

Q & A: What is “the power to enjoy” our lives

“Together, we enjoy freedom; together, we thrive in challenges” (Osaka University of Tourism Constitution 2022).

This slogan lies at the core of our educational philosophy. As a university specializing in tourism, offering the study of tourism as its subject, we proudly present this philosophy, one that we can uniquely advocate.

Under this philosophy, our mission is to support students growing as global citizens and industry professionals who have “the power to enjoy” (「楽しむ力」) their lives.

What is “the power to enjoy” our lives? Why and how does the ability to enjoy things in our lives relate to the issues of the study of tourism? We are sharing our answers in the Q&As below.

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●What is “the power to enjoy” something?

Few would deny the importance of “enjoyment” in life.

It is easy to feel enjoyment, such as satisfaction and happiness, when we engage in activities that follow our intrinsic motivations or fulfill our cravings. However, it sometimes takes effort to enjoy the process to get to this point.

For example, we desire to get to the top when we climb a mountain. However, achieving this goal becomes more challenging if a person lacks enough preparation or physical training or doesn’t have the route memorized. Feelings of anxiety or suffering might occupy that person’s mind rather than a sense of fulfillment. On the other hand, a person who had carefully prepared for mountain climbing would have enough space in their mind to enjoy the process of getting closer to the top. Knowledge about the ecology of flora, fauna, and geology might increase the enjoyment of the process.

As we can see in the example above, we must first identify a goal or object we wish to enjoy before we enjoy anything. Once we set the goal or object we want to enjoy, whether we experience pain or enjoyment in the process depends on whether we have the following abilities: the ability to imagine the potential paths to get to the goal and the ability to take the

initiative in acquiring a competence necessary for achieving the goal. We call the collection of these abilities “the power to enjoy” things.

Our human desires are more diversified and sophisticated than ever in contemporary society. We also have as many diverse problems to tackle and spend much of our lives addressing them. In today’s society, the critical question is how much we can enjoy our free and autonomous lives. Since developing the relevant abilities for achieving a goal is vital to enjoying the process, and since the power to enjoy things in life makes it possible for us to move toward developing relevant competencies, it is this power, above all, that impacts the critical question of our time - if we can enjoy our free and autonomous lives.

● Why is “the power to enjoy” things important now?

For recent young generations born in this century in Japan, it may be common sense that everyone wishes to enjoy things in life. However, it wasn’t always the way. There have been a few significant value changes in 20th-century Japan, even during the period after WWII.

When Japan first experienced rapid urbanization and high economic growth, i.e., until the mid-1970s, diligence and seriousness were the highest virtues. In other words, working diligently in a company was the most important thing in life. Combined with the lifetime employment system in Japanese companies, this moral value of hardworkingness led to the mass production of workaholics.

In the late 1970s, however, earnestness fell out of style (as reflected in the book “Japanese Youth Today—A Generation No Longer So Serious” published in 1991) and even became ridiculed. In this new era, the young generation (nicknamed the “new breed of humans”) rebelled against conventional values. Young people empathized with cultural icons who showed entertaining characteristics, being amusing rather than earnest like in the previous era. Simultaneously, people started recognizing the value of individuals' unique personalities and choices instead of losing themselves in a group.

In the 21st century, both during work hours and leisure time, how we spend our time has evolved to be more diverse and complex than ever. The search for and engagement with things we love and find appealing has increasingly become central to our worldview, whether in work or leisure activities. “Earnestness” and “having fun” used to be opposing values but are now tightly mixed. A lot of people now expect to “earnestly have fun.” The concept of “having fun” used to be passive, but now it has developed into a more proactive action.

As the subjects and means of enjoyment evolved, the very essence of “enjoying” things changed and developed. At this point in history, the central question is what each person enjoys with the “power to enjoy” something and what level of that power a person has.

We live our lives transforming our surroundings and ourselves. In our attempts to do so, whether we live our lives to the fullest depends on whether we can grow our “power to enjoy” things and make the most of that power. Tourism is a symbol of enjoying things of one’s own free will. As a university with tourism in its title, we have a social responsibility to pioneer the development of the “power to enjoy” things.

● What is tourism?

One of the most widely-used dictionaries in Japan, Kohjien (6th edition), defines tourism as “visiting and observing other lands. Also, seeing the sights and beauty of the places.” This definition, however, may not reflect the ever-expanding landscape of contemporary tourism. The extent of the “other lands” available now for tourism is more global and broader than ever, and tourists’ activities in the destinations are incredibly diverse and sophisticated like never before.

Reflecting the expanding landscape of contemporary tourism, we define tourism as “activities of appreciation, creation, and interaction that we do of our own free will, accompanied by a physical transfer into out-of-the-ordinary (nonroutine) spaces.”

The expression “of our own free will in the above definition highlights our freedom; we engage in tourism activities based on our desire and will, without being forced. “Appreciation” can be understood as consumption or enjoyment/savoring, “creation” as production, and “interaction,” in its essence, as communication.

To depict these keywords in another way, “appreciation” illustrates activities where we take in various external objects through our five senses; “creation” signifies activities where we effortfully generate things outside ourselves from the result of “appreciation;” finally, “interaction” indicates the activities where we share the experiences of “appreciation” and “creation” with others by communicating with each other.

Again, these three elements (appreciation, creation, and interaction) portray the essence of various activities in our lives, not just tourism but also our daily work (labor) and leisure activities other than tourism. What distinguishes tourism from work is that tourism activities happen of our own free will. What distinguishes tourism from other leisure activities is that tourism activities emerge from/in nonroutine, out-of-the-ordinary spaces.

As discussed in the first paragraph of this section, the tourism landscape has changed drastically in recent years. However, it’s not the only thing changing in contemporary society. How we relate to work (labor) and leisure activities has also transformed. In today’s culture, work, and leisure activities are often seen as significant contributors to our “raison d’être/ikigai.” As the crown jewel of leisure activities, tourism, uniquely involving a move into out-of-the-ordinary spaces, also critically impacts the quality of our lives.

The study of tourism is a scholarship whose subjects are the tourism activities as described above, their surrounding phenomena, and their environment. It is, therefore, a science that addresses our way of life and inquires about our life purposes (“raison d’être/ikigai”).

● Why do we engage in tourism?

At some point in our lives, we all step outside our daily lives and venture into a new world. The reasons and duration may vary, but when such acts are driven not by obligation but by personal desire and free will, many fall under the category of tourism. Thus, the question of why people engage in tourism ultimately leads to the question of why we, as humans, desire to explore and experience new worlds.

The desire to know and experience new places is both a fundamental human urge and a force that enhances the quantity and quality of that very desire. For instance, encountering a particular

cuisine from another country in daily life might spark the desire to travel to the country where that dish originated and experience the dish cooked authentically. Travelers who immerse themselves in the unique social and cultural context that gave birth to such cuisine gain a deeper understanding of the dish itself. They might even try to cook it themselves. As their taste for the cuisine deepens, it stimulates new intellectual and sensory desires.

As our intellect and sensibility develop, we are more likely to achieve the goals we aim for in life. Realizing a goal is deeply rooted in human desires, which means developing our intellect and sensibility leads to expanding the scope and depth of human freedom.

While labor (=work) is usually seen as the basis of human activities that induce the development of our intellect and sensibility, leisure activities we do of our free will during our free time complement this development. Among these free-time activities, tourism, in particular, often serves as a powerful stimulus that promotes the wholesome development of our intellect and sensibility. Here is why: Tourism lets us enter a nonroutine, unfamiliar space full of stimulation, which is magnified by the freedom and autonomy accompanying our tourism activities. Contemporary tourism, more sophisticated, diverse, and globalized than before, plays a significant role in enriching people's lives far beyond simple sightseeing or pleasure-seeking activities.

● “The power to enjoy”（「楽しむ力」）our lives, and “the power to thrive in challenges”（「生きぬく力」）

Our educational philosophy at the Osaka University of Tourism has two pillars: “the power to enjoy” things in life and “the power to thrive in challenges.”

First, what is the education for “the power to enjoy” life? Imagine visiting a village with a beautiful landscape of terraced rice fields. Whether or not a person can appreciate the beauty of the particular style of rice fields in front of them depends on that person's sensibility, experiences, and knowledge. A person with a seasoned sensibility could appreciate the scenery while perhaps contemplating the livelihood of the people who built the magnificent rice field scenery, and delight in its beauty while feeling the wind and smell of the place. A person can appreciate the scenery even more deeply if they have experience cultivating terraced rice fields before or know how these landscapes, often referred to as the original scenery of Asia, are becoming a precious cultural asset as they decline. Furthermore, people with the necessary language and communication skills can converse with local residents, enriching the tourism experience. In summary, we can enhance our tourism experiences by nurturing and polishing “the power to enjoy” things in life, and the power is the sum of knowledge, sensibility, and communication skills, including language skills.

The above is about education to foster citizens who enjoy tourism (i.e., tourists). Concurrently, we need education to nurture citizens who assume the role of providing tourism (i.e., tourism industry professionals). In our university, we identify this latter education as the one that cultivates “the power to thrive in challenges.” The condition under which we can enjoy tourism is when the subjects and means of tourism are adequately provided, and for that condition to come true, we need education for future professionals in the tourism and transportation industries. Making the condition a reality is part of the jobs in the tourism businesses. To thrive in contemporary society, tourism industry professionals must face difficult

tasks under various competitive situations, and that's when they need "the power to thrive in challenges."

To clarify, it's also crucial for industry professionals to find enjoyment in their work, as it is the driving force behind our lives. In other words, "the power to enjoy" our lives is indispensable for all of us who live in contemporary society. Furthermore, a tourism industry professional's job is to bring tourists enjoyment. And to provide enjoyment for others, we must first understand and empathize with what others enjoy. In this sense, nurturing "the power to enjoy" things in life is a prerequisite for gaining "the power to thrive in challenges" and, therefore, the most critical ability for professionals and citizens in contemporary society.

For this reason, the foundational philosophy of the Osaka University of Tourism lies in the fostering of the power to enjoy things in life.

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YAMADA Yoshiharu

President of Osaka University of Tourism

Representative of the Q&A Creation Team,
"the power to enjoy" Discussion Group