

Japan deploys cultural assets for economic revitalization

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Sports and culture assigned role in growth strategy

The second Abe Administration, which was launched at the end of 2012, has been formulating a growth strategy every year since 2013. Up to 2016 this had been compiled as the *Japan Revitalization Strategy* and their successive revisions. From 2017, its name was changed to the *Investment for the Future Strategy*. In the series of growth strategies that have been set forth, including corporate governance reform, reduction of corporate tax rate, work-style reforms, regional revitalization and electricity deregulation, there has recently been a greater focus upon the promotion of sports, culture and the arts.

Sports and culture have inherent value, irrespective of whether one is a player or a creator, or participates as a spectator or a viewer. Sports are connected to pleasure and the promotion of health, while culture and the arts are connected to relaxation and comfort as well as creativity and refinement. The focus upon Japan's cultural assets may stem from the Administration's deadlock in pulling the economy out of a slump even by its "Abenomics" policy mix. Given that sports, culture and the arts enrich people's lifestyles, its promotion makes sense, and would be a desirable option if it vitalizes the economy.

Of these pursuits, regarding sports, the Japan Sports Agency (JSA) was established in October 2015, and the *2nd Sport Basic Plan* was formulated in March 2017. Through these efforts and other initiatives, the Government of Japan has been taking strategic steps for the promotion of sports, while simultaneously looking ahead to the Tokyo Olympic Games that will be held in 2020. At the same time, where culture and the arts are concerned, the above-mentioned *Investment for the Future Strategy*, which was approved by the Cabinet in June 2017, along with the *Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform*, incorporates a plan to draw up a *Cultural Economy Strategy* for realizing Japan's aim to become *A Cultural and Artistic Nation*. This demonstrates the stance of the Government of Japan that it will place greater emphasis on making this field a priority, even using the expression "culture which earns money."

Measures for economic vitalization that utilize cultural and artistic resources

Even after Japan established its Agency for Cultural Affairs in 1968, it continued to face criticism that its engagement in promoting culture and the arts was insufficient compared to other developed countries. The *Basic Act on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts* was finally enacted in 2001, and the *Basic Policy on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts* was formulated on the basis of that Act with the aim to promote medium-term

measures in this field. The current *4th Basic Policy* received Cabinet approval in 2015, and it prioritizes support for cultural and artistic activities and the utilization of cultural assets in regional revitalization.

The *Investment for the Future Strategy* prioritizes the use of cultural assets for economic vitalization. The *Strategy* cites the formulation of a *Cultural Economy Strategy*, the strategic cultivation of highly-skilled producers, and the development of center functions relating to publicly displaying and utilizing cultural assets in order to develop the necessary framework and system. As a means for regional revitalization and branding, the *Investment for the Future Strategy* promotes the formation of regional cultural clusters and the nationwide deployment of a cultural program for promoting Japanese culture both at home and abroad. Furthermore, to strengthen contents-based cultural and artistic industries, the *Investment for the Future Strategy* sets forth ideas such as holding business matching events, and strengthening the dissemination of media arts such as *anime* and computer games both domestically and overseas.

Of these initiatives, the *Cultural Economy Strategy* is scheduled to be drawn up in 2017 as a means to generate social and economic value through the maintenance and creation of cultural stock, expansion of economic spillover effects from utilizing cultural and artistic resources, and the expansion in “cultural GDP” (the economic scale of cultural and artistic industries).

This *Cultural Economy Strategy* will be formulated as a framework that looks forward toward 2020, which is the year of the Tokyo Olympics. The *Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform* also stipulates that the period up to 2020 is positioned as “a priority period for promoting cultural policy.” Meanwhile, the *Investment for the Future Strategy* states a target (Key Performance Indicator (KPI)) of lifting Japan’s cultural GDP – around JPY5 trillion as of 2011 – to around JPY18 trillion in 2025.

Using cultural heritage for regional promotion

Focusing upon the economic effects of culture and the arts, there are high expectations toward the utilization of regional cultural resources for promoting tourism. In many cases historical cultural resources are symbols and sources of pride of each particular region. The preservation of these resources and their utilization to attract domestic and foreign tourists is also effective for regional revitalization.

The registration of cultural resources with international organizations or the government is a highly effective means of lifting their profiles. In particular, the World Heritage sites selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) offer a high degree of appeal overseas. In 2017 the “Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region” (Fukuoka Prefecture) was newly inscribed on the World Heritage list, taking Japan’s total number of World Heritage sites (comprising cultural heritage and natural heritage) to 21.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan has started to register “Japan Heritage” sites in 2015. This is based on local municipalities making applications for their regional cultural resources, which are then certified by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Given the third round of certifications in April 2017, a total of 54 sites had been registered. This project is characterized by the emphasis it places on conveying historical and/or cultural narratives, with a number of historical landmarks and other spots bound together according to respective themes and titles. This creates an excursion effect that involves tourists traveling around multiple heritage sites, which is compatible to the concept of “consumption of experiences” that has been increasingly prevalent in recent years. In some cases the registered Japanese Heritage sites straddle several prefectures – one that connects historical

landmarks relating to the ‘Kitamae-bune’ cargo ships of the Edo period involves 11 cities and towns in seven prefectures along the Sea of Japan, for example.

In regions facing demographic decline, initiatives such as this that utilize cultural assets are effective means for regional revitalization by increasing the number of visitors. With regard to the above-mentioned Japanese Heritage sites, support for strategic promotion is also incorporated into the *Investment for the Future Strategy*, and is expected to lead to the attraction of tourists .

The *Cultural Economy Strategy* will start in 2018

As outlined above, the efforts to realize *A Cultural and Artistic Nation* will start, in particular from the perspective of the growth strategy. 2018 will be the year that the newly-formulated *Cultural Economy Strategy* will begin. While culture and the arts are not sought only as means to “earn money”, these efforts should lead to broader opportunities to enhance the multifaceted strengths of Japan’s cultural assets.

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