



Tokyo's MICE community prepares for the Olympics 2020

From Daniel Tschudy

It's fair to say that the world was stunned to learn early September 2013 that Tokyo was awarded the Olympic Summer Games 2020 after a final vote-victory (60:36) against Istanbul. For the second time after 1964, Japan's capital and business hub will host the most prestigious international public event.

After the triple-catastrophe two-and-a-half years earlier, no-one really expected that the Japanese would be ready to present a great bid, and be able to communicate strongly and positively about it. Yet, they did, and they balanced the hurting Fukushima-issue well. Not ignoring it, nor putting it too much to the front-line. Winning issues were security, infrastructure, public transport, and of course friendliness and the great sense of hospitality. So, Japan is getting ready for 2020 and hopes to create a similar impact to its economy and social mentality, as the 1964 Games did.



Also, tourism officials and the inbound trade prepares for 2020, hoping to generate substantial pre-Olympic demand, and even more business for after the event. On the same time, those aiming at MICE-traffic (meetings, incentives, conventions & exhibitions) see great potential for Tokyo, respectively for the entire region Chiba, Tokyo and Yokohama. Event Management companies, entertainment agencies, congress organisers and catering specialists begin their planning, aiming to stimulate domestic traffic and creating great inbound demand.

The leading Japanese meetings & events trade magazine 'MICE Japan' already reported regularly on the outlook of 2020 and what impact that would have to local hotels, restaurants, transport companies and venue providers. No wonder that the publication also reaches out to the large Japanese real estate corporations, since they provide spaces and venues for events, meetings, entertainment, and dining.



A true giant is MORI Building Company, a prosperous Japanese property management firm, founded in 1955 by Taikichiro Mori. When he died 1993 at the age of 88, Mori was the richest man in the world. The company today runs more than 100 office-facilities in Japan and China, including the famous Shanghai World Financial Centre, presently the tallest building in China. Mori Building Company set-up its head-quarter at the Roppongi Hills Mori Tower in Tokyo, an upbeat 54-story mixed-use skyscraper, 238 meters tall, and completed in 2003. The building is primarily used for office space, but it also includes retail stores, restaurants and several tourist attractions, including the Mori Art Museum and the observation deck on the 54th floor.

International Media group

Mori and MICE Japan recently teamed-up to host an international MICE-focused media group from Asia and Europe. The journalists were welcomed to Tokyo and introduced to a series of activities and services available to international conferences and incentive groups. The program was supported by two leading hotels, the Grand Hyatt Roppongi Hills and the Andaz Hotel at the recently opened Mori Toranomon Hills (picture right).

Toranomon Hills is an outstanding skyscraper complex, designed by Nihon Sekkei and built around the new Loop Road No. 2, a surface artery that connects the districts of Toranomon and Shinbashi. The Toranomon segment was popularly referred to as the "MacArthur Road" after General Douglas MacArthur, who led the Allied liberation of Japan following WW II, and making reference to the proximity of the United States Embassy compound in nearby Akasaka. There have been plans to build this new road since 1946, but it was only completed one year ago – followed by the opening of the Mori Toranomon Hills complex in June 2014.





Both Mori skyscrapers offer excellent and extensive meetings- and events-facilities. Roppongi's venue is called AcademyHills 49, located about 230 meters above sea level and able to host 500 delegates at its largest room, the Tower Hall. In total, 10 conference rooms are available. The Tokyo City View has high ceiling and glass walls, creating an excellent venue for corporate events and product launches.



Mori's excellent meeting & event facilities

The Toranomon Hills Forum offers brand-new meeting & event space on 2'180 m², located on the 4th and 5th floors. In the Main Hall, 504 guests can sit in classroom-, and 744 in theatre-style. Like in Roppongi, the newest audio-video infrastructure is available too. In addition to further banquet- and breakout-rooms at the two 'in-house' hotels Grand Hyatt Roppongi and Andaz Toranomon, the two gigantic Mori Towers offer truly a full package of facilities and catering services.



The visiting trade journalists could experience not only the Mori meeting and hospitality infrastructure, but also many other elements of the Japanese culture and hospitality. Fine dining included not only typical local dishes, served for example in a local Izakaya restaurant, but also fusion-food or on another occasion, a 'good'old' Hamburger. The media people also enjoyed a surprise Kabuki-performance.

Another highlight for the group was a helicopter flight above Tokyo, offered by Mori's very own Mori Building City Air Services (MCAS). Their main product is the "Narita Airline Connection Service" providing swift transportation by helicopter between central Tokyo (from ARK Hills Tower in Akasaka) and Narita International Airport. Compared with regular rail service (over 60 min.) and car-transfer (some 75 min.), Mori's helicopter service significantly reduces travel time between Narita and central Tokyo. After a 15-minute flight to the Narita-Sakura heliport, limousine service whisks passengers to the terminals in just another 15 min. The journalists enjoyed a circle flight above the Imperial Palace, passing the new Skytree-Tower and viewing Shinjuku and Shibuya. Just as ordinary tourists can purchase sightseeing-flights from MCAS.





Communication is key

During the 3-days program, it was evident that Tokyo will surely be ready for the 2020 Olympic Summer Games. Roads and public transport are excellent, hotels available in all categories, tours and sightseeing covers all aspects of Japan, including for example Kyoto or near-by Mount Fuji; and all is bundled by a kind and friendly hospitality attitude. Not all is perfect, of course. English is well spoken among the front-line service people, but must be improved by everybody-else serving tourists and conference attendants: And a bit more flexibility is required too in view of foreigners' needs to short-term changes and adjusted program needs. But, overall, hospitality is great in Japan, and future visitors, Corporate or Olympians, will be profiting from it.

The Japanese tourism- and MICE-industries must now communicate active, strongly and positively about its great infrastructures and services and promote Tokyo not only as a wonderful cultural city, but also as a lifestyle meeting hub. International audiences require so-called 'sexy' destinations with fun, music, entertainment, as well as opportunities and free-space to explore individually.

Communication must be aimed at the *future*, with the Olympics as one, but not the only one target. Communication must be adjusted to specific needs of specific markets (for example, the US must be approached differently than Europe), as well as to domestic needs. Nikkei, Japan's largest business newspaper just did such a report (on the right), published after the departure of the foreign journalists.

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2020 TOKYO 国際会議・観光 我が施設で

海外旅行業向けツアー

大手不動産

名所案内や文化体験

東京は文化・交流の場見事

文化・交流	国際会議の 開催回数	海外からの 観光客数	海外からの 観光客数	割合
2014年	6回	100万人	100万人	4.1%
1994年	8回	70万人	170万人	4.1%
1974年	7回	50万人	180万人	4.1%
1954年	6回	40万人	100万人	4.1%
1934年	5回	30万人	90万人	4.1%
1914年	4回	20万人	70万人	4.1%

訪問者・会議は増加傾向

都市間競争では改善余地