

Japan's 'Quality Service': Can Omotenashi be a source of Japan's soft power?

Abstract:

Visitors to Japan often express their appreciation of Omotenashi (Japan's quality service), and regularly comment on their pleasant experiences. Recently, Omotenashi has become a widely-used term by the Japanese government, mass-media and hospitality business who wish to attract more inbound tourists, one of the major strategies of Abenomics. It is also a term associated with the promotion of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020. What is Omotenashi? What are the fundamental elements and characteristics of Omotenashi? Is it uniquely Japanese? Are there similarities and differences in quality service in Japanese and non-Japanese settings? How can it contribute to increase Japan's soft power? Can it be transferable to a different cultural setting? This paper addresses these related questions from an interdisciplinary perspective. Despite popularization of the term Omotenashi, little research has been done concerning its concept, sources and impact among other important issues such as its transferability. This study is one of the pioneering academic investigations into this key term which seems to be gaining attention and importance in business and government sectors.

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