

Factors Influencing Sports Teams' Choice of Training Camp Destinations in Japan: A Comparative Analysis

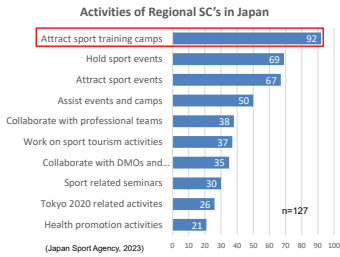


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Background



- Sports training camp have long been a central component of sports tourism in Japan.
- Number of cities bidding for Olympic teams' training camps before Tokyo 2020 increased.
- Recently, 72.4% of sports commissions in Japan work on attracting sports training camps. (Japan Sport Agency, 2023)
- Municipalities provide subsidy to sport teams which hold camps in their area.

Limited understanding of selection criteria difference among team characteristics, which may affect marketing strategies.

Purpose

To identify variations in destination selection factors based on team attributes, including player's gender composition, sport type, competitive level, and age group.

The findings enable destinations to have a better understanding of team preferences, and to conduct a more efficient segmentation and targeting strategy in marketing.

Literature Review

Aspects of decision-making for selecting a sport training camp destination

- ✓ Coaches/advisers and student leaders are typically the decision-makers at high school and university levels. (Oshimi et al., 2012)
- ✓ Flexibility of local organizer influences team's revisit. (Oshimi et al., 2012)

Central elements of destination choices

- ✓ Factors such as facility and equipment, training environment, daily life infrastructure, and meal services are central elements to destination choices for national-level teams. (Kubo and Matsui, 2020)

Nonetheless, prioritization of these factors may vary depending on team's characteristics; a deeper understanding of their preference is required.

Methodology

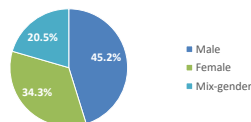
- **Subject** : Various sport teams' coaches and staff in Japan (n = 73)
- **Method** : Web-based survey distributed by snowball sampling
- **Period** : Jan 8 – Feb 28, 2025
- **Items** : Respondent's demographics, team attributes, factors of destination choice
- **Analysis** : Qualitative data from open-ended questions coded and analyzed using KH Coder. Major and subcategories extracted using co-occurrence network. Chi-square test applied to assess group differences regarding criteria of selection factors.

Results

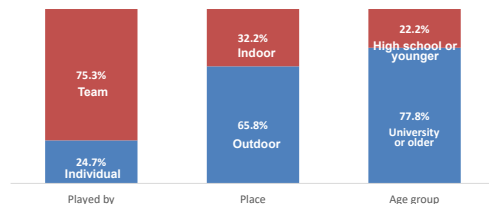
Demographics of teams

- ✓ Male>Female>Mixed
- ✓ Top-tier>National, Reginal
- ✓ Team sports>Individual sports
- ✓ Outdoor>Indoor
- ✓ University or older>High school or younger

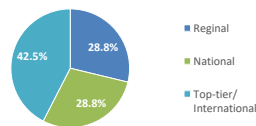
TEAM'S GENDER



TEAM ATTRIBUTES



COMPETITIVE LEVEL



Most frequently cited terms

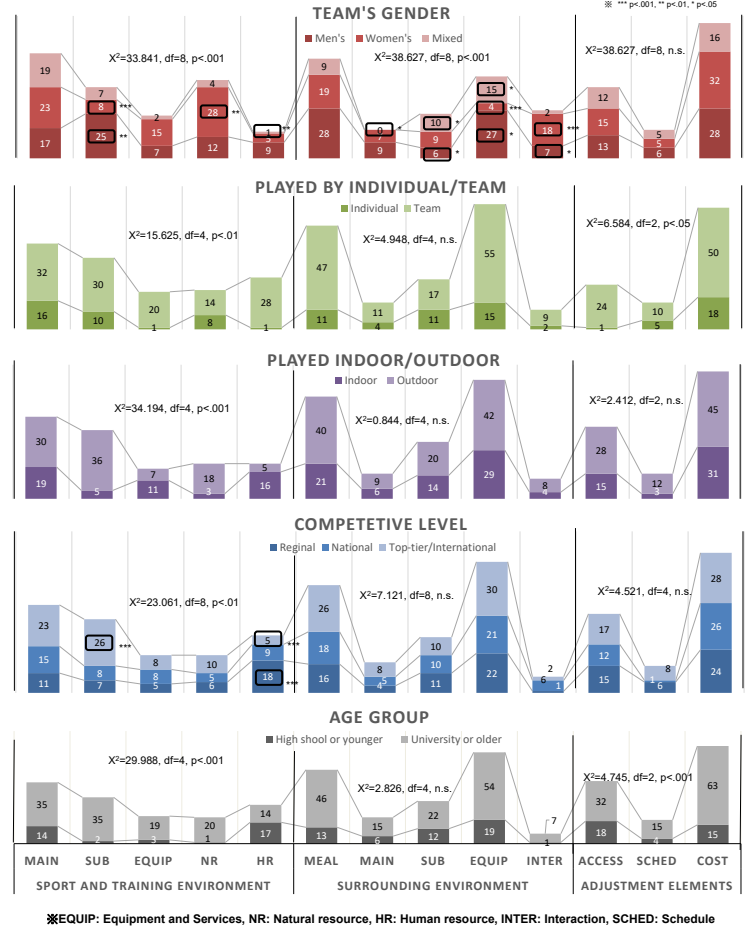
- ✓ All types except Outdoor and University or older teams cited "Cost", "Meal", and "Facility".
- ✓ The exceptional 2 types cited "Substantial sport and training facility (in case of rain)" the most.

3 major categories and 13 subcategories

- Sport and training environment**: main facility, substantial facility, equipment & services, natural resource, and human resource
- Surrounding environment**: meal, accommodation, substantial facility, equipment and services, interaction
- Adjustment elements**: access, schedule, cost

Significant difference in selection criteria

- ✓ Preference in **sport and training environment** differ depending on team attributes.
 - Outdoor sports, team sports, higher level sports tend to prioritize **substantial facility**.
 - Team sports, reginal-level sports, younger aged teams emphasized more on "opponent/games"(HR).
- ✓ Gender composition affects the preference for **surrounding environment**.
 - Mixed-gender teams prioritize **equipment/services** such as laundry, parking space, large baths, and has higher need for **shopping and sight-seeing (substantial facility)**.
 - Women's team seek more on **substantial facility** and **interaction** aspects.
- ✓ Higher demands in **adjustment factors** such as "access", "schedule", "cost" among team sports and university or older aged groups.



※EQUIP: Equipment and Services, NR: Natural resource, HR: Human resource, INTER: Interaction, SCHED: Schedule

Discussion

Importance of "substantial training facility" & "HR"

- ✓ Outdoor sport is influenced by weather, and as team size or competitive level increases, the need for substantial training facility gets higher.
- ✓ Most teams seek a competition-like environment with opponents.

Flexibility in adjustment factors

- ✓ Team sports and older age groups may have specific needs and require some flexibility in arrangements such as schedule, cost, and access.

Surrounding environment needs are not universal

- ✓ Mixed-gender teams maybe active tourists with a variety of interests.
- ✓ Women's teams maybe more open to interacting with other teams and locals.

Implication, Limitations, Future Studies

Implication

- ✓ Improvement of not only the main sport and training facilities, but also the quality of substantial facility may attract more teams such as outdoor sports and team sports.
- ✓ Assistance on finding opponent teams may become a helpful service for teams.
- ✓ Subsidy maybe more effective to team sports and university or older teams.
- ✓ Thorough collaboration with local business may elevate player's non-sport experiences and the satisfaction of their stay at the destination.

Limitations and future studies

- ✓ Unbalanced sample distribution and term counting.
- ✓ Gather more samples to conduct a quantitative study.