

Kashima Brewery Tourism® , mastermind behind Japanese brewery tourism: Revitalising the community through simultaneous diffusion of local sake wines and local culture!

Kashima City, Saga Prefecture



Background to the Project

By disseminating both local culture and local sake wines, we want to invigorate the local economy centred on world-renowned sake breweries

Located in Saga Prefecture, Kashima City is one of Japan's foremost areas for producing sake wine, with some six sake breweries located within the city. In particular, the Hizenhamashuku district, where there is a cluster of three breweries, features not only sake wine but also beautiful historical Japanese streetscapes that have been preserved, and is designated as a "Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings."

After the Fukuchiyo Shuzo Brewery won the top prize of "Champion Sake" at the IWC (International Wine Challenge) in 2011, momentum within the community to "create a tourist destination utilising Japanese sake" grew, leading to the establishment of the "Kashima Sakagura Tourism Promotion Committee" centring on six local sake breweries, local government agencies, and tourism-related organizations.

This unique project combining the promotion of local sake wines and local culture is pioneering within Japanese sake brewery tourism, and as a best practice for creating tourist destinations, its development is gaining attention not only in Japan but also internationally.

Project Aims

Revitalise the local community by spreading Japanese sake culture throughout Japan and the world.

Project Outline

Best practice for "creating a tourist destination" by spreading local sake wines, history, and culture"

Centred on the "Kashima Sakagura Tourism Promotion Committee"—an organisation that carries out community revitalisation activities by utilising sake breweries and sake wines as well as disseminating information about Kashima's sake wines and unique history and culture throughout Japan and the world—committee activities currently aim to expand year-round sake tourism focusing on the "Sake Brewery PR Event" that is usually held in March each year. The project involves a wide range of participants—local residents, private companies, local government agencies, etc.—while polishing local resources such as the area's sake breweries/sake wines and unique history/culture, and communicating their appeal.

Furthermore, project branding is also being pursued, with the name "Brewery Tourism®" being trademarked in 2012.



Sake brewers playing a leading role in the committee

Features and Innovation

Pursuit of management that does not depend on local government agencies gave birth to regional collaboration transcending walls between local government agencies

The Kashima Sakagura Tourism Promotion Committee differs from other community development and tourism-related organisations in that the committee is not dependent on support from local government agencies, but rather has steadily undertaken profit-making business activities aimed at securing independent financial resources; moreover, it has been achieving good results.

In particular, acquiring funds through the sale of “Six-Brewery Sets”—a product that the committee produced independently—contributed greatly to the securing of stable operational funding, and the committee’s operational independence has been increasing year-to-year.

Furthermore, a “Sake Brewery PR Event” sponsored by the committee is held at breweries in Kashima City every March. Not only has this event grown and expanded to now boast some of the largest crowds of attendees for a sake brewery event in Japan, but the committee activities in recent years have also expanded to include initiatives that transcend walls between local government agencies through cooperation with neighbouring municipalities.



Results of the Project

Growth into a movement for “community revitalisation through tourism” involving city residents and neighbouring local government agencies

The “Sake Brewery PR Event” that drew 30,000 visitors over two days in March 2012 attracted 99,000 visitors in 2019, expanding in scale to more than three times Kashima City’s population and becoming firmly established as the best sake brewery event in Japan. In recent years, the project has also launched a wide-area tourism organisation in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities inspired by this PR initiative, and other community revitalization initiatives transcending walls between local government bodies are now being developed through the addition of new tourist attractions.

Again in recent years, local residents have independently established a “Kashima Sakagura Tourism Guide Association.” Thus, a small project launched by sake breweries and tourism-related business operators has grown into a great movement incorporating local residents as well as neighbouring municipalities, with the resident-led “community revitalisation through tourism” movement taking root in the area.



Sake Brewery PR Event

Issues and Responses

Continuing to take on new challenges to avoid getting stuck in a rut

In order to promote the “Sake Brewery Tourism Event”, which is usually held every March, and year-round sake brewery tourism activities, it is essential to prevent events and projects from falling into a rut, ensuring that visitors are always presented with new surprises.

Once every month, the committee holds a meeting which is attended by representatives of all six of the breweries located in Kashima City. Here, members discuss new initiatives and experiments, such as a “Joint New Year Opening of Sake Casks at Six Breweries”, sale of “Six-Brewery Sets”, and the possibility of operating a “Free Bus Service” for travelling to and from the breweries.

Future Developments

Pouring effort into attracting inbound tourists and developing excursion-type sightseeing content, with the aim of establishing year-round tourism

The “Joint New Year Opening of Sake Casks at Six Breweries”, where visitors can enjoy Japanese sake wines produced by six local breweries in the region where they were produced, has received especially high praise from participants. The breweries have a friendly rivalry, with each brewery welcoming

visitors with their own innovative hospitality, such as holding concerts and providing unique brewery tours.

Moreover, a spring festival and other events are now held simultaneously in central Kashima City and nearby shopping districts around the time of the Sake Brewery PR Event. Not only does each of these activities provide impetus for attracting visitors to the area as a whole, but also three sake breweries in neighbouring municipalities have been holding a Japanese Sake Fair to coincide with the Kashima event since 2015. Thus, this project has become a movement that also involves neighbouring municipalities. In the future, we intend to proactively consider initiatives that enable visitors to enjoy excursions into surrounding areas.

Furthermore, 2019 saw the opening of guest houses in renovated traditional Japanese houses in Hizenhamashuku due to an influx of people moving into this district.

In future, we will strive to also attract inbound tourists in accordance with FIT, with the aim of establishing year-round sake brewery tourism while continuing to cooperate with these various other activities.

Reference URLs

<http://sakagura-tourism.com/main/>

(Kashima Brewery Tourism® Official Website (Available in Japanese with multilingual translation services provided.))

http://sakagura-tourism.com/site_files/file/guidebook/sakegb_en.pdf

(Kashima Brewery Tourism® Guidebook (English))

Contact

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Key Terms

◆Six-Brewery Set

A set of sake wines produced by the six breweries located in Kashima City. These sets are limited edition products that are available only during the Sake Brewery PR Event held in March.

◆Sake Brewery PR Event

This is the “Joint New Year Opening of Sake Casks at Six Breweries” event where visitors can enjoy sake wines produced by six local breweries in the region where they were produced.

Each brewery welcomes visitors with their own innovative hospitality, such as holding concerts and providing unique brewery tours. In addition, a spring festival and other events are held simultaneously in central Kashima City, and nearby shopping districts as well as at three sake breweries in neighbouring municipalities to coincide with the Sake Brewery PR Event.