

# **CONSIDERATION FOR A CHARACTERIZATION OF URBAN TOURISM RESOURCES: Interactive verifications local government's involvement and private vitality in Taito**

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**Abstract:** According to the current research conducted by Taito City, the number of tourists<sup>i</sup> to Taito City now is about 34,000,000 a year and 30% of that is assumed to visit Asakusa. This means that the entire population of Tokyo visits Asakusa once a year, for total population of Tokyo is around 12,000,000. According to another survey<sup>ii</sup> of the tourist's expectations for Asakusa, the top 5 rankings are "old downtown", "Edo atmosphere", "old history", "old good days" and "a town of the warm-minded". But in most cases, such feelings as "Edo atmosphere" and "a town of the warm-minded" are subjective and emotional, and besides they are different from person to person, so it is difficult to verify and analyze them.

In the first part of this research, I would like to define a characteristic of a town, which spontaneously arouses these emotions or affections in the mind of tourists, as "a historical characteristic as tourism resources<sup>iii</sup>", and then from the comparative study of history of Ueno<sup>iv</sup> and Asakusa, I will explain the historical characteristics of both areas. In the second part, that these historical characteristics are essential to the tourism promotion is verified from the tourism marketing research. On the other hand, from a psychological standpoint I will approach the usefulness for tourism promotion which makes use of the historical characteristic, considering the effective use of cultural resources for tourism

**Keywords:** Urban tourism resources, Tourism promotion policy, Ueno, Asakusa, Taito.

### **1. An overview of Taito City**

Taito City was inaugurated as one of 23 special wards of Tokyo in 1947 by the combination of Shitaya and Asakusa. The city is now visited by as many as thirty million tourists a year.

#### **1-1. Topography of Taito City**

Taito City is the oldest urban district in Tokyo located northeast of central Tokyo.

It stretches from Ueno Hills, 20m above sea level in the west of the city to Sumida River in the east.

#### **1-2. Area of Taito City and population**

Taito City is 10.08 square kilometers in area, accounting for 0.46% of Tokyo. It is the smallest of all the wards in Tokyo. As of June 6 in 2008, the population of the city is 164,158 and the number of families is 89,455.

#### **1-3. Traffic network**

East Japan Railway (Shinkansen 5 lines, the old railroad lines: 6 lines: 5 stations)

Tokyo Metro (2 lines: 8 stations)

Bureau of Transportation of Tokyo metropolitan government (2 lines: 6 stations)

Keisei Line (1 line: 2 stations)

Tobu Isesaki Line (1 line: 1 station)

Tsukuba Express Line (Iline: 2 stations)

Water Bus, Public Bus, Community Bus (megurin)

#### **1-4. Tourism resources**

##### **1-4-1.Ueno area:**

As a cultural center in Tokyo, Ueno Park on the Ueno Hills, 20m above sea level has many cultural facilities such as Tokyo National Museum, National Museum of Western Art, and Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. Ueno Zoo, which is the oldest public zoo in Japan, is always crowded with many families in holidays.

##### **1-4-2.Asakusa area:**

Sensouji Temple, Matsuchiyama Shoden Temple, Otori-Jinja Shrine

##### **1-4-3.Shitaya area:**

Old town Yanaka, Shitaya-Jinja Shrine

##### **1-4-4.Asakusa-bashi area:**

Torikoe-Jinja Shrine

### **1. The hilly area and the old downtown in Taito City**

The prosperity of Edo (old Tokyo) begins with the establishment of the Edo Shogunate by Tokugawa Iyeyasu, who was conferred the title seii tai shogun (generalissimo) in 1603. Though Edo was not the official capital city of Japan, for the imperial seat remained in Kyoto, it truly had functions as the center of economic activity. At first, the population of Edo was 150,000 (by conjecture), but afterwards it swelled to about 600,000 to 1,000,000. No city in the world equaled to Edo in the size of population. According to the history of Tokyo in 1869, the population of townspeople such as tradesman and craftsman was around 500,000. Tokugawa Shogunate was located at the center of Edo and the periphery was crowded with houses of local lords. Edo was almost the same size of the current inner area of JR Yamanote Line and the Sumida River Basin. City planning was mainly conducted for river improvement, irrigation, and reclaim project. The status system known as shi-no-ko-sho had almost been established. Peasants and townspeople who supported the life of warriors lived by using water transportation in river and moat. Their residential districts based on each status were divided without trouble.

Generally, shitamachi (old downtown) is considered to be a residential district of the common people, while yamanote (the hilly area) to be the one of the rich. In Taito City, however, the distinction between shitamachi and yamanote are named by the condition of geographic features. Ueno is located on upland-region, being generally designated as “Ueno hills,” but Asakusa is located on low-lying region near the Sumida River, being called as shitamachi. There is only about 10 meters difference of altitude between Ueno and Asakusa. There remains scarp of about 10 to 20 meters on the west side along the JR Tohoku line now. This is the reason Ueno is classified as yamanote and Asakusa as shitamachi. In Taito City, this division of residential district seems to affect the determination of historical and cultural characteristics of Ueno and Asakusa respectively.

#### **2-1. Historical characteristic of Ueno**

After the establishment of the Kaneiji Temple, Ueno Hill had been the most important hallowed ground in Edo. In 1873, Ueno Hill was designated to be a National Park. Within 50 years, the precursors of the present cultural and artistic institutions were established. Though the park ground became the imperial estates for some time, it was disposed of to Tokyo City by the government. It was called Ueno Onshi Park. Onshi means “bestowal of the Emperor.” The historical characteristic as tourism resources of this area is “tranquility.”

On the other hand, shopping buildings stand in a row along the area from Hakama-koshi to Ueno-hiro-koji. But turning down an alley, the bustling sight of Ameyoko Street, which has a reminiscence of chaotic period after the end of war, comes into view. The historical characteristic as tourism resources of this area is “activeness.” Shinobazu Pond fills the role of a bond, which links these two disparate areas together.

Accomplished arts are unrelated to the sight of the town, for they are stored in the cultural institutions. The tourism resources in Ueno are “the place of lofty arts and culture” and “not assertive”. Ueno is the neighborhood where “sordid and cheap town market of the commons” is able to exist.

### 2-1. Historical characteristic of Asakusa

Asakusa has developed as the temple town of the Sensoji Temple. Both Ueno and the Sensoji Temple were designated as park district almost for the same period. The former enjoyed the patronage of the government, but the latter did not. Or rather, Asakusa was often regarded as “a kind of a nuisance” at that time. So Asakusa, “from the self-protecting perspective”, began to bear greediness in order to survive. It was like a “culture reproducing machine”, which incessantly took the newest in it, digesting, and excreting. The major part of Asakusa was seriously damaged and laid in ashes by both the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the Great Air Attack on Tokyo in 1945. Most of the present buildings, including the Sensoji Temple, were newly rebuilt.

In spite of such background, Asakusa is not only “self-assertive place where the pure coexist with the foul”, which makes tourist feel the history of Edo and a town of the warmhearted but “the place of life of the commons over a span of 1000 years”. This is a historical and cultural characteristic of Asakusa.

### 3. Tourism Promotion and Tourism Marketing Research

The importance of tourism marketing research for tourism promotions is already common knowledge. Especially for city administration, the marketing research is indispensable for tourism promotion policy by reason of its usefulness for evaluating the effect of the former project, planning and practicing an effective project scheme afterwards. In the 2008 fiscal year, Taito City has been conducting the marketing research with the cooperation of Toyo University and Tokyo Metropolitan University. The following examinations are based on tourism marketing researches conducted by Taito City in 2004 and 2006, the current research on visitors to Japan by JNTO, and tourism marketing research by Tokyo metropolitan government.

#### 3-1. Annual events of Ueno and Asakusa

Events sponsored by community are effective measures against industrial promotion. Festivals coming from religious ceremonies of temple and shrine are important “historical and traditional culture” which passes the regional history down to the present day. (Refer to Chart1: P=Promotion H=History)

| Ueno                         |                 |      | Asakusa  |                  |      |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------|--|------------------|------|
| Event                        | Nr. of tourists | Type | Event  | Nr. of tourists  | Type |
| Ueno Sakura Matsuri          | 1,690,000       | P    | Hatsumode ( Sensoji )                          | 2,160,000        | H    |
| Shitamachi Tanabata Matsuri  | 430,000         | P    | Sumida-gawa Hanabi                             | 980,000          | H    |
| Ueno Natsumatsuri Parade     | 120,000         | P    | Sensoji Hozuki ichi                            | 600,000          | H    |
| Kutsu no megumi Matsuri ichi | 50,000          | P    | Setsubun ( Sensoji )                           | 400,000          | H    |
| Ueno Jazz In                 | 2,000           | P    | Hagoita ich(Sensoji )                          | 300,000          | H    |
| Ningyo Kuyo                  | 1,000           | P    | Sanjya Matsuri                                 | 1,000,000        | H    |
| Ueno aki no kanko sai        | 1,000           | P    | Asakusa Yabusame                               | 24,000           | H    |
| Dai Tokyp Waodori            | 800             | P    | Edo Nagashi Bina                               | 2,000            | H    |
|                              |                 |      | Naki zumo                                      | 1,800            | H    |
|                              |                 |      | <b>Events derived from History</b>             | <b>5,467,800</b> |      |
|                              |                 |      | Asakusa Kikubana ten                           | 240,000          | P    |
|                              |                 |      | Sakurabashi Hana Matsuri                       | 118,000          | P    |
|                              |                 |      | Asakusa Sanba Carnival                         | 495,000          | P    |
|                              |                 |      | Tokyo Jidai Matsuri                            | 450,000          | P    |
|                              |                 |      | Kon Kon Kutsi ich                              | 55,000           | P    |
|                              |                 |      | Hakidaore ich                                  | 50,000           | P    |
|                              |                 |      | <b>Events derived from community promotion</b> | <b>1,408,000</b> |      |
| Total                        | 2,294,800       |      | Total  | 6,875,800        |      |

The number of annual events is about 33 in Asakusa, while 13 in Ueno. These events are classified into two categories. The one is the events that derive from legend or history and the other is that which comes from the promotion of the community.

In Ueno, main event, “Sakura Matsuri” derives from the origin and history of Ueno Hill, which

was very famous for a popular tourist destination among the commons in Edo period. The number of spectators at Sakura Matsuri is around 1,690,000 (5% of the gross number of visitors to Taito City). There are no events in Ueno worthy of special mention, except for Sakura Matsuri, from the viewpoint of the number of spectators.

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Tokyo National Museum          | 1,729,463  |
| National Science Museum        | 1,515,535  |
| National Museum of Western Art | 676,468    |
| Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum  | 2,843,037  |
| Ueno Royal Museum              | 295,256    |
| Ueno Zoo                       | 3,363,786  |
| Sogakudo of the Former         | 27,685     |
| Tokyo Music School             |            |
| Total                          | 10,451,230 |

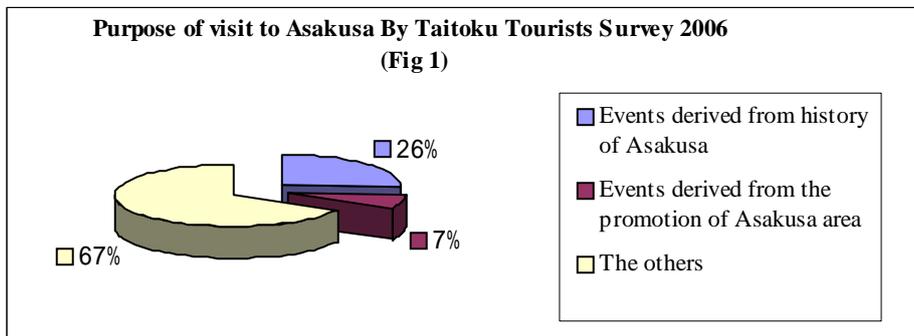
These events come from the community promotion policy. But on the other hand, total tourists to museums and a zoo within Ueno Onshi Park are about 10,400,000 (30 % of the gross number of tourists to Taito City) (See chart 2).

About 60 % of events in Asakusa derive from legend and history or religious ceremonies of temple and shrine. It should be noted that Hatsumode (New Year visit to a temple or shrine) and Hozuki Ichi (Chinese Lantern Plant Fair) are religious events of the Sensoji Temple, which has not particular supporting members of the temple and is an object of folk religion. The number of tourists to these historical events in Asakusa is double of that in Ueno (13 % of the gross number of visitors to Taito City).

### 3-2. Verification of characteristics of each district from the visiting aim of tourists

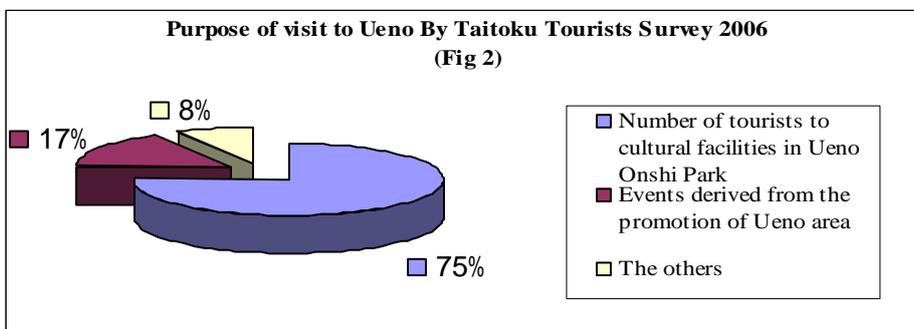
It is presumable that there are two factors in determining a characteristic of a town. One is attributed to the nature of the locals and the other is associated with tourists' expectations and evaluation for the town. The following research is focused on the latter.

#### 3-2-1. Asakusa



The number of tourists to Asakusa is 19,670,000 per year, and 23 % of that visits Asakusa for historical events. It is presumable that they expect Asakusa to have “historical characteristic, or Edo atmosphere” (See Fig 1).

#### 3-2-2. Ueno



The number of tourists to Ueno is 11,600,000 per year, 75 % of that visits museums. So it is presumable that the aim of visitors to Ueno is “the appreciation of fine art and culture” (See Fig 2).

### 3-3. Tourism Promotion using a characteristic of a town

The principal needs of tourists are revealed in the previous paragraph. The needs toward Asakusa is experiencing Edo atmosphere (mood), while the needs to Ueno is appreciating “treasures” in museums.

### **3-3-1. Asakusa**

Central landmarks in Asakusa are Nakamise (shopping arcade street) and the Sensoji Temple visited by many worshipers as an object of folk Faith. According to Sensoji Engi, worshipers to the Sensoji Temple in Edo period were almost such the lower classes as peasants, craftsmen, and peddlers. It is presumable that under the control of certain national policies throughout Edo, Meiji and Taisho period, Asakusa learned to survive for itself and came to have the outspoken and meddlesome social norms for coexistence, that is, “the old downtown temperament”. This social norm has been passed down from generation to generation, for local bonding, relationship in Asakusa has been very strong. However, in these days when nuclear families are growing, the traditional characteristic of Japanese family is crumbling. In parallel with that, “the old downtown temperament” is intermingled with “a native of Edo”, something like a brand image, so the social norms in Asakusa are ebbing away.

After the Second World War, Asakusa had to rehabilitate the town by itself only through the introduction of civilian vitality. So the most effective promotional measure was to hold events or “festivals” which enabled people to slough off their daily life. In 1947, Asakusa Kanko-sai (Asakusa sightseeing festival) which was the first event after the war, was held by civilian group “Asakusa Kanko Renmei” and Sanja-Matsuri and Dai-Asakusa-Noryo ensued. To hold events which were remembered in connection with temple or shrine was to lead to strengthening the characteristic of the town, resulting in attracting tourists to Asakusa effectively.

### **3-3-2. Ueno**

Ordinary tourists to the Kaneiji Temple were the samurai classes as compared with those to the Sensoji Temple. The common people usually visited Ueno just once a year when cheery blossoms were in full bloom. Ueno was not the place for their daily life. At present, it is certain that most of tourists to museums in Ueno Park do not go as far as Ueno-hiro-koji. It is presumable that this is because these tourists’ taste is incompatible with the characteristic of Ueno-hiro-koji. So their contribution to Ueno-hiro-koji neighborhood is very small. A top priority for tourism promotion in this area is to secure the road to Ueno-hiro-koji for 10,000,000 tourists a year.

## **4. Psychological approach to tourism promotion policy**

Reminiscent emotion like nostalgia is called “a healing”, and in tourism marketing research it is highly valued as important tourism resources for tourists. This appears to arise from the maturity of culture, permeation of individualism, the dilution of human relations in society and so on.

It has been well known since ancient times that definite learning is necessary in order for the individuals to adapt themselves to the society. As the society makes rapid progress and becomes more complicated, quantity of information that they should learn is increasing. The increase of information requires people of today to learn effectively and to cope with properly. This rapid change of society inflicts more mental stress on city-dwellers than on country-dwellers. In a word, most of city-dwellers are suffering from a chronic mental fatigue.

Each of individual is supposed to have “the subjective speed of progress in society,” which is mentally acceptable. The suitable speed is naturally different from person to person. If he or she feels the speed is too fast to follow, they would feel mental stress and then plunge into mental fatigue. But this mental fatigue is curable when they put their mind in non-everydayness, experiencing in it a leisurely speed which is best suitable to them. This is clear from the evidence that many tourists to Tokyo Disney Land feel “a healing” when they have virtual experiences there.

I would like to consider the process in which peoples’ mental fatigue was healed by offering them non-everydayness or a place of non-everydayness, conjecturing what the effective tourism promotion should be in order to meet the needs of city-dwellers who seek for “a healing” and a cure for mental fatigue in tourism.

**4-1.** When tourists look at a historical monument in non-everydayness, they first tend to have the sensation that they turn their thoughts toward the old days when the object was existent, trying to take the object in their consciousness together with its historical background. Especially, the sensation is intensified if the monument was built to exaggerate one's political power or to represent a religious symbol, for the tourists would have feelings of strong or sublime pressure from it. Though it may differ in degree, if tourists look at something old, their consciousness will take a time travel, putting them in virtual place. For example, when tourists look at a great picture in museum, they would try to share the time and place when the picture was painted, making an effort to understand what the artist's intention was.

**4-2.** Distance and space of time travel are different from person to person, so they are indefinite and not concrete. However, the shorter the distance is, the more correct the time setting will be. When tourists turn their thoughts toward old days (Time travel = to put some image into non-everydayness), they unconsciously tend to choose the time into which they can move themselves comfortably. But overlap and misunderstanding of the time frequently arise.

99% of the buildings in Asakusa including the Sensoji Temple and the Nakamise shopping arcade are reconstructed after the Second World War. The newly built main hall of the Sensoji Temple and five-storied pagoda are made of ferroconcrete. But they never weaken "the effect on time travel," for they preserve the same exterior as before they were burned down. It is presumable that the distance of the time travel when tourists look at these structure stretches over a period of 100 years before or after mainly on Edo period.

**4-3.** The distance of the time travel is restrictive. In most cases, it is apt to be determined by the advance learning of each individual. For example, scenes of the novel or the movie and images of picture or TV which one read or saw before are stored in the depths of one's consciousness. These depths psychology become the moving force behind the time travel. Phenomena that are beyond one's comprehension cannot be represented as virtual world. In this case, the time setting or historical background is taken in not as images but as supplementary information, so one rarely move into non-everydayness.

## **5. The present condition of tourism promotion in Asakusa**

As has been mentioned, when tourists look at a historical structure (hardware) they turn their thoughts toward old days and take the image in their consciousness, trying to experience the non-everydayness. But at the same time, everydayness like food and money comes into tourists' view. Such everydayness gives a negative influence on time travel to non-everydayness, for it brings tourists back to the real world. To avoid the negative influence, Disney Land prohibits tourist from bringing food and drink into it, and in Club Med, premium all-inclusive policy is adopted. These methods seem to be effective to eliminate everydayness. Likewise in Asakusa, the events of shrine and temple such as Sanja-Matsuri reminiscent of the past are conducive to eliminating monotonous everydayness from a daily life. In addition, characteristics of the local people, their life-style, food and manners are also contributory factors to enhance non-everydayness for tourists. These various effects continuously and effectively offer tourists longer and deeper non-everydayness called "Edo atmosphere" and "old downtown atmosphere".

As has been mentioned in part 5, the most important point in conducting a event as tourism promotion is that the event must be held at the very place from which it originates. So the "origin" of Sanja-Matsuri is only in Asakusa, not anywhere else. To have tourists experience the same wind and the same light of old days in Asakusa enables them to take a time travel to one-time Asakusa easily. It is conceivable that the synergetic effect generated by "origin", "events derived from history" and "daily life of the local people" contributes to the tourism promotion effectively. These events make fully use of historical characteristics of Asakusa, that is, "self-assertive place where the pure coexist with the foul".

On the other hand, the effect of events that ignore historical backgrounds or time settings is short-lived. Even if a large number of people gather momentarily, the continuation of such events is questionable. It appears that the events which do not have “origin” and “history” are insufficient to offer “a healing” to tourists.

## **6. The challenge hereafter**

The course Ueno should take hereafter is to remove the image of old downtown and to become more culture-oriented to cater to the interests of tourists to Ueno cultural zone, while keeping close ties with Ueno Onshi Park. In Tokyo now, there are many areas calling themselves “we are old downtown (shitamachi)”. For example, the public bus named “dreamy old downtown” runs between Otemachi and Ryugoku. Old downtown-color is common and substitutable now. So the most effective promotional measure is to make the best use of Ueno’s characteristic, that is, “the place of lofty arts and culture”.

The periphery of Shinobazu Pond is one of few places in Tokyo where the synthesis of affinity with water and the landscape is compatible. In this area, setting up café-style tea houses which will open until midnight is effective. This is the way cinema complex and shopping malls in the suburbs take.

Asakusa recovered from the devastation after the Second World War. But as time passes, movie theaters in the sixth ward has been forced into decline, for cinema complexes in the suburbs are predominant now.

It is natural that the locals should be obstinately exclusive in order to protect their own tradition. In other words, tradition cannot be maintained unless they adhere strictly to their exclusiveness. Satisfying tourists with hospitality is quite opposite. To give a friendly reception to tourists, the locals as recipients have to be more openhearted towards tourists. However, it is crucial to keep the balance between “to preserve tradition” and “to be open-minded towards tourists”. It is clear, from the good examples of tourism and sightseeing countries such as Switzerland and France, that “offence” and “defense” are compatible. The misunderstanding that local standards meet the international standards leads to the decrease in number of tourists to Asakusa. The number of tourists from East Asia to Japan has been increasing, for their cultural backgrounds are close to that of Japan, but Asakusa will be left behind if the same conditions continue. To avoid this, I suggest that:

1. To share a sense of crisis with those who are concerned with tourism industry such as “the locals”, “community” and “tourism related industry”.
2. Stop “relying on others,” advancing the introduction of local innate vitality of Asakusa
3. To be open-minded towards tourists and to protect the tradition

The development of transportation makes tourists’ stay in Asakusa shorter than before. Easy access to urban sightseeing spots means the easiness for tourists to cease to take an interest in them. In addition, tourists’ sense of value is so diversifying today that a particular area alone cannot satisfy their diversified needs. It is necessary to consolidate the cooperation between Ueno and Asakusa, making much of each other’s characteristics. Establishing an organization that takes an initiative in realizing this policy is needed now. As Michelin Guide is highly valued, tourists hope to get useful and accurate information that satisfy their diversified tastes. Public office cannot meet the requirement of tourists any more, for its principles are to be fair, impartial, and for the public good. To overcome the restriction, I would like to suggest the establishment of “Public Corporation for Tourism.” Though industrialization of tourism demands some expenditure from tourists, it is based on the principle of capitalism. To make tourism resources chargeable and introduce a competitive principle into the industry lead to advancing natural selection of tourism project which is unpopular among tourists. Even if tourism resources for a particular area are “history and tradition,” it is inessential to stick to old sales method according to the ancient custom. From now on, coexistence between “novelty” and “oldness” is urgent need. This will be the key to success in tourism promotion policy in Taito City.

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- i “In recreational activities such as appreciation, learning, experience, activity, relaxation, participation, mental uplift in order to satisfy humans’ fundamental desires, sightseeing is especially a series of activities done under natural or cultural environment far away from everyday life.” And also “sightseeing is the various activities done out of everyday life, which plan to learn and play, allowing a close contact with people.”
- ii Conducted by tourism promotion section in Taito City Office at the meeting place of event of Tokyo Marathon before running in February of 2008
- iii In this research, tourism resources mean all things that sightseeing economic effect is expected, such as natural sceneries, artificial landscapes, buildings, regional characteristics, events and festivals to attract visitors, including the sightseeing object within given period of time.
- iv Ueno means the area around Ueno Onshi Park and Ameyoko Sopping Arcade, that is, between the westward of Showa St. and the eastward of Shinobazu Pond. Asakusa means around the former Asakusa Park (around the present Asakusa 1-2, kaminarimon 1-2).
- v For example, the red light district in Shin-Yoshiwara and Kabuki Theaters in Saruiwa-cho. The commons approved these entertainments, but diplomats did not, because they regarded them as “disorderly things.”

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