

Chapter XXIII

Strategies for Cultural Economic Development in Kamakura: Managing Digital Contents and Cultural Assets

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ABSTRACT

Over recent years, the circumstances surrounding regional cultural assets have been significantly changed. A series of IT promotion projects implemented by the national government since the early 2000s have intensified regional initiatives in managing digital content of cultural assets. Behind this, there has been a growing expectation toward regional development through wide dissemination and proactive use of cultural information resources. In reality, though, many challenges still remain to become a driving force of regional economy. This means, in practice, a more strategic approach should be taken in the management of human, financial, and information resources. Using Kamakura as a case study, we present an integrated model that develops the underlying value of cultural assets into regional economic strength.

INTRODUCTION

The innovation of digital technology has caused a paradigm shift in the field of heritage management. It is characterized by increasing consciousness toward the digital archiving of cultural assets as

an integral part of an information infrastructure (Makiuchi, 2000). Japanese National government-led approaches such as the Cultural Heritage Online Plan (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003) and Local Culture Digitalization Project (Ministry of Internal Af-

fairs and Communications, 2003) have played an underpinning role in facilitating the accumulation, dissemination, and utilization of cultural information resources as broadband content.

Thanks to these efforts, many local authorities have become highly committed to digitalizing a variety of tangible and intangible cultural assets that represent their regions. According to the survey on the implementation of digital archives, nearly 90% of prefectural governments and more than 80% of museums throughout the nation have built digital archives and made them available on the Internet (Japan Digital Archives Association, 2005). However, despite such a remarkable increase in digitalization and networking, there has been little or no progress in the utilization of digital contents, especially in terms of contributing to the regional economy.

In the most basic sense, the digitalization of regional cultural assets is a means of manifesting regional attractiveness and quality; moreover, it can be a catalyst for interactions with the outside world (Kasaba, 2004). The biggest challenge that many regions face is to establish a cooperative framework for the continued improvement and effective use of digitalized cultural assets. In this chapter, we argue for the need to create a strategic mechanism for managing human, financial, and information resources so that it can generate long-term economic vitality. In this context, digital technology must be a cornerstone for ensuring that resources become value-added outputs enabling further cultural and economic activity. The conservation of cultural assets should be integrated into this value-chain mechanism and operated in a sustainable way.

In this chapter, we review and analyze the complex relationship among cultural assets, regional economies, and the innovation of digital technology. We particularly focus on the economic value of cultural assets and the controversial aspects that this has, and clarify the aim of digitalization in the context of regional economic development. The issues of ownership and rights management

are also taken into consideration. In a case study of Kamakura, a city with rich and varied cultural assets from medieval times, we propose an integrated regional model for sustainable development in order to convert the inherent value of cultural assets into regional economic benefits. Finally, the directions for future management of cultural assets are discussed.

BACKGROUND

Economic Value of Cultural Assets

Economic value is undoubtedly one of the most controversial natures that cultural assets have. It receives a great deal of attention in the context of regional economic policies and activities. More often than not, the concept of economic value is explained by two elements: use and nonuse. Use value (including direct use, indirect use, and optional use) refers to current and future commercial activities and any multiplier effects derived from them. For instance, tourism, sales of products, exhibitions, publications, and advertising can be included in this category. In contrast, nonuse value (including existence and bequest) refers to the notion that people do not intend to use a cultural asset (or visit a cultural heritage site), but that they do expect its continuing existence because of the significance that it has (Cegielski & Janeczko, 2001; IUCN, 1998; Pagiola, 1996).

When focusing on use value, we inevitably face the trade-off between the conservation and the utilization of cultural assets. For many historic cities, tourism plays a central role in the regional economy. Also, cultural assets are often exploited for tourist attractions. Indeed, the income brought by visitors' spending on accommodations, admission fees, meals, shopping, transportation, and other expenditures can be a financial base of a community (Cegielski & Janeczko, 2001). Yet, on the other hand, a growing number of visitors cause physical damage to cultural assets. For in-

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