公式ホームページ.” Ehime.jp, 2026, www.pref.ehime.jp/page/103213.html. Accessed 18 June 2026
- Elad, Barry. “TikTok vs. Instagram Statistics 2025: Who’s Winning the Social Media Race?” SQ Magazine, 12 June 2025, sqmagazine.co.uk/tiktok-vs-instagram-statistics/. Accessed 8 June 2026.
- Eg, Ragnhild, et al. “A Scoping Review of Personalized User Experiences on Social Media: The Interplay between Algorithms and Human Factors.” *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, vol. 9, no. 1, Mar. 2023, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958822000872, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100253>.
- Europa.eu, 2026, ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TOUR_DEM_TNW__custom_4585075/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=adc667ed-31f4-40c0-ae01-6a1d8b288357&c=1674050995197. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- Fitzpatrick, Michael. “Why Is Hi-Tech Japan Using Cassette Tapes and Faxes?” BBC News, 3 Nov. 2015, www.bbc.com/news/business-34667380. Accessed 17 May 2026.
- Garaus, Marion, et al. “Innovating the Experience Economy: How Novel Technologies Transform Customer Experiences.” *Digital Business*, June 2025, p. 34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2025.100134>.
- Gligorić, Kristina, et al. “Causal Effects of Brevity on Style and Success in Social Media.” *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, vol. 3, no. CSCW, 7 Nov. 2019, pp. 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3359147>
- Greiner, Andrew, et al. “Facebook at 15: How a College Experiment Changed the World.” *Www.cnn.com*, 1 Feb. 2019, edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/02/business/facebook-history-timeline/index.html. Accessed 23 April 2026

- Gerbaudo, Paolo. "TikTok and the Algorithmic Transformation Social Media Publics: From Social Networks to Social Interest Clusters." *New Media and Society*, 2025, www.academia.edu/126364484/TikTok_and_the_algorithmic_transformation_social_media_publics_from_social_networks_to_social_interest_clusters.
- Govers, Robert, et al. "Promoting Tourism Destination Image." *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, Aug. 2007, pp. 15–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507302374>.
- Gössling, Stefan, and Paul Peeters. "Assessing Tourism's Global Environmental Impact 1900–2050." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 23, no. 5, 12 Mar. 2015, pp. 639–659, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09669582.2015.1008500.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1994.
- Hofmann, Wilhelm, et al. "Of sweet temptations and bitter aftertaste: self-control as a moderator of the effects of media use on well-being." vol. 21., 2017, pp. 13 *The Routledge Handbook of Media Use and Well-Being: International Perspectives on Theory and Research on Positive Media Effects*. Routledge (2017): 229-240.
- Horie, Takuya . "A Data-Based Look at Kyoto Tourism before and after COVID | Kyoto Travel." Kyoto Travel, 12 Mar. 2025, kyoto.travel/en/travel-inspiration/a-databased-look-at-kyoto-tourism-before-and-after-covid/ . Accessed 13 Feb 2026.
- Horvath, Jared C., et al. "The Impact of Binge Watching on Memory and Perceived Comprehension". *First Monday*, vol. 22, no. 9, Sept. 2017, doi:10.5210/fm.v22i9.7729.
- Husain, Muhammad, et al. "The Effect of Social Media Addiction on Attention Span and Aggression among University Students." *Kurdish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 19 Apr. 2024, pp. 6472–6480, kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/2873/1869, <https://doi.org/10.53555/ks.v12i2.2873>
- Instagram. "Introducing Instagram Reels." Instagram, 5 Aug. 2020, about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/introducing-instagram-reels-announcement. Accessed 25 April 2026.
- Instagram. "#Visitehimejapan (@Visitehimejapan) • Instagram Photos and Videos." Instagram.com, 2026, www.instagram.com/. Accessed 19 June 2026.

- InTokyo. “Journey to 1000 Cities.” Journey to 1000 Cities, 29 Oct. 2025, journeyto1000cities.com/home/35-most-instagrammable-spots-in-tokyo-japan. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.
- Islam, Md Mujahidul, et al. “the IMPACT of SHORT VIDEO CONTENT and SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS on DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW of SMARTPHONE USAGE .” Ssrn.com, 6 Jan. 2025, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5388107
- Iyo City. “Iyoji/ JR Shimonada-eki raihō-sha-muke no chūshajō ni tsuite” “伊予市／JR下灘駅 来訪者向けの駐車場について.” Iyo.lg.jp, 2025, www.city.iyo.lg.jp/keizaikoyou/kanko/shimonadaeki_parking.html. Accessed 18 June 2026.
- The Japan Times. “Tsukiji Market Urges Tourists to Avoid Visiting at Year-End to Ease Congestion.” The Japan Times, 15 Dec. 2025, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/15/japan/society/tsukiji-market-year-end-crowds/. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.
- Japan Society for International Tourism Studies. “Inbaundo kankōkyaku to desutinēshonroi yariti ni kansuru ichikōsatsu — miyakoshi o rei ni” “インバウンド観光客とデスティネーションロイヤリティに関する一考察 —京都市を例に—.” 日本国際観光学会論文集, vol. 30, 2023, p 2, https://www.shikokubank.co.jp/ser/resources/image/pdf/report/thinktank-news/2026_05.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2026.
- JNTO. “Nihon no kankō tōkei deta” “Data List | 日本の観光統計データ.” Japan Tourism Statistics | 日本の観光統計データ, statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--foreigners--by--port--of--entry--by--age--sex. Accessed 8 June 2026.
- JNTO. “Hōnichi daikyaku tōkei” “訪日外客統計 | JNTO (日本政府観光局).” 日本政府観光局 (JNTO) - Japan National Tourism Organization, www.jnto.go.jp/statistics/data/visitors-statistics/. Accessed 8 Feb. 2026
- Kalnina, Adelina. “Techno-Orientalism: Future, Otherness, and Fax Machines.” Tvērums, 4 Feb. 2026, tverums.lv/blogs/vartrume/techno-orientalism-future-otherness-and-fax-machines?srsId=AfmBOoojJNRI-jql1rzvxQAU_3We4LhPUwrIN9Scj-WgWFnNelCxVNVj. Accessed 17 May 2026

- Kaye, D. Bondy Valdovinos, et al. “The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok.” *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 9, no. 2, 30 Aug. 2021, pp. 229–253. Accessed 14 April 2026
- Karen, Kong. “Lawson with Mt Fuji.”” Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/CYTxs5qPnU2/?img_index=1. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Kaplan, Andreas M., and Michael Haenlein. “Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media.” *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59–68, doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.
- Karunakaran, Rajarathi, et al. “Antecedents of Binge-Scrolling Short-Form Videos.” *IEEE Xplore*, 1 Aug. 2022, ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10010460/references#references.
- “Mt.Fuji and the LAWSON Kawaguchiko Convenience Store Will Not Be Able to Take Pictures.” *Kawaguchiko.net*, 3 May 2024, en.kawaguchiko.net/blog-en/ntfuji-and-the-lawson/. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- Khalil, Shaimaa. “Mount Fuji: Japan Blocks Iconic View to Deter Tourists.” *Www.bbc.com*, 21 May 2024, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgrkry897k0o. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Kinsta. “Mobile vs. Desktop: Statistiche Di Utilizzo E Quote Di Mercato Nel 2022.” *Kinsta*, kinsta.com/it/quote-di-mercato-mobile-vs-desktop/. Accessed 2 May 2026.
- Kira. “Why Is the Lawson Store near Mount Fuji so Popular.”” Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/DSz6mxJigN5/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Kitamura, Yushiko. “Gion no shidō ni “shinnyū kinshi” no kanban bakkin 1manen no hyōki mo kankōkyaku kyūzō de” “祇園の私道に「進入禁止」の看板 罰金1万円の表記も観光客急増で:朝日新聞デジタル.” *朝日新聞デジタル*, Asahi, 29 May 2024, www.asahi.com/articles/ASS5Y43GYS5YPLZB004M.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2026 ū
- Kitchin, Rob. “Thinking Critically about and Researching Algorithms.” *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, 25 Feb. 2017, pp. 14–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2016.1154087>
- Kobe Shinbun. “GW ni konaide!” “Neko no shima” de yūmeina Chintao `neko o shien suru kai' ga SNS de yobikake shingata korona kansen o keikai.” “「GWにこないで！」「猫の島」で有名な青島「猫を支援する会」がSNSで呼び掛け 新型コロナ感染を警戒.” *Kobe-Np.co.jp*,

- 神戸新聞NEXT, 2026, www.kobe-np.co.jp/rentoku/omoshiro/202105/0014290600.shtml. Accessed 16 June 2026.
- Kyoto City. “Rekishteki kenzōbutsudai・chiku no shūri・shūkeijyo seidō nitsute” ”歴史的建造物等・地区の修理・修景助成制度について.” 京都市情報館, 2026, www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/tokei/page/0000281311.html. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.
- Kyoto Prefecture. “Reiwa 6 Kyōto-fu no kankō irikomi kyakusu oyobi kankō shōhigaku nitsute” “令和6年京都府の観光入込客数及び観光消費額について.” 京都府, 2025, www.pref.kyoto.jp/kanko/research/6report.html. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.
- “Japan to More than Double Number of Regions Tackling Overtourism by 2030.” Japan Wire by Kyodo News, 30 Jan. 2026, english.kyodonews.net/articles/-/69563. Accessed 17 Feb 2026.
- Linaker, Ema. “What’s That Vining? A Bit of a Look at Vine & Viners.” Medium, 17 Jan. 2016, emalinaker.medium.com/what-s-that-vining-a-bit-of-a-look-at-vine-viners-191a71289411. Accessed 17 April 2026.
- Longo, Anthony. “How Do Social Media Algorithms Appear? A Phenomenological Response to the Black Box Metaphor.” *Minds and Machines*, vol. 35, no. 2, 4 Mar. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-025-09716-1>.
- Manovich, Lev. “Instagram and Contemporary Image.” Manovich.net, 2015, manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image. Accessed 17 May 2026.
- Marciszewska, Barbara, and Marzena Wanagos. “Development of Tourism Products and the Concept of Experience Economy.” *EUROPEAN RESEARCH STUDIES JOURNAL*, vol. XXVII, no. Issue 4, 1 Nov. 2024, pp. 1708–1723, ersj.eu/journal/3823/download/Development+of+Tourism+Products+and+the+Concept+of+Experience+Economy.pdf, <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3600>.
- Matsuyama City. “Reiwa 7nen Matsuyama-shi kankōkyaku suiteihyō” “令和7年松山市観光客推定表.” matsuyama.jp, 2024, <https://www.city.matsuyama.ehime.jp/shisei/keikaku/kanko/suitei.files/reiwa7kankoukyaku.pdf>. Accessed 20 June 2026.
- Mechant, Peter, and Lieven De Marez. “Studying Web 2.0 Interactivity.” *International Journal of Interactive Communication Systems and Technologies*, vol. 2, no. 2, July 2012, pp. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijicst.2012070101>

- Messing, Solomon, and Sean J. Westwood. “Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online.” *Communication Research*, vol. 41, no. 8, 31 Dec. 2012, pp. 1042–1063, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212466406>.
- MILT, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. “Chihō ni okeru kō fuka kachina inbaundo kankō-chi-dzukuri kentō iinkai | hōnichi ryokō de no kō fuka kachi ryokō-sha no yūchi sokushin” “地方における高付加価値なインバウンド観光地づくり検討委員会 | 訪日旅行での高付加価値旅行者の誘致促進.” 観光庁, 2025, <https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/content/001860216.pdf>. Accessed 16 June 2026
- MLIT, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. “Ryokō kankō shōhi dōkō chōsa | kankō tōkei hakusho | kankō-chō” “旅行・観光消費動向調査 | 観光統計・白書 | 観光庁.” 観光庁, 2026, www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/tokei_hakusyo/shohidoko.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- MOF, Ministry of Finances. “Japanese Public Finance Fact Sheet”. pp 11-12, 2025. <https://www.mof.go.jp/english/policy/budget/budget/fy2025/02.pdf> Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- Möller, Judith, et al. “Do Not Blame It on the Algorithm: An Empirical Assessment of Multiple Recommender Systems and Their Impact on Content Diversity.” *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 21, no. 7, Mar. 2018, pp. 959–977, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1444076>.
- Moreno, Donn Enrique, et al. “The Role of Short-Form Video Content on Online Tourism Destination Image and Travel Intent.” *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Business and Information Management*, 19 Sept. 2025, pp. 147–153, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3785171.3785218>.
- Mowforth, Martin, et al. *Tourism and Responsibility*. Routledge, 2008.
- Morley, David, and Kevin Robins. *SPACES of IDENTITY*. 1995, monoskop.org/images/3/39/Robins_Kevin_Morley_David_Spaces_of_Identity_Global_Media_Electronic_Landscapes_and_Cultural_Boundaries_1995.pdf. Accessed 17 May 2026.
- Narayanan, Arvind. “Understanding Social Media Recommendation Algorithms.” Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, 9 Mar. 2023, knightcolumbia.org/content/understanding-social-media-recommendation-algorithms

- News from Elsewhere. “Japanese City Tries to Improve Tourists’ Manners”.BBC, 3 June 2019, www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-48496562. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Obar, Jonathan A., and Steven S. Wildman. “Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge: An Introduction to the Special Issue.” Papers.ssrn.com, 22 July 2015, pg. 774, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2647377.
- OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. “OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024”. OECD Tourism Trends and Policies, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 6 July 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1787/80885d8b-en> Accessed 11 Feb 2026.
- Opara, Emmanuel, et al. “The Impact of Tiktok’s Fast-Paced Content on Attention Span of Students.” The Impact of Tiktok’s Fast-Paced Content on Attention Span of Students, vol. 1, no. 1, 3 Jan. 2025, www.researchgate.net/publication/387697885_THE_IMPACT_OF_TIKTOK%27S_FAST-PACED_CONTENT_ON_ATTENTION_SPAN_OF_STUDENTS, <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202501.0269.v1>.
- Paresh, Dave et al. “Video App Vine’s Popularity Is Spreading, Six Seconds at a Time.” Los Angeles Times, 20 June 2013, www.latimes.com/business/la-xpm-2013-jun-20-la-fi-vine-20130620-story.html. Accessed 18 April 2026.
- Pariser, Eli. The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You. New York, Penguin Press, 12 May 2011.
- Park, Joohye, and Yoonhyuk Jung. “Unveiling the Dynamics of Binge-Scrolling: A Comprehensive Analysis of Short-Form Video Service Consumption Using a Stimulus-Organism-Response Model.” Telematics and Informatics, vol. 95, 1 Oct. 2024, pp. 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102200>.
- Pasquale, Frank. The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information. Harvard University Press, 2015. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0hch>. Accessed 9 May 2026.
- Pavlić, Ivana, and Ana Portolan. “Irritation Index, Tourism.” Encyclopedia of Tourism, 2015, pp. 1-2, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01669-6_564-1.

- Pearce, Douglas. *Tourist Development*. pp. 23-29, Harlow, Longman Scientific & Technical, 1994
- Pine, B. Joseph and James H Gilmore. *Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*. Harvard Business School Press, 1999.
- Pipkin, Jane. “Influencers Helped Cause Overtourism. Can They Help Fix It?” *The Japan Times*, The Japan Times, 25 July 2024, www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2024/07/29/issues/overtourism-japan-tiktok-instagram-travel/. Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- Pipkin, Jane. “7 Hidden Cafés and Bars in Tokyo.” *Tokyo Cheapo*, 8 Sept. 2024, tokyocheapo.com/food-and-drink/hidden-cafes-bars/. Accessed 19 Feb 2026.
- Piwek, Lukasz, and Adam Joinson. ““What Do They Snapchat About?” Patterns of Use in Time-Limited Instant Messaging Service.” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 54, no. 4, Jan. 2016, pp. 358–367, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563215301023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.026>
- Price, Emily. “How Musical.ly Became a Pop Culture Phenomenon.” *Fast Company*, 18 Aug. 2016, www.fastcompany.com/3062863/how-musically-became-a-pop-culture-phenomenon. Accessed 21 April 2026.
- Quinling, Chen. “Cities Cancel Summer Matsuri amid Controversial Japan-Related Incident - Global Times.” *Globaltimes.cn*, 2022, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202207/1271585.shtml. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Renji, George Amballoor. “The Evolving Landscape of the Experience Economy: From Social Media Showcases to Personal Journeys.” *Medium*, 2024, medium.com/@amballoor/the-evolving-landscape-of-the-experience-economy-from-social-media-showcases-to-personal-journeys-d8cce3c27617. Accessed 18 June 2026.
- Roettgers, Janko. “It’s Official: Twitter Has Shut down Vine.” *Variety*, 17 Jan. 2017, variety.com/2017/digital/news/twitter-vine-shut-down-1201961620/. Accessed 17 April 2026
- Russell, Tara. “Overtourism in the Age of Social Media: How Instagram Is Shaping Travel Trends : The Independent.” *The Independent*, 14 Sept. 2024, www.independent.co.uk/overtourism-in-the-age-of-social-media-how-instagram-is-shaping-travel-trends/. Accessed 15 Feb 2026

- Russo, Antonio Paolo. “The “Vicious Circle” of Tourism Development in Heritage Cities.” *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, Jan. 2002, pp. 165–182, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(01\)00029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(01)00029-9).
- Saito, Ai. “Japanese Aesthetics in the Age of New Media.” OpenSIUC, 2016, opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/705/. Accessed 17 May 2026.
- Sangyo University. “Ryō wa 6-nen kuni chiiki betsu gaikoku hito kōdō tokusei chōsa kekka | kuni chiiki betsu gaikoku hito ryokō-sha kōdō tokusei chōsa” “令和6年国・地域別外国人行動特性調査結果|国・地域別外国人旅行者行動特性調査|東京都産業労働局.” 産業労働局, 13 June 2025, www.sangyo-rodo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/toukei/tourism/tourism/r6. Accessed 22 Feb 2026.
- Saveriades, Alexis. “Establishing the Social Tourism Carrying Capacity for the Tourist Resorts of the East Coast of the Republic of Cyprus.” *Tourism Management*, vol. 21, no. 2, Apr. 2000, pp. 147–156, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177\(99\)00044-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177(99)00044-8).
- Sharma, Bhakti, et al. “The Dark at the End of the Tunnel: Doomscrolling on Social Media Newsfeeds.” *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, vol. 3, no. 1, 10 Jan. 2022, tmb.apaopen.org/pub/nn9uaqsz/release/3, <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000059>.
- Sherman, Todd. “One Year of YouTube Shorts — What We’ve Learned so Far.” *Blog.youtube*, 16 Oct. 2021, blog.youtube/news-and-events/one-year-of-youtube-shorts-what-weve-learned-so-far/. Accessed 25 April 2026.
- Shimbun, The Yomiuri. “Kyoto’s Gion District Erects Signs Banning Tourists from Private Alleyway; Tourists’ Disrespect toward Geiko, Maiko Cited as Reason.” *Japannews.yomiuri.co.jp*, 31 May 2024, japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20240531-189134/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Shutterstock. “Nature Background Mt Fuji behind Lawson Stock Photo 2230678575 | Shutterstock.” Shutterstock, 2022, www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/nature-background-mt-fuji-behind-lawson-2230678575. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Shikoku Tourism Agency. “JR Shimonada Station.” *Tourism SHIKOKU*, 2023, shikoku-tourism.com/en/see-and-do/10020.

- Siles, Ignacio, et al. "Learning to like TikTok . . . And Not: Algorithm Awareness as Process." *New Media & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 512, 12 Dec. 2022, p. 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221138973>.
- SixthSense. "Instagram vs TikTok: Social Media Comparison." 6sense, 2026, 6sense.com/tech/social-media/instagram-vs-tiktok. Accessed 8 June 2026
- Skift. "Exploring the Coming Perils of Overtourism." Skift, 23 Aug. 2016, skift.com/2016/08/23/exploring-the-coming-perils-of-overtourism/. Accessed 16 Feb 2026.
- Soji, Lee. "Classifying Tourist Destinations in Japan for Overtourism." *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 4, 30 Oct. 2022, pp. 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.33422/jarss.v5i4.663>.
- SoraNews24. "Tourist Ban Now in Effect in Kyoto's Gion Geisha District...but Are Visitors Obeying the Rules? - Japan Today." *Japantoday.com*, 31 May 2024, japantoday.com/category/national/tourist-ban-now-in-effect-in-kyoto%E2%80%99s-gion-geisha-district%E2%80%A6but-are-visitors-obeying-the-rules. Accessed 23 Feb 2026
- Speed, Jessica. "'Mount Fuji Lawson' Becomes a Symbol of Japan's Overtourism Problem." *The Japan Times*, 31 Aug. 2025, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/08/31/japan/society/mount-fuji-lawson-overtourism/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- STAT, Statistic Bureau. "Yui hate no gai kaname""結果の概要". 2024, <https://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/2024np/pdf/2024gaiyou.pdf> Accessed 18 Feb 2026.
- Statista. "TikTok Users Worldwide 2029| Statista." Statista, 2025, www.statista.com/forecasts/1142687/tiktok-users-worldwide/. Accessed 29 April 2026.
- Story of Leicester. "Thomas Cook's Leicester - Story of Leicester." *Www.storyofleicester.info*, www.storyofleicester.info/city-stories/thomas-cooks-leicester/. Accessed 17 Feb 2026.
- Sugiyama, Satomi, and Nello Barile. "Japanese City Pop and Gen Z in the US: Happy, Calm, and Automated Nostalgia." *Continuum*, 21 Mar. 2025, pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2025.2471073>.
- Sukaris, S. "Increasing Customer Satisfaction through Rural Tourism's Quality Service, Experience, and Offered Value." *Jurnal Minds: Manajemen Ide Dan Inspirasi*, vol. 11, no. 1,

20 June 2024, pp. 29–44, journal3.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/minds/article/view/45305,
<https://doi.org/10.24252/minds.v11i1.45305>.

Support-TikTok. “For You | TikTok Help Center.” [Support.tiktok.com](https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/exploring-videos/for-you),
support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/exploring-videos/for-you Accessed 3 May 2026.

Tasci, Asli D.A., and William C. Gartner. “Destination Image and Its Functional Relationships.”
Journal of Travel Research, vol. 45, no. 4, May 2007, p. 413,
journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0047287507299569,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507299569>.

Themainichi. “Town near Mt. Fuji Blocking View of Peak at Lawson Store Photo Spot amid
“Overtourism” - the Mainichi.” Facebook, 13 May 2024,
[mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240513/p2a/00m/0na/024000c](https://www.mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240513/p2a/00m/0na/024000c). Accessed 23 Feb 2026.

TikTok. “Presentazione Del Sistema Di Raccomandazioni TikTok | Politiche E Coinvolgimento.”
Tiktok.com, 2021,
www.tiktok.com/safety/it-IT/policies-and-engagement/recommendation-system. Accessed 3
May 2026.

TikTok, Various. “TikTok - Make Your Day.” Tiktok.com, 2018,
www.tiktok.com/discover/how-to-go-to-lawson-from-kawaguchiko-station. Accessed 23
Feb 2026

Tokunaga, Robert S. “A Meta-Analysis of the Relationships between Psychosocial Problems and
Internet Habits: Synthesizing Internet Addiction, Problematic Internet Use, and Deficient
Self-Regulation Research.” *Communication Monographs*, vol. 84, no. 4, 23 June 2017, pp.
423–446, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1332419>.

TRAN Committee. “Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: Impact and Possible Policy
Responses.” Academia.edu, 2018,
[www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_](https://www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses)
[possible_policy_responses](https://www.academia.edu/79802339/Research_for_TRAN_Committee_Overtourism_impact_and_possible_policy_responses). Accessed 20 Feb 2026

“The Fiscal 2025 Supplementary Budget for Japan Tourism Agency Amounts to 22.5 Billion Yen
Including 6.8 Billion Yen for Over-Tourism Countermeasures.” Travel Voice, 2025,
[www.travelvoice.jp/english/the-fiscal-2025-supplementary-budget-for-japan-tourism-agency-](https://www.travelvoice.jp/english/the-fiscal-2025-supplementary-budget-for-japan-tourism-agency-amounts-to-22-5-billion-yen-including-6-8-billion-yen-for-over-tourism-countermeasures)
[amounts-to-22-5-billion-yen-including-6-8-billion-yen-for-over-tourism-countermeasures](https://www.travelvoice.jp/english/the-fiscal-2025-supplementary-budget-for-japan-tourism-agency-amounts-to-22-5-billion-yen-including-6-8-billion-yen-for-over-tourism-countermeasures).
Accessed 18 Feb 2026.

- Tricomi, Pier Paolo, et al. “Follow Us and Become Famous! Insights and Guidelines from Instagram Engagement Mechanisms.” Proceedings of the 15th ACM Web Science Conference 2023, 30 Apr. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3578503.3583623>.
- Uchiko Township. “Uchikochō kankō shinkō keikaku” “内子町観光振興計画.” Ehime.jp, 2025, p. 5, https://www.town.uchiko.ehime.jp/uploaded/life/142763_304501_misc.pdf Accessed 20 June 2026.
- Uchiko Tourism Association. “Early Summer Is One of the Best Times to Explore Uchiko’s Historic Streets.” Instagram, 2026, www.instagram.com/p/DZjyTyZJOtq/. Accessed 19 June 2026.
- UNWTO, United Nation World Tourism Organization. “International Tourism Highlights, 2024 Edition”. 26 Nov. 2024. <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284425808>. Accessed 11 Feb 2026.
- UNWTO, United Nation World Tourism Organization. “Report on the Draft Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code; Addendum 1”, 3 Oct 1983, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/abs/10.18111/unwtogad.1983.1.g365ug514776nq88>. Accessed 18 Feb 2026
- Van Dijck, José. The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 30 Jan. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199970773.001.0001>
- About Ehime | Visit Ehime Japan.” Visitehimejapan.com, 2026, www.visitehimejapan.com/en/discover/about-ehime/. Accessed 9 June 2026.
- “Dogo Onsen Honkan | Things to Do | Visit Ehime Japan.” Visitehimejapan.com, 2026, www.visitehimejapan.com/en/things-to-do/spots/0055/. Accessed 9 June 2026.
- Visit Shimanami. “Oyamazumi Shrine - Visit Shimanami.” Visit Shimanami, 25 Mar. 2026, visitshimanami.com/attractions/536/. Accessed 18 June 2026.
- Wakayama City. “Ryō wa 8-nendo Yawatahama-shi shukuhaku shisetsu miryoku appu kaishū jigyo hojo-kin no go an'nai.”“令和8年度 八幡浜市宿泊施設魅力アップ改修事業補助金のご案内.” Ehime.jp, 2026, www.city.yawatahama.ehime.jp/doc/2026031100036/. Accessed 18 June 2026.

- Wang, Chuang, et al. “Why We Cannot Stop Repetitive Scrolling on Short-Form Video Apps: The Roles of Content Types and Recommendation Systems.” *Information & Management*, vol. 63, no. 3, Apr. 2026, p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2026.104316>.
- Warc. “Unlocking Business Impact through Personal and Cultural Relevance | WARC.” Warc.com, 2024, www.warc.com/en/article/unlocking-business-impact-through-personal-and-cultural-relevance-6fe84e07b8e64528aa32299f23592f4f. Accessed 2 May 2026.
- “The Elusive Mt. Fuji.” We Wander... We Wonder!!, 6 Nov. 2022, we-wander-we-wonder.com/2022/11/07/the-elusive-mt-fuji/. Accessed 23 Feb 2026.
- Wei, Tao, and Xiaohong Wang. “A Historical Review and Theoretical Mapping on Short Video Studies 2005–2021.” *Online Media and Global Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1 June 2022, pp. 247–286, <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2022-0040>.
- Yomiuri Shimbun Online.”Yūhi no zekkei-eki de ōbātsūrizumu, ichi ga senzoku no taiō-in o setchi e... jūtai ya poisute `ressha ga kuru no ni senro ni nyūrō to suru hito sae iru'.” “夕日の絶景駅でオーバーツーリズム、市が専属の対応員を設置へ...渋滞やポイ捨て「列車が来るのに線路に入ろうとする人さえいる」.” 読売新聞,, 22 Mar. 2026, www.yomiuri.co.jp/local/kansai/news/20260322-GYO1T00035/. Accessed 15 June 2026.
- Zandt, Florian. “Infographic: The Rise and Fall of MySpace.” Statista Daily Data, Statista, 12 Nov. 2021, www.statista.com/chart/26176/estimated-number-of-myspace-users-at-key-milestones/?srsltid=AfmBOOpCyq36A_HUs_TT9art0RmO2iybJ7eP1WH7fJlKomx0hm0d3jxl. Accessed 23 April 2026.
- Zeng, Jing, et al. “Research Perspectives on TikTok & Its Legacy Apps| Research Perspectives on TikTok and Its Legacy Apps—Introduction.” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 15, no. 0, 7 July 2021, p. 12, ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/14539.
- Zhao, Zhengwei. “Analysis on the “Douyin (Tiktok) Mania” Phenomenon Based on Recommendation Algorithms.” *E3S Web of Conferences*, vol. 235, no. 03029, 2021, pp. 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202123503029>.
- Zhu, Peng, et al. “Experience Economy and Authenticity in the Heritage Tourism Sector: A Multiple-Dimensional Approach.” *Acta Psychologica*, vol. 257, 4 June 2025, p. 105118, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001691825004317, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105118>.

Zimmer, Franziska, et al. "Fake News in Social Media: Bad Algorithms or Biased Users?"
Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice, vol. 7, no. 2, 2019,
www.isi.hhu.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Fakultaeten/Philosophische_Fakultaet/Sprache_und_Inf
ormation/Informationswissenschaft/Dateien/Franziska_Zimmer/2019_JISTaP_7_2__Zimme
r_Scheibe_StockM_StockWG.pdf, <https://doi.org/10.1633/JISTaP.2019.7.2.4>.

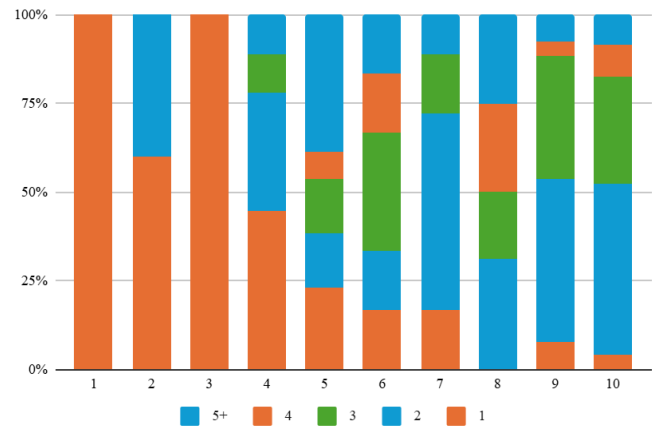
Zmyślony, Piotr, et al. "Deconstructing the Overtourism-Related Social Conflicts."
Sustainability, vol. 12, no. 4, 24 Feb. 2020, p. 1695, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041695>.

Appendix A: Data and Charts

A.1 Mute Case (MC)

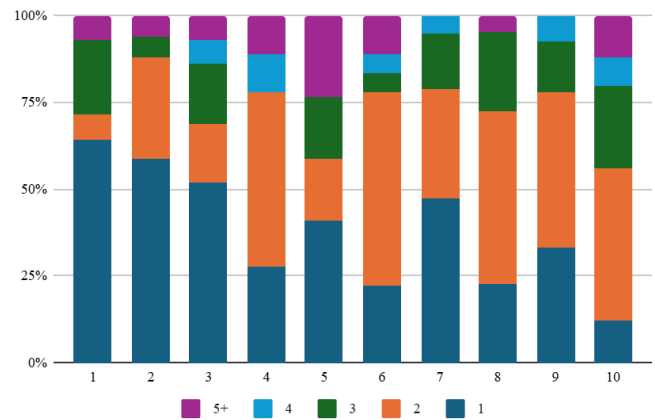
JC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	1	0	0	0	0
D2	3	2	0	0	0
D3	2	0	0	0	0
D4	4	3	1	0	1
D5	3	2	2	1	5
D6	3	3	6	3	3
D7	3	10	3	0	2
D8	0	5	3	4	4
D9	2	12	9	1	2
D10	1	11	7	2	2



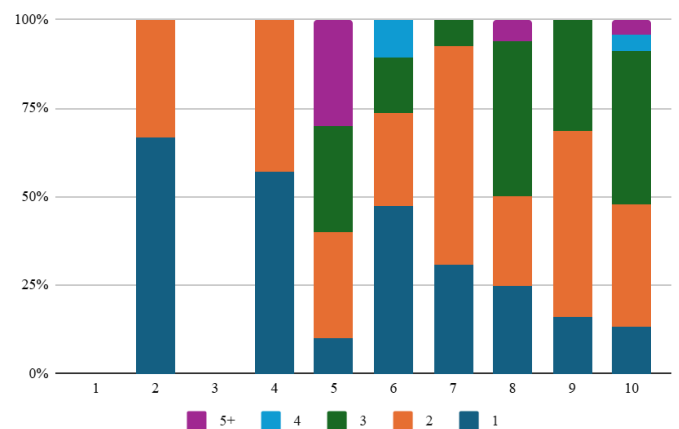
TC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	9	1	3	0	1
D2	10	5	1	0	1
D3	15	5	5	2	2
D4	5	9	0	2	2
D5	7	3	3	0	4
D6	4	10	1	1	2
D7	9	6	3	1	0
D8	5	11	5	0	1
D9	9	12	4	2	0
D10	3	11	6	2	3



JTC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	0	0	0	0	0
D2	2	1	0	0	0
D3	0	0	0	0	0
D4	4	3	0	0	0
D5	1	3	3	0	3



D6	9	5	3	2	0
D7	4	8	1	0	0
D8	4	4	7	0	1
D9	3	10	6	0	0
D10	3	8	10	1	1

Location Based Analysis

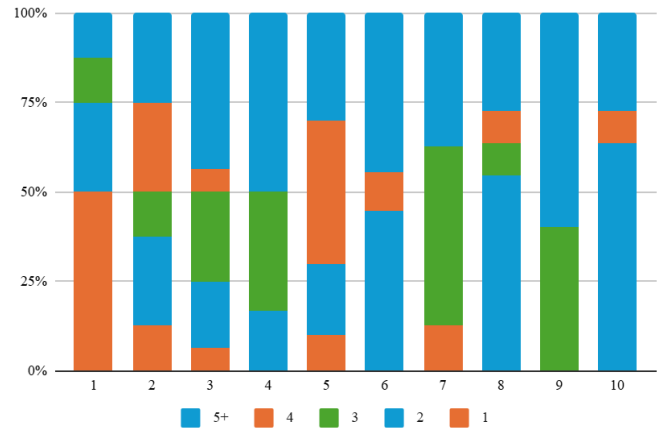
Prefecture		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	Total	Average	φ	μRf	Inbound% (2025)	Φt
Tokyo	TKY	0	0	0	4	13	9	9	6	9	10	60	6	4,52	22,39	48,4	0,459
Kyoto	KYT	0	1	0	1	6	6	2	9	13	11	49	4,9	4,57	18,28	32,2	0,568
Osaka	OSK	0	0	0	1	5	4	1	1	7	5	24	2,4	2,46	8,96	43,8	0,207
Nara	NR	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	1	0	6	12	1,2	1,78	4,48	9,8	0,457
Aichi	ACH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	6,4	0,058
Akita	AKT	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	0,4	1,866
Aomori	AMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,75	0,8	0,933
Chiba	CHB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	34,4	0,000
Ehime	EHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	0,4	2,799
Fukui	FKI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	0,2	5,597
Fukuoka	FUK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	11,6	0,097
Fukushima	FKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,4	0,000
Gifu	GF	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	2	0	8	0,8	1,25	2,99	3,5	0,853
Gunma	GNM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	0,4	1,866
Hiroshima	HRS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4	0,4	0,92	1,49	4,3	0,347
Hokkaidō	HKO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	7,9	0,000
Hyōgo	HÖG	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	0,3	0,46	1,12	5,4	0,207
Ibaraki	IBK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	0,3	1,244
Ishikawa	ISHK	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	2,3	0,324
Iwate	IWA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	0,5	0,746
Kagawa	KGW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,2	0,000
Kagoshima	KGS	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	0,7	1,066
Kanagawa	KNG	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6	4	4	16	1,6	2,11	5,97	8,8	0,678
Kōchi	KCI	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	0,2	1,866
Kumamoto	KMM	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	2,2	0,339
Mie	MIE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0,2	0,60	0,75	0,6	1,244
Miyagi	MYG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	1,4	0,267
Miyazaki	MYZ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	0,4	2,799
Nagano	NGN	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7	0,7	0,90	2,61	3,1	0,843
Nagasaki	NGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,1	0,000
Niigata	NIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,37	0,6	0,622
Ōita	ŌT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	5	0,5	0,92	1,87	3,8	0,491
Okayama	OKA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	1,1	1,018

Okinawa	OKW	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	8	0,8	0,75	2,99	6,1	0,489
Saga	SG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0,3	0,64	1,12	0,7	1,599
Saitama	SIA	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	4	0,4	0,66	1,49	0,8	1,866
Shiga	SHI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Shimane	SHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,1	0,000
Shizuoka	SHK	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	5	0,5	0,67	1,87	3,4	0,549
Tochigi	TCG	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	1	0,746
Tokushima	TKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Tottori	TTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0,2	0,40	0,75	0,3	2,488
Toyama	TYM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,9	0,000
Wakayama	WKY	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0,3	0,46	1,12	1,3	0,861
Yamagata	YMG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0,3	0,46	1,12	0,7	1,599
Yamaguchi	YMC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Yamanashi	YMN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	8	0,8	1,25	2,99	8,7	0,343

A.2 Japanese Culture Based Case (JBC)

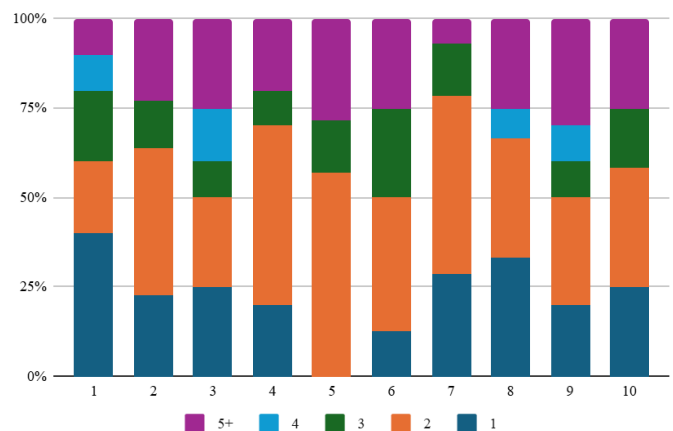
JC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	8	4	2	0	2
D2	2	4	2	4	4
D3	1	3	4	1	7
D4	0	1	2	0	3
D5	1	2	0	4	3
D6	0	4	0	1	4
D7	1	0	4	0	3
D8	0	6	1	1	3
D9	0	0	2	0	3
D10	0	7	0	1	3



TC by Cluster Size

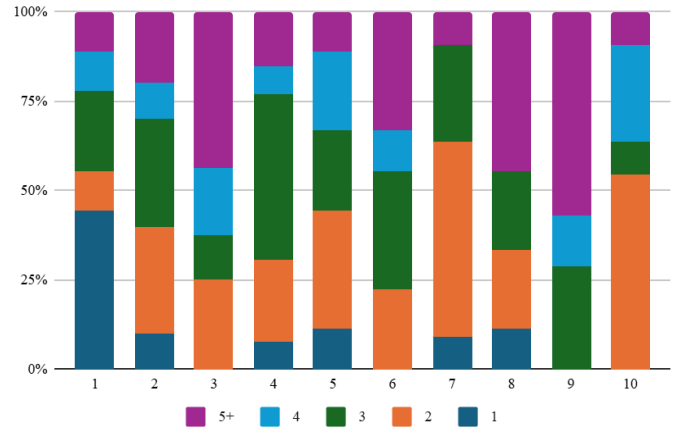
Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	4	2	2	1	1
D2	5	9	3	0	5
D3	5	5	2	3	5
D4	2	5	1	0	2
D5	0	4	1	0	2
D6	1	3	2	0	2
D7	4	7	2	0	1



D8	4	4	0	1	3
D9	2	3	1	1	3
D10	3	4	2	0	3

JTC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	4	1	2	1	1
D2	2	6	6	2	4
D3	0	4	2	3	7
D4	1	3	6	1	2
D5	1	3	2	2	1
D6	0	2	3	1	3
D7	1	6	3	0	1
D8	1	2	2	0	4
D9	0	0	2	1	4
D10	0	6	1	3	1



Location Based Analysis

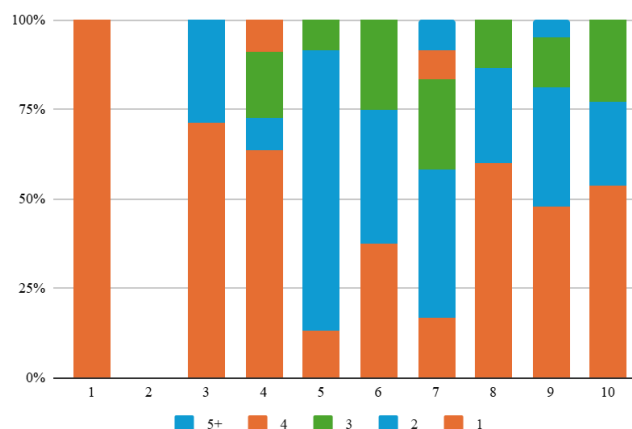
Prefecture		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	Total	Average	ϕ	μR_f	Inbound% (2025)	Φ_t
Tokyo	TKY	9	15	27	20	18	12	12	16	22	18	169	16,9	5,05	27,17	48,4	0,557
Kyoto	KYT	5	9	7	10	20	10	16	14	20	12	123	12,3	4,88	19,77	32,2	0,614
Osaka	OSK	3	11	5	10	6	6	6	14	6	0	67	6,7	3,82	10,77	43,8	0,249
Nara	NR	1	5	3	0	4	0	0	4	2	2	21	2,1	1,76	3,38	9,8	0,345
Aichi	ACH	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	8	0,8	1,33	1,29	6,4	0,201
Akita	AKT	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	6	0,6	0,80	0,96	0,4	2,412
Aomori	AMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,8	0,402
Chiba	CHB	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	34,4	0,009
Ehime	EHM	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	0,5	1,20	0,80	0,4	2,010
Fukui	FKI	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	0,5	0,81	0,80	0,2	4,019
Fukuoka	FUK	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	9	0,9	1,14	1,45	11,6	0,125
Fukushima	FKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,4	0,000
Gifu	GF	1	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	11	1,1	0,94	1,77	3,5	0,505
Gunma	GNM	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,80	0,64	0,4	1,608
Hiroshima	HRS	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	6	0,6	0,92	0,96	4,3	0,224
Hokkaidō	HKO	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	7	0,7	1,27	1,13	7,9	0,142
Hyōgo	HÖG	0	1	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	7	0,7	0,90	1,13	5,4	0,208
Ibaraki	IBK	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,3	1,072
Ishikawa	ISHK	0	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	7	0,7	1,27	1,13	2,3	0,489
Iwate	IWA	0	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	7	0,7	1,27	1,13	0,5	2,251
Kagawa	KGW	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	0	8	0,8	1,33	1,29	1,2	1,072

Kagoshima	KGS	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,80	0,64	0,7	0,919
Kanagawa	KNG	0	0	2	4	6	2	0	2	2	0	18	1,8	1,89	2,89	8,8	0,329
Kōchi	KCI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Kumamoto	KMM	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0,3	0,64	0,48	2,2	0,219
Mie	MIE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0,4	1,20	0,64	0,6	1,072
Miyagi	MYG	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	7	0,7	0,90	1,13	1,4	0,804
Miyazaki	MYZ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,4	0,804
Nagano	NGN	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	7	0,7	0,90	1,13	3,1	0,363
Nagasaki	NGS	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0,6	0,92	0,96	1,1	0,877
Niigata	NIA	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,6	0,536
Ōita	ŌT	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	9	0,9	0,94	1,45	3,8	0,381
Okayama	OKA	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0,4	0,80	0,64	1,1	0,585
Okinawa	OKW	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	7	0,7	0,90	1,13	6,1	0,184
Saga	SG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,7	0,459
Saitama	SIA	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	6	0,6	0,92	0,96	0,8	1,206
Shiga	SHI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Shimane	SHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,1	0,000
Shizuoka	SHK	0	2	0	2	2	10	0	2	2	2	22	2,2	2,75	3,54	3,4	1,040
Tochigi	TCG	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,66	0,64	1	0,643
Tokushima	TKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,2	1,608
Tottori	TTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,3	1,072
Toyama	TYM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	0,4	0,80	0,64	0,9	0,715
Wakayama	WKY	0	1	3	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	10	1	1,10	1,61	1,3	1,237
Yamagata	YMG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,32	0,7	0,459
Yamaguchi	YMC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Yamanashi	YMN	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	7	0,7	1,10	1,13	8,7	0,129

A.3 Tourism not specific to Japan Case (TNJ)

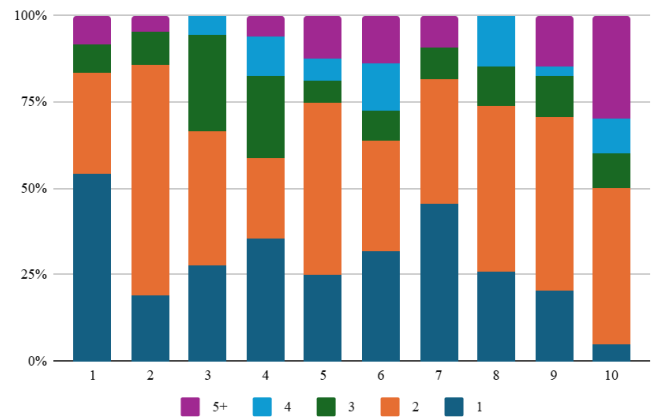
JC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	3	0	0	0	0
D2	0	0	0	0	0
D3	5	2	0	0	0
D4	7	1	2	1	0
D5	3	18	2	0	0
D6	9	9	6	0	0
D7	2	5	3	1	1
D8	9	4	2	0	0
D9	10	7	3	0	1
D10	7	3	3	0	0



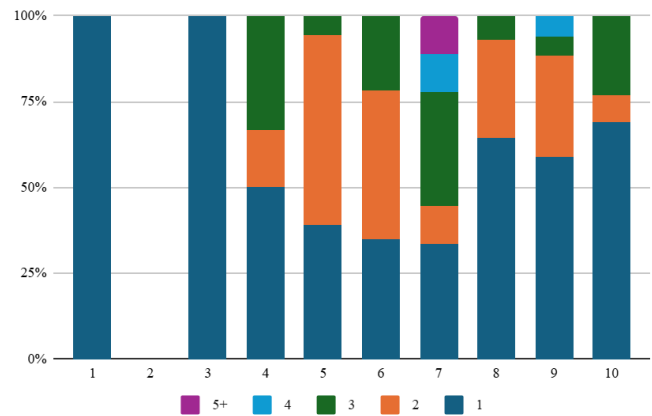
TC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	13	7	2	0	2
D2	4	14	2	0	1
D3	5	7	5	1	0
D4	6	4	4	2	1
D5	4	8	1	1	2
D6	7	7	2	3	3
D7	5	4	1	0	1
D8	7	13	3	4	0
D9	7	17	4	1	5
D10	1	9	2	2	6



JTC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	1	0	0	0	0
D2	0	0	0	0	0
D3	6	0	0	0	0
D4	3	1	2	0	0
D5	7	10	1	0	0
D6	8	10	5	0	0
D7	3	1	3	1	1
D8	9	4	1	0	0
D9	10	5	1	1	0
D10	9	1	3	0	0



Location Based Analysis

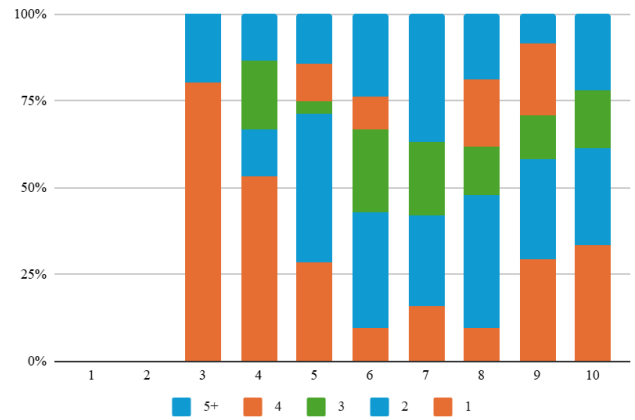
Prefecture		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	Total	Average	ϕ	μRf	Inbound% (2025)	Φt
Tokyo	TKY	0	0	3	6	10	18	9	7	13	7	73	7,3	5,33	33,33	48,4	0,683
Kyoto	KYT	0	0	1	6	4	7	6	3	6	6	39	3,9	2,59	17,81	32,2	0,553
Osaka	OSK	1	0	0	3	3	8	7	3	8	4	37	3,7	2,90	16,89	43,8	0,390
Nara	NR	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	5	2	11	1,1	1,51	5,02	9,8	0,513
Aichi	ACH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	6,4	0,071
Akita	AKT	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,91	0,4	2,283
Aomori	AMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,8	0,000
Chiba	CHB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	34,4	0,000

Ehime	EHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,4	0,000
Fukui	FKI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Fukuoka	FUK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	11,6	0,000
Fukushima	FKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,4	1,142
Gifu	GF	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0,3	0,46	1,37	3,5	0,391
Gunma	GNM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,4	0,000
Hiroshima	HRS	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,91	4,3	0,212
Hokkaidō	HKO	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0,3	0,46	1,37	7,9	0,173
Hyōgo	HÖG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	5,4	0,000
Ibaraki	IBK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,3	0,000
Ishikawa	ISHK	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0,3	0,64	1,37	2,3	0,596
Iwate	IWA	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,5	0,913
Kagawa	KGW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,2	0,000
Kagoshima	KGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,7	0,000
Kanagawa	KNG	0	0	0	1	4	3	2	0	2	2	14	1,4	1,36	6,39	8,8	0,726
Kōchi	KCI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Kumamoto	KMM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	2,2	0,208
Mie	MIE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,6	0,000
Miyagi	MYG	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	1,4	0,326
Miyazaki	MYZ	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,4	1,142
Nagano	NGN	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0,2	0,40	0,91	3,1	0,295
Nagasaki	NGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,1	0,000
Niigata	NIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,6	0,000
Ōita	ŌT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	3,8	0,120
Okayama	OKA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	1,1	0,415
Okinawa	OKW	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0,3	0,90	1,37	6,1	0,225
Saga	SG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,7	0,000
Saitama	SIA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,8	0,571
Shiga	SHI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Shimane	SHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,1	0,000
Shizuoka	SHK	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0,3	0,64	1,37	3,4	0,403
Tochigi	TCG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1	0,000
Tokushima	TKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Tottori	TTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,3	0,000
Toyama	TYM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,9	0,507
Wakayama	WKY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,3	0,000
Yamagata	YMG	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	0,7	0,652
Yamaguchi	YMC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Yamanashi	YMN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,46	8,7	0,052

A.4 Tourism and Japan (TAJ)

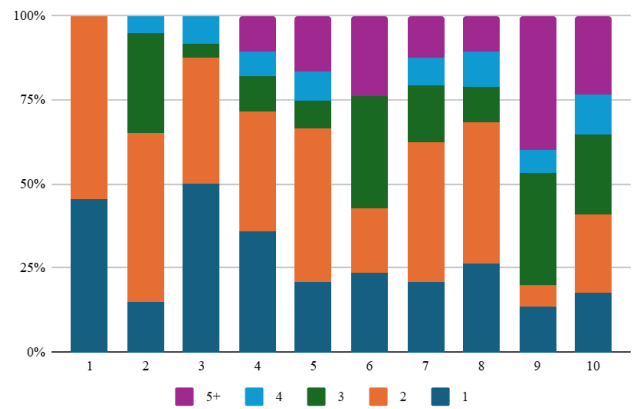
JC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	0	0	0	0	0
D2	0	0	0	0	0
D3	4	1	0	0	0
D4	8	2	3	0	2
D5	8	12	1	3	4
D6	2	7	5	2	5
D7	3	5	4	0	7
D8	2	8	3	4	4
D9	7	7	3	5	2
D10	6	5	3	0	4



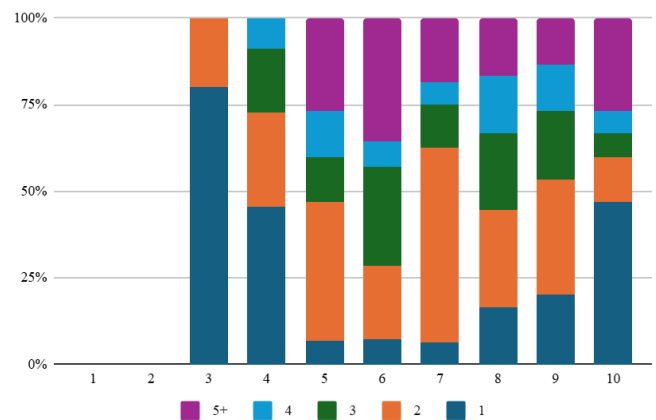
TC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	5	6	0	0	0
D2	3	10	6	1	0
D3	12	9	1	2	0
D4	10	10	3	2	3
D5	5	11	2	2	4
D6	5	4	7	0	5
D7	5	10	4	2	3
D8	5	8	2	2	2
D9	2	1	5	1	6
D10	3	4	4	2	4



JTC by Cluster Size

Cluster Size	1	2	3	4	5+
D1	0	0	0	0	0
D2	0	0	0	0	0
D3	4	1	0	0	0
D4	5	3	2	1	0
D5	1	6	2	2	4
D6	1	3	4	1	5
D7	1	9	2	1	3
D8	3	5	4	3	3
D9	3	5	3	2	2
D10	7	2	1	1	4



Location Based Analysis

Prefecture		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	Total	Average	φ	μRf	Inbound% (2025)	Φt
Tokyo	TKY	0	0	1	7	12	9	15	10	13	17	84	8,4	5,94	20,54	48,4	0,421
Kyoto	KYT	0	0	3	6	21	18	18	12	6	12	96	9,6	7,32	23,47	32,2	0,729
Osaka	OSK	0	0	1	2	6	7	10	8	8	11	53	5,3	3,98	12,96	43,8	0,299
Nara	NR	0	0	0	1	5	2	1	6	5	6	26	2,6	2,46	6,36	9,8	0,649
Aichi	ACH	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	6,4	0,076
Akita	AKT	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	0,4	1,222
Aomori	AMR	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0,3	0,64	0,73	0,8	0,917
Chiba	CHB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	34,4	0,000
Ehime	EHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	0,3	0,46	0,73	0,4	1,834
Fukui	FKI	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	4	0,4	0,66	0,98	0,2	4,890
Fukuoka	FUK	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0,3	0,64	0,73	11,6	0,063
Fukushima	FKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0,3	0,64	0,73	0,4	1,834
Gifu	GF	0	0	0	1	4	7	1	2	0	1	16	1,6	2,15	3,91	3,5	1,118
Gunma	GNM	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	0,4	1,222
Hiroshima	HRS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0,3	0,64	0,73	4,3	0,171
Hokkaidō	HKO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	7,9	0,031
Hyōgo	HÖG	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0,3	0,64	0,73	5,4	0,136
Ibaraki	IBK	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	0,3	0,815
Ishikawa	ISHK	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	7	0,7	1,00	1,71	2,3	0,744
Iwate	IWA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Kagawa	KGW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	1,2	0,000
Kagoshima	KGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,7	0,000
Kanagawa	KNG	0	0	1	1	1	6	5	2	2	5	23	2,3	2,10	5,62	8,8	0,639
Kōchi	KCI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Kumamoto	KMM	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,92	0,98	2,2	0,445
Mie	MIE	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0,3	0,90	0,73	0,6	1,222
Miyagi	MYG	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	1,4	0,175
Miyazaki	MYZ	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,66	0,98	0,4	2,445
Nagano	NGN	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	5	0,5	0,92	1,22	3,1	0,394
Nagasaki	NGS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	1,1	0,222
Niigata	NIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,6	0,000
Ōita	ŌT	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	4	0,4	0,66	0,98	3,8	0,257
Okayama	OKA	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	1,1	0,445
Okinawa	OKW	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	4	0,4	0,49	0,98	6,1	0,160
Saga	SG	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	0,7	0,349
Saitama	SIA	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,60	0,49	0,8	0,611
Shiga	SHI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Shimane	SHM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,1	0,000

Shizuoka	SHK	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	5	2	0	14	1,4	1,43	3,42	3,4	1,007
Tochigi	TCG	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	1	0,489
Tokushima	TKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,2	0,000
Tottori	TTO	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	0,3	1,630
Toyama	TYM	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0,2	0,40	0,49	0,9	0,543
Wakayama	WKY	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	6	0,6	0,92	1,47	1,3	1,128
Yamagata	YMG	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1	0,30	0,24	0,7	0,349
Yamaguchi	YMC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,5	0,000
Yamanashi	YMN	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	5	0,5	0,67	1,22	8,7	0,141

A.5 Tourism Content on an Account Basis

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10
JCB	55	71	85	44	40	41	39	37	43	38
TNJ	4	0	9	20	43	52	33	25	47	22
TAJ	0	0	6	33	73	76	78	72	61	61
MC	1	5	2	18	50	58	42	66	65	72

A.6 Japanese Content on an Account Basis

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10
JCB	55	71	85	44	40	41	39	37	43	38
TNJ	4	0	9	20	43	52	33	25	47	22
TAJ	0	0	6	33	73	76	78	72	61	61
MC	1	5	2	18	50	58	42	66	65	72

Japanese Tourism Content on an Account Basis

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10
JCB	23	65	60	37	32	33	25	34	38	32
TNJ	1	0	6	18	30	45	27	20	29	20
TAJ	0	0	6	29	65	67	66	58	49	50
MC	0	4	0	11	40	35	23	44	45	66

Acknowledgement

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Utsumi, who accompanied me throughout this journey in writing my thesis and supporting my academic studies in both my Bachelor and Master's Degree. His support was essential in writing this thesis, as he gave me the fundamental tools from his classes to find an argument that would interest and would challenge me. His support was essential not only for this thesis but also for my careers.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Mariotti, who I am extremely grateful for accepting to be my Assistant Supervisor for the thesis. Her feedback was essential in completing my work.

Lastly, I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart my brother Federico, who believed in me from the very beginning of my journey. He supported me during the ups and downs of my life, and he was always there for me no matter what. Even when I decided to pursue Japanese as my major after high school, he instantly supported me in this choice, allowing me to pursue something that I always wanted to do. He helped me to fully expose my potential as a student, by always encouraging me to always pursue my dream and my passion no matter what other people would say. He was there no matter what happened in my life, at university, at home or even in Japan. I would not have been able to be here presenting this thesis if I did not have his support