

1. Executive summary

The challenge: Assess Yamagata's current tourist offerings and develop a set of recommendations to increase the number of inbound tourists.

Context

- In the face of an aging and declining population, the tourism industry in Yamagata can no longer rely solely on domestic tourists
- The National Government of Japan's Ministry of Land and Tourism has set an ambitious target growth plan of 40 million visitors to Japan by 2020
- Of all the inbound tourists to Japan, only 0.1 percent will make the trip to Yamagata

Findings

- The target markets for the tourist attractions and activities are not defined and require segmenting
- There is no clear marketing strategy for Yamagata or a visible message that makes it stand out as a destination
- Experiences are standalone, are not grouped together by themes (e.g., foodie trip), and the tourist accessibility and infrastructure need to be improved

Summary of recommendations



Segment and quantify the tourist market



Build the Yamagata brand



Deploy the Yamagata brand



Build experience packages



Generate awareness of experience packages



Develop Digital Yamagata



Support the digital tourist



Implement a measure-monitor-manage culture



Collaborate on a common goal



Develop an ambassador program



Take the mystery out of moving around Yamagata



Review and revitalize tourist attractions

Expected outcomes

Better understanding of tourist wants and needs

More effective marketing activities

Maximized brand awareness among the target segments and improved marketing ROI

Increased visitor satisfaction, value perception and revenue

Maximized holiday tour spending in Yamagata

Attract private companies and individuals to build apps without any development costs

The creation of new interactive tourist services

The creation of a trusted source of information and allow constituents to see progress

The investments and achievements will be visible to the local populace

Greater citizen involvement in tourism

Improved tourist satisfaction and revenues

Greater number of repeat visits and increased earned marketing

Vision

Yamagata has a lot to offer tourists, whether through its cuisine, history or natural beauty. However, inbound tourists are not currently aware of its potential. To ensure the tourism industry can prosper, Yamagata must identify the high-value tourist groups, define the Yamagata brand, build the experiences into themes, implement a Digital Yamagata, improve collaboration between the different tourism bodies and involve the local citizens.