

# Chapter 25

## 'Little Australia': Unpacking Cosmopolitanism in Niseko, Japan



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**Abstract** This case study introduces the small village of Niseko in northern Japan, transformed through tourism into an international ski resort. It outlines the history of the resort and highlights how Niseko is an anomaly in an increasingly urbanised country in which rural communities are struggling due to increasing numbers of people migrating from rural areas to the cities. This case study invites students to explore and reflect on the tension between the economic gains from tourism development in rural areas and the impacts of tourism on the lives of tourism hosts. Narrative data are presented in the form of three micro-stories which incorporate both participant and researcher perspectives to offer insight into the experiences of real tourism business owners who live in Niseko and offers potential pathways to address the points of friction between the hosts and visitors. The sociological concept of cosmopolitanism is introduced, and students are invited to reflect on various ways that cosmopolitanism can be used to understand both tourism hosts and tourism spaces.

**Keywords** Cosmopolitanism · Rural tourism · Host experiences · Japanese tourism · Ski tourism · Tourism spaces · Socio-cultural change

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## Introduction

This case study demonstrates how the small agricultural village of Niseko in Japan has been transformed from a rural farming community into an international ski resort through the development of international ski tourism since the late 2000s. The case study highlights how international tourism has influenced the socio-cultural environment of the village, and in particular, how international tourism has changed the community from being composed of a homogenous Japanese demographic to a population which is culturally and socially diverse and inclusive. This case prompts students to contemplate the tension between the economic gains from tourism development in rural areas and the impacts of tourism on the lives of the people who live and work in tourism receiving communities. Data in the form of micro-stories drawn from the experiences of tourism business owners in the Niseko area are presented to provide first hand insights and suggest potential strategies which could be used to address the points of friction between the hosts and visitors.

Once tourism development occurs in a community, the lives of the people that live there are affected by the influence of tourism (Jurowski et al., 1997). It is recognised that unlike other industries, tourism has the capacity to “permeate communities” (Harrill, 2004, p. 2), and is a powerful vehicle of socio-cultural change in host communities (Mbaiwa, 2011; Styliadis et al., 2014; Wu, 2014). Through understanding the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, it is possible to illuminate and explore the relationship between the tourist and the host society and the influence of each on the other (Lupoli et al., 2014). The need to explore and understand these kinds of impact is acute and recognised to be beneficial for industry, governments and the overall well-being of the host community (Deery et al., 2012). Research has demonstrated that involvement in tourism appears to affect both hosts and guests in tourism spaces in a variety of ways (Canavan, 2016), such as changes to lifestyles, values, behaviours and identities (Burr, 1995; MacLeod, 2004; McDowell & Choi, 2010; Sharpley & Telfer, 2002). Despite these considerable impacts, the socio-cultural influences of tourism on residents is an area of tourism research often overlooked (Deery et al., 2012; Styliadis et al., 2014) particularly in rural communities (Yeh & Fotiadis, 2014), such as Niseko, Japan.

The teaching objectives of this case study include: developing an understanding of sociocultural impacts of tourism in a real tourism community and reflecting on both the positive and negative aspects of these impacts; recognising both potentials for, and challenges of tourism in rural communities as an agent of revitalisation; critically reflecting on host perspectives of the impacts of tourism given their reliance on the industry; and introducing and developing an understanding of the sociological concept of, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and how it may apply in tourism spaces.

‘Cosmopolitanism’ is a sociological concept which can be used as a lens to understand social transformation by recognising new or emerging social realities (Delanty, 2006) in tourism spaces. Derived from ancient Greek word *kosmopolites*, meaning ‘citizen of the world’ (Delanty, 2006), cosmopolitanism is defined as the ability to know and utilise a vast cultural knowledge (Kendall et al., 2009).

The concept of cosmopolitanism can be applied when considering both the qualities of people and places (Lawhon & Chion, 2012). The key features of cosmopolitanism in tourism contexts are recognised to include:

- cultural exchange facilitated by mobility
- openness to other cultures
- international travel
- a perception of being globally connected (Hannerz, 1990; Urry, 1995; Vertovic & Cohen, 2002).

Cosmopolitan spaces are created by cosmopolitan individuals, both those who are mobile and those without global mobility. For example, in a study examining the tourism destination of Cusco, Peru, Lawhon and Chion's (2012, p. 541), local participants described feeling as if, "we do not live in Cusco anymore, we are citizens of the world as an outcome of living in a tourism space". Thus, cosmopolitan spaces may be created and recreated by both local and international influences and the interplay between them (Clifford, 2003).

Another perspective of cosmopolitanism relevant to consider in regard to this case is that much like mobility; cosmopolitanism is suggested to be largely underpinned by discourses of consumption (Butcher & Smith, 2010). Cosmopolitanism was traditionally exclusively attributed to the global elite, for example in the context of Niseko, Takeda (2017) notes that Australian tourists are Anglo-Saxon, native English speakers from a first world country and fit typical perceptions of cosmopolitans.

The change that has occurred in the rural community of Niseko is significant, given the history of tourism, limited migration into Japan, and increasing urbanisation in Japan. Rural areas, such as Niseko, in particular, are being targeted as regions rich in opportunity to stimulate inbound tourism growth. Kato and Horita (2018) highlight a key trend in future Japanese tourism research will be centred around the utilisation of tourism as a means of development for rural areas, demonstrating the salience of research concerned with understanding regional tourism spaces. Thus, Niseko represents a distinct case of a rural community, which is countering the broader trend of rural de-population in Japan through international tourism that has shaped it into a unique socio-cultural space.

## Rural Tourism in Japan

Rural tourism spaces are recognised as experiencing more acute influences from tourism development than their urban counterparts (Dickman, 1989), and are generally characterised by highly homogenous populations and small family-run enterprises (Beeton, 2006). In comparison with urban areas throughout Japan, rural communities have experienced an economic decline due to a continuing trend of urbanisation and governmental industrialisation policies since the 1960s (Fujita & Tabuchi, 1997; Schneider & Silverman, 2010). For example, many villages

advertise low or no cost abandoned houses as an incentive for young urbanites to relocate to rural areas to combat the dual pressures of depopulation and ageing (Funck & Cooper, 2013). The influence of globalisation and deregulation since the 1980s has further increased this trend towards urbanisation (Shikida et al., 2010).

Agricultural activity in Japan is declining, and in turn, this has affected population levels in rural locations, which as an outcome has threatened the survival of many regional communities (Chen et al., 2018). Funck and Cooper (2013, p. 119) predict a “Darwinian struggle for survival as the population outside major cities across the country diminishes in line with the predicted decline for the Japanese population overall”. The governmental support for rural tourism in Japan is particularly motivated by the prospect of development through the process of *muraokoshi* (awakening the village), underpinned by the decline of these communities (Hashimoto & Telfar, 2010). The sustainable aspect of this kind of development is not motivated by aspirations to preserve the natural environment, but rather with community involvement as a way of overcoming depopulation (Arlt, 2006), and creating jobs through tourism (Funck & Cooper, 2013).

## Introduction to the Research Site of Niseko, Japan

Niseko is located on the northernmost tip of the Japanese archipelago on the island of Hokkaido. The island is mountainous and spans 1283 km<sup>2</sup>. Hokkaido is the largest region in Japan, and the most sparsely populated (Teikoku-Shoin, 2010). The area is known for its natural beauty, and a strong farming industry comprised of numerous small villages, many specialising in a particular type of field produce or dairy product (Staples, 2011; Teikoku-Shoin, 2010). Hokkaido has a strong nature-based tourism industry, considered to be an important component of the national economy (Ide, 2012; Teikoku-Shoin, 2010).

Niseko is located 93 km west, or approximately 100 km from the prefectural capital, Sapporo (population of 1.87 million), see Fig. 25.1. The population of Niseko is 4958, and the population density is 25 persons per square kilometre (Niseko Town Council, 2018). Niseko is known for its cool climate, low humidity and abundant snowfall (Japan External Trade Organisation, 2006).

The chance introduction of skiing by an Austrian Lieutenant in 1912, a year after its initial introduction in central Japan, changed the course of the future of the Niseko area. By 1961 the first ski lifts had opened, marking the beginning of the transformation of the area into a ski destination (Committee for Publishing a History of Ski Resort Development at Hirafu, 2011). Underpinned by the success of the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympic Games, in the 1980s there was a rapid expansion of ski lifts, ski lodges and hotels in the Niseko area (Committee for Publishing a History of Ski Resort Development at Hirafu, 2011). During this period of expansion, many Japanese migrated to the Niseko area from cities in other parts of Japan to pursue a more natural lifestyle (M Kureha, 2014). The area has gained distinction as a world class ski resort due to the consistent falls of high-quality powder snow



**Fig. 25.1** The geographical location of Niseko in Japan (Nelson, 2019)

(Staples, 2011). While originally popular with a mostly domestic ski tourism market, it has only been since the early 2000s (Segon et al., 2015) that Niseko has attracted inbound tourists in large numbers (Hirota, 2015). The influx of snow seeking Australians to Niseko was quickly followed by the arrival of Australian investment companies, which led to the development of apartment complexes and travel agencies positioned to serve the new foreign tourists (Funk & Cooper, 2013).

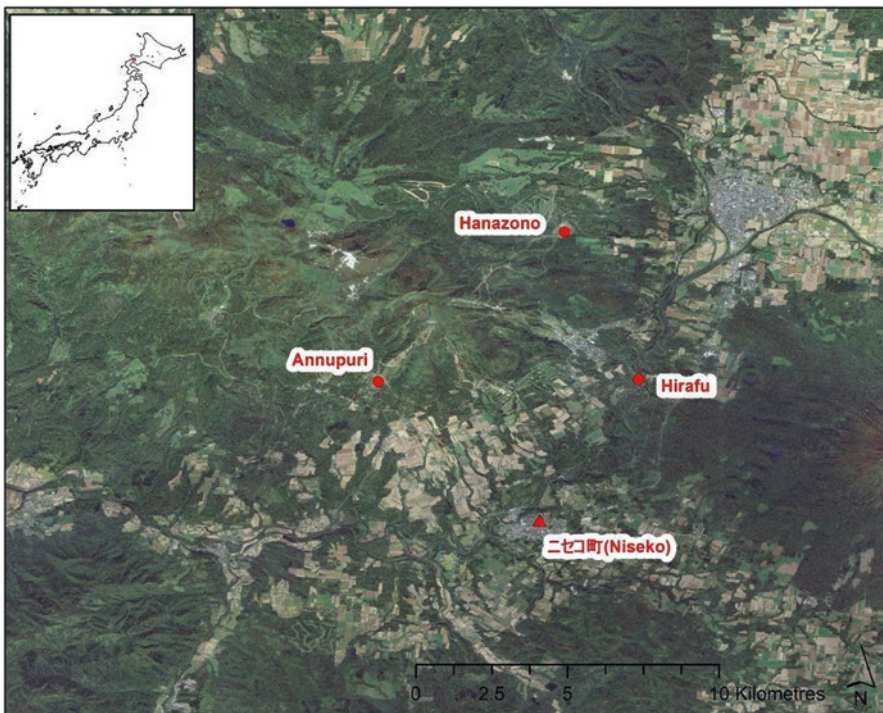
While Niseko town itself is a small administrative hub, what has become known as the 'Niseko area' encompasses ski fields located in the surrounding areas of



Kutchan town, Grand Hirafu, Hirafu Onsen, and Annupuri (Staples, 2011) (see Fig. 25.2).

There are about 250 accommodation facilities in the Niseko area, the majority of which are located near the ski slopes. This number includes five large hotels (100 rooms +), an increasing number of new self-contained apartment complexes targeted at foreign tourists, and a number of smaller bed and breakfast and pension facilities. The style of accommodation developments in the Niseko area is reflective of the Australian trend of taking longer holidays than Japanese tourists (Hirafu, 2011). Australian-style apartment blocks which are four to six storeys high dominate the ski field base and do not conform to the existing style of Japanese ski resort developments (Kureha, 2014); see Fig. 25.3. An international school was opened in Niseko in 2012 to accommodate the children of the growing expatriate population (Takeda, 2017).

At present, Niseko is recognised as an economically successful tourist ‘hot spot’ in Hokkaido, and Japan more broadly (Ide, 2012). The majority of inbound tourists are foreign ski and snowboard enthusiasts, attracted by Niseko’s ranking as one of Japan’s top ski resorts. Niseko is recognised as being transformed from a rural to a cosmopolitan environment by foreign investment in recent years, manifesting what has been termed the ‘Niseko boom’ (Staples, 2011). The local economy has been



**Fig. 25.2** Villages within the Niseko ski area (Nelson, 2019)



**Fig. 25.3** Hirafu streetscape. (Image author's own)

revived by foreign investment and has been highlighted by the Japanese government as an example of how foreign investment can revitalise rural economies. However, the long-term feasibility of continued development in the area has been questioned due to the rapid inflation of land prices (Staples, 2011).

Peak tourism season in Niseko is winter (December to April), and during this time, there is an influx of ski and snowboard tourists to the area (Staples, 2011). The Niseko area attracts both domestic and inbound visitors across its seven ski slopes each winter (Japan External Trade Organisation, 2006). During the summer period (July–August) the Niseko area is promoted as a 'green' destination, encouraging tourists to enjoy the natural scenery, hot springs and more recently, adventure tourism such as white-water rafting (Staples, 2011).

The Australian tourist boom occurred in response to Australian skiers and snowboarders seeking an alternative ski destination after the September 2001 attacks in the United States of America (Kureha, 2014). Many Australians are settling in the Niseko area, developing tourism-based businesses and establishing holiday homes, transforming local streetscapes (Committee for Publishing a History of Ski Resort Development at Hirafu, 2011; M. Kureha, 2008). Due to the concentration of Australians in the Niseko area, the prominence of English and availability of Australian food, it is often referred to as 'Little Australia' (Takeda, 2017). Statistics from the local government office demonstrate this demographic change. For example, in December 2003 eighty foreign residents were recorded in the region, and by December 2016, this had increased to 1545 foreign residents (Kutchan Town Office, 2016).

While such increased tourist demand and tourism development are positive for the economic outlook of Hokkaido and Niseko, it is clear that international tourism also has other influences. Research by Nelson (2019) and Nelson and Matthews

(2018) investigated the perceived effects of Australian tourism in the Niseko area and highlighted, firstly, a developing Australian tourist enclave and secondly, potential issues with regards to excessive alcohol consumption and other anti-social behaviours among Australian tourists. The Japan External Trade Organisation (2006) reported that one of the key obstacles facing the future of tourism in the Niseko area is concern regarding potential friction between Japanese hosts and foreign guests, which is underpinned by the significant increase in foreign tourists.

In addition to the impact of Australian tourists on the social environment of Niseko, inbound travel from nearby Asian countries has also increased in recent years. In 2016, Niseko welcomed 1,693,000 foreign tourists, and of these, the top three source countries for inbound tourists included China with 39,902, Hong Kong with 33,616, Taiwan with 29,024 and Australia with 24,856 (NisekoGovernment Office, 2017). With a recent increase in direct flights from mainland China to Hokkaido, the number of Chinese inbound tourists to Hokkaido has been steadily increasing since 2007 and the latest statistics from 2016 indicate they have overtaken Australian tourists (Foster, 2011; NisekoGovernment Office, 2017). This is not surprising, given that China is acknowledged as the leading tourism market worldwide (UNWTO, 2014) and Japan is identified as one of the top ten outbound destinations for Chinese tourists (CTA, 2014). The pattern is the same in Niseko with the Kutchan Town Office reporting seventy-six Chinese tourists to the Niseko region in 2005 and 8179 Chinese tourists in the area in 2015 (personal communication, 2016). In light of this rapid growth and the contribution it is no doubt making to the local tourism economy in Niseko, it should be noted that recent research by Ji et al. (2016) has revealed that Japanese domestic tourists in Niseko feel challenged by the different manners and customs of Chinese tourists in the area. To assist in navigating tourist behavioural issues, the Hokkaido Tourism Board released a guide to appropriate behaviour for Chinese tourists in Japan (HokkaidoTourism Organisation, 2016) detailing the 'correct' way to eat in restaurants, use Japanese bathroom facilities, queue, behave in shops and at hot springs, and interact with attendants and other service personnel. The brochure has since been taken out of circulation (after complaints from Chinese tourists who were offended by it), but its very existence highlights the fact that Chinese tourists presence is having a notable impact on the social environment in the area.

## The Situation

As a regional community in Japan, the Niseko area provides a unique case of tourism space, which has been physically, socially, and economically transformed by international tourism. As a previously rather culturally homogenous area, it has experienced rapid tourism development and significant changes in a short period of time. These changes include the emergence of an Australian tourist enclave, into which other groups, including Chinese tourists, have since moved, transforming the social space of the town. The physical evidence of the foreign influence brought by



tourism to Niseko is easily discernible to any visitor; however, the social impacts on individuals who are living and working in the tourism space are less evident. Addressing this gap, the following three micro-stories are drawn from narrative interview data aimed at unpacking experiences of Japanese and Australian tourism business owners who live in Niseko, Japan (Nelson, 2019) to offer a window into the experiences of individuals living in this unique socio-cultural space.

### Micro-Story 1: Kita-San

*Kita-san is the kind of Japanese man whose energy belies his age. Slightly built with sharp features, he ascends the steep wooden staircase to his guesthouse with ease. Having lived in both the USA and England, Kita-san speaks excellent English and has prepared a whole table of pamphlets and maps that he thinks could be useful. He gives a quick tour, and then we get down to business. No tea or chit chat. Although not a teacher, Kita-san has the presence of a polished instructor, and he is most insistent that everything is covered.*

Kita-san was born in Hokkaido, not far from Hakodate, and his wife was born in Sapporo. After they married, they lived abroad for a time, and then returned and settled in Kobe for 30 years while Kita-san worked as a company employee. Uncomfortable in the hot climate of Kobe, they returned to Hokkaido and chose Niseko as it is halfway between their two hometowns. They did not move with the intention of building holiday cottages, however, encouraged by a local builder who was building their house, they agreed to the construction and opened it to the public in 2000.

Kita-san attributes the growth of Australian tourism in Niseko to two key factors, firstly the oil boom in Australia, and secondly, Australians wanting shorter travel times when travelling abroad to ski. He estimates 90% of visitors in winter were Australians in the early years, around 2004–2005.

Kita-san reflects that when he first moved to Niseko, there were mainly small cottages down the main street and a spa and lots of space between buildings and natural forest close to the houses (he illustrates this with one of his maps). More recently, however, he has noticed many more Asian visitors have been coming to Niseko. Interestingly, Kita-san believes that tourism has had little impact on the local economy as he sees most of the profits going outside of the town due to all the investment.

An important point of difference about Niseko identified by Kita-san is that there are opportunities for citizens to attend town meetings and express their opinions and advocate for change. This is a process that he is very proud of being a part of, and he cites numerous examples of recommendations the citizens have suggested that have been acted upon by the local council, such as increased English signage. Kita-san is adamant that Niseko is,

*Very, very different (from other parts of Japan). Because this town is the first town to declare such kind of regulation. It's the first town. Therefore, we could speak about many problems.*

One of the troubling outcomes of tourism business development for Kita-san is that the increased wages offered by large tourism businesses have affected the capacity of farmers to be able to afford to employ workers. He feels this situation is compounded by the very low unemployment rates in the area.

In terms of his own experience of living in a tourism space that has been transformed by international tourism, Kita-san feels that he has not had to adjust at all;

*I have experience of living abroad, the United States and the UK. I visited many times Australia also. So, here is not so different for me at all.*

He believes that living overseas has been the experience, which has really changed him, exposing him to different cultures that have different ways of thinking;

*One thing is the thinking way. Mm, many things actually. One, the biggest thing is that I recognise individuals is most important thing for human beings, but for Japanese are used to act as a group. Also, along with that, many people have their own way to live or think so, he is he and she is she.*

Kita-san illustrates his different perspective as he shares a story about the recent increase in Chinese tourists to Niseko. He remembers how they were largely thought of as 'trouble makers' as they seemed not to follow the rules in terms of things like disposing rubbish or being quiet in restaurants; many guesthouses did not want to have them. Kita-san's perspective was quite different. He could see there was a cultural difference and told the other accommodation owners that they needed to be patient and their manners would improve in time. Kita-san felt that for people who do not have experience living abroad, it is hard to understand such cultural difference.

Kita-san has clear plans for his future and no intention of slowing down. He is very committed to the idea of intercultural exchange and hopes to facilitate this by working with the council to develop a student exchange program in Niseko.

## Micro-Story 2: Shimizu-San

*The guesthouse is right in the middle of town in a prime location. We knock and wait for quite a while for an answer; there is no one about. Eventually, a late-middle-aged woman in an apron answers the door and seems annoyed about being disturbed. I feel like I am imposing, and it does not sit comfortably with me. I am very aware that she is reluctant to refuse us out of politeness. Despite having arranged the interview with her, she says she is busy but will talk to us quickly, as she has to prepare dinner. Donning slippers in the genkan, the interpreter and I are led to the main area of the guesthouse, it is quite dark and full of country style pine furniture. Large soft teddy bears are the decorative theme; their eyes, like drops of hard toffee, are unsettling.*

Shimizu-san speaks rapid fire Japanese to the interpreter, as her story is carefully unfolded. Born in Tohoku, Shimizu-san moved to Niseko in 1980 with her young family to pursue a new lifestyle that would allow them to ski. This was one of the first guesthouses in the area, and in the early times, she mainly had Japanese guests. An Australian man and his Japanese wife approached her about having foreign guests, and because she liked them, she agreed. After that, everyone started copying the idea, and many Australian travel companies began to 'broadcast' Niseko. Things began to change, *ahh there were more who came and there were people who sold land and they invested and then more buildings were built like this.*

Shimizu-san recounts how more and more of the original Japanese guesthouses are being sold; *Because they (foreigners) paid three times more than its original value, that is why they sold their properties.*

She recounts how her feelings have changed since that first foreign guest:

*I appreciated it in the beginning, but recently, when foreigners come, I am sorry, you are a foreigner, well it is stressful. Has been very stressful, still very stressful. It is because, maybe because of this location, Australians scream at night, over drinks.*

*They drink a lot, don't they? And it wasn't here, but there was a fight at a bar. And there are a lot of fireworks, and public safety and peace got worse. And here, last year. Someone who wasn't my guest was sleeping here, of course there was no room, so they were sleeping in the entrance way. It happens every year. My car is parking in front of the guesthouse, it was a little bit damaged. And because of those things I am stressed. More and more stressed. Ahhhhhh.*

Shimizu-san is clearly being impacted by foreign tourists. In winter, she describes feeling like she is in a foreign country, and laments needing to use English which she hoped she was finished with at university.

Looking forward, Shimizu-san is thinking about retirement and the possibility of moving. Still, there is tension around this decision, as she clearly is deeply connected to the landscape of the Niseko area.

*We are at a certain age, so we are hoping, we are hoping live somewhere quiet. I hope, in the end.*

*Ahh. I want to have relaxing time, with doing what I like, like hobby and watch Mount Yotei. Not here, it is too noisy. Quiet place. I like Mount Yotei, as long as I can see it. With watching, looking at Yotei. (laugh). I like mountains. I like mountains more than oceans. Life like that. It's cold though. And I have to shovel the snow. (laughs). But it should be ok.*

*This interview did not have the same open, expansive feel of most of the others, and interestingly she seemed, out of all the participants, to be the one not only resistant to being interviewed but also resistant to the change brought by tourism. I could sense a kind of anger in her, and as the interview progressed, it seemed to become an opportunity for her to voice her discontent, space for her experiences to be heard.*

### Micro-Story 3: Brad

*Japanese families are busy creating and recreating memories. Sausages on a stick can be bought from the open grill and fresh berry ice cream from a stand. The in-house café has an impressively long menu of coffee varieties. Children are delicately balanced on horses and slowly led around the grounds. The squeal of delighted toddlers punctuates the air as chubby hands discover the bristly touch of the farm animals, safely ensconced in the stalls. Hay is on the ground, and the staff wear long black gumboots. Brad welcomes me like an old friend; our conversation flows easily as we sit on a high veranda and talk over the steady noise of the tourists below. Dressed something between a cowboy and a drover, Brad's Australian accent is unchanged from many years living in Japan.*

Brad studied Japanese at school and did a student exchange to Japan involving a trip to Hokkaido. From that point, he knew he would somehow return. While at university, he travelled to Hokkaido in the long summer breaks to work in a sausage factory and ski in the non-work hours. Brad returned to Hokkaido after university, and each weekend travelled to Niseko to ski. While there, he stayed at a small guesthouse and became friendly with the owner who was something of a maverick, **he drilled his own onsen and all that sort of stuff and it was just a mish mash of whatever he found lying around – he would build an extension out of it, basically think like 'The Castle'... Japanese version.**

When the guesthouse owner found out he was dying, he encouraged Brad to buy the business so his wife could retire after he died. Brad reflects that he, **was just the right place, right time, there were enough people. (I) basically just sent a letter back to all my friends in Australia saying I have got this ski lodge, I know I have been pestering you all for years to come and stay but seriously come and stay this place is amazing come and check it out. So, lots of bites from friends, so they did a lot of the work for me and passed it on and word of mouth and at that stage there was really nowhere else to stay that was, well certainly not budget that was easy for foreigners to get into so, I mean we were almost full from year one. No business plan required.**

The guesthouse thrived, and Brad's life revolved around running it;

*I basically worked really hard every winter for about ten years and did not do much in the summer for ten years.*

Despite the lifestyle advantages, he felt the running of the business **still weighed on me, I still stressed. Also, it was getting really noisy on that street, we were getting a lot of drunkards as well, snowguns, bogan riff raff coming through. So, most of my clientele were families and it just wasn't nice, waking up with sick on the front of the door or you know they would be walking home not even that late and idiots would be pissing on the door or whatever, so I was just like nah this isn't fun and I was getting stressed of a night because there was doof doof music keeping everyone awake So I am totally responsible. It was just stressful.**

Eventually, Brad turned the guesthouse into a restaurant and brought in partners to run it. For a time, he worked in tourism real estate development and then resort development for a large Thai company, as their international development director. He describes this period as changing him from a 'ski bum' to someone who could understand a corporate environment. At this time, his perception of large companies transformed. He began to see them as entities that could make a positive impact when underpinned by good people with a clear vision. During this period, Brad worked on understanding branding and distilling the core values of the company. This experience had a significant impact on Brad and how he views his current tourism business and its context.

*It really, really changed me. It changed my thinking, it just gave me a lot more understanding, knowledge about what it is all about and how that relates to everything, and since then I have been constantly changing, it has become a big thing for me. So, what I am doing here is a constant exploration of actually what I want from this place, what I want this place to be um you know how that fits into the land here.*

Brad has noticed changes to Niseko in the time he has lived there, from the early days of domestically driven tourism to the 'Aussies who came in force' and grew the town and things got, *busier and busier and your Tim Tams and Vegemite and all that sort of stuff started appearing.*

More recently, he notes an increase in tourists from Hong Kong, Singapore, and also more Scandinavians, whom he affectionally describes as, 'the tall, blonde, good looking bastards'. Brad remembers turmoil in the community when foreigners started buying up businesses; however, he reflects,

*it was inevitable that if the Australians hadn't come in they would have closed, it was that simple. It had a huge impact on the economy, people coming in and buying up and then getting the international travellers to come and ski there ahh saved it, I mean, you can talk about community all you like. One way or the other, if the Australians hadn't come the resort [it] would have been, bye bye, ahh, so it killed the community while simultaneously creating a new one.*

Brad describes his vision for himself in the future as a 'gentleman scientist'. He is reflexive about his role as a tourism business owner.

*I am not the kind of person that is going to come in and bulldoze everything, I am not a, I wouldn't want to come in and (force change), so my branding has to fit in with learning the history of this place and that is really working out what the future is and how that fits into my concept as a gentleman scientist. I think we probably could have treaded, even a little bit softer.*

Brad has spent almost his whole adult life in Niseko and reflects that he feels like he has grown up alongside it, he had watched it transform from the rough and ready early days when it was dominated by young Australian snowboarders chasing powder snow and cheap accommodation and beer, to the world class resort it is today offering luxury accommodation, fine dining and a burgeoning holiday home industry. This young Aussie snowboarder turned businessman, and now aspiring gentleman scientist looks perfectly at ease as he tips his Akubra to thank me and disappears into the crowd of tourists below.



## Conclusion

This case study has demonstrated how the development of tourism can have a transformative impact on rural communities. The sociological concept of ‘cosmopolitanism’ was introduced and discussed in relation to tourism spaces and the people who live in tourism receiving communities and was applied as a lens to offer a more nuanced understanding of social transformation in Niseko, Japan.

This case study has unpacked the different reactions of tourism hosts regarding international tourism development in rural spaces. It has explored the inherent tension between the economic benefits of tourism and social and cultural impacts on host communities. The micro-stories presented in this case, illustrate the various ways cosmopolitanism can be embodied by both people and the places that they inhabit. This case draws focus on the question: how can we create strategies which engender culturally sensitive and socially sustainable tourism development?

## Teaching Note

### *Case Summary*

This case draws on the narratives of three real tourism business owners in Niseko, Japan, to illustrate how international tourism development can influence the lives of the people that live and work in tourism spaces. The sociological theory of cosmopolitanism was introduced, a concept which can be used to understand social transformation by recognising new or emerging social realities in tourism spaces.

### *Teaching and Learning Objectives*

1. *Understand the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in a real tourism community and reflect on the positive and negative aspects of these*
2. *Recognise the potential for and challenges of tourism in rural communities as an agent of revitalisation*
3. *Introduce and develop an understanding of the sociological concept of ‘cosmopolitanism’ and discuss how it may apply in tourism spaces*

## ***Target Audience***

At an early undergraduate level, this case study could be used to foster greater understanding and critical thinking about rural tourism and tourism impacts in host communities. At third year or post-graduate levels, this case-study invites students to apply theory to real data and prompts students to reflect on multiple perspectives within a single case.

## ***Teaching Approach and Strategy***

The following format could be used for students to use this case study in a classroom environment:

1. Students to read the case study individually (or set as required reading before class) – 20 min.
2. In class, students are allocated into small groups of 4–5 and given 2–4 of the teaching questions as relevant to the focus of the course to brainstorm as a group – 15–25 min.
3. Each group shares their ideas with the whole group – 15–20 min.
4. The instructor facilitates a group discussion to unpack any other key ideas and encourages students to think critically about the ideas – 15 min. Students should also be encouraged to think of other example towns and regions (e.g., from their own experience) to further reflect on the key aspects outlined in the case study (this could be set as homework as a reflective task).

## ***Case Study Questions***

1. Reflect on the experiences of the three business owners, what similarities or differences could you identify between their experiences?
2. What challenges has the development of international tourism brought to the lives of tourism business owners?
3. What lessons could be learned from this case which could be applied to other struggling rural communities in Japan?
4. Reflecting on the concept of 'cosmopolitanism', are there any examples of non-cosmopolitan behaviour and attitudes that are apparent in the micro-stories?
5. In the study conducted in Cusco, Peru, by Lawhon and Chion's (2012, p. 541) local participants described feeling as if "we do not live in Cusco anymore, we are citizens of the world as an outcome of living in a tourism space". Reflect on this statement in relation to the experiences of the tourism business owners. Ask students to identify with this feeling from their own experience. Ask how they feel, why etc.

6. Reflecting on the three tourism business owner's experiences and the key features of cosmopolitanism, which tourism business owners (if any) are cosmopolitan and why?
7. Do you think international tourists have contributed to Niseko functioning as a cosmopolitan space? Explain why or why not?

### *Sample Answers*

1. Both Kita-san and Brad had lived abroad before settling in Niseko, thus had experience with other cultures, Shimizu-san, has not lived overseas and not had the same opportunity to develop the same level of cultural acuity. Both Brad and Shimizu-san express that they have been in situations when tourist behaviour has negatively impacted their lives; conversely, Kita-san feels that he is so comfortable with foreigners that they have no impact on him.
2. Some of the challenges include; the flow of tourism revenue flowing out of Niseko, alcohol fuel anti-social behaviours, tourism jobs driving wage prices up and drawing workers away from traditional roles, Chinese tourists not following social norms, land prices increasing due to foreign investment and trespassing.
3. Local communities and councils need to be cognisant of the potential economic impacts to the local community of international tourism development. There is a need for proactive planning to navigate cultural differences and social norms between the host community and incoming tourists. The development of international tourism in rural spaces may require increased English (or other) language capacity.
4. Examples of non-cosmopolitan behaviour include the tourist's alcoholic fuelled antisocial behaviour and Shimizu-san's apparent resistance to connecting with other cultures.
5. Shima-san says she feels like she is living, 'in a foreign country'; further, Kita-san's cosmopolitan attitude aligns well with the idea of being, 'a citizen of the world'.
6. Kita-san appears to embody cosmopolitanism in terms of his commitment to cultural exchange programs, openness and understanding of other cultures, his extensive international travel experience and his perception of all being the same. Likewise, Brad also has extensive travel experience, demonstrates respect for other cultures.
7. The explanation for why and why not would include:
  - It has become a site of cultural exchange and transformation.
  - It has become culturally and linguistically diverse.
  - The built environment reflects a fusion of Western and Japanese design.
  - The shops and restaurants provide international foodstuffs.
  - There is a sense that at a local government level, there is a level of openness to international development.

- Cosmopolitan behaviours and attitudes are still evident amongst both tourists and locals.
- Some of the tourism development has clearly not been culturally sensitive and has negatively impacted local conditions

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