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JTB Corporation
Panasonic Corporation

JTB and Panasonic Develop a Platform to Support Travelers Visiting Japan

Tokyo/Osaka - JTB Corporation, a leading travel agency in Japan, and Panasonic Corporation, a major Japanese electronics company, announced today that they have developed an information platform called Traveler Relationship Management (TRM) for integrated management of traveler information, such as itinerary, for overseas travelers visiting Japan. The move is part of their collaboration in tourism-related fields which began in June 2015 in anticipation of the year 2020 when foreign visitors to Japan are expected to reach 40 million a year.

By integrating management and operation of the various services overseas visitors use while traveling around Japan, TRM is designed to improve the convenience and quality of those services. Starting this September, the companies will begin offering on a trial basis two services through the TRM platform, with the aim to launch them on a commercial basis by March 2017. The services are "JAPAN FITTER"¹⁾ for providing multilingual tourism guidance and customer service, and "LUGGAGE-FREE TRAVEL"¹⁾ aimed to alleviate the complications with large-size luggage when overseas visitors are traveling around Japan.

As the number of overseas travelers visiting Japan rapidly increases, there are more private travelers visiting the countryside, going outside the metropolitan areas such as Tokyo. This trend has created an urgent need to develop infrastructure for supporting, in cooperation with local communities, hospitable services offered by the businesses and local governments who receive tourists.

In response to such need, JTB and Panasonic developed the TRM platform that allows for using information about visitors, such as age, nationality and itinerary, in various services. Providing services to overseas visitors using TRM makes it possible, for example, to eliminate the need for filling in information such as name and lodging address on registration forms, so tourists can use services more readily without worrying about the language barrier.

As TRM allows for managing services offered by different providers, it can enhance the convenience of overseas travelers. To begin with, JAPAN FITTER, which constitutes the touch point for providing various services, and the LUGGAGE-FREE TRAVEL service using TRM will be introduced on a trial basis before commercialization by using lodging facilities as base points. In the future, by increasing the number of businesses offering TRM and expanding the services using the TRM platform, JTB and Panasonic aim to help overseas visitors enjoy traveling around Japan through one seamless service of "Japanese hospitality."

JTB is working on its Multicultural Communication Business for providing excitement and enjoyment through bringing people together, while Panasonic is focusing on proposing solutions integrating hardware and software to realize future lifestyles for 2020 and beyond. Going forward, the two companies will expand business partnerships in the tourism field, including related services in such areas as attractive optional tour products and mobility sharing. The companies will also accelerate development of community-based services and service business infrastructure for travelers visiting Japan, with an eye toward community revitalization through wide-area collaboration.

Note:

1) Trademark registration pending

Media Contacts:

JTB Corporation
Public Relations Office Tel.: +81 (0)3-5796-5833
Panasonic Corporation
Public Relations Department Tel.: +81 (0)3-3574-5664

1. Traveler Relationship Management (TRM) Platform

This is a platform for linking traveler information held by JTB to the systems and products of various tourism-related service providers via Panasonic's dedicated cloud. This is designed for use by tourists during their stay in Japan, so that overseas visitors to Japan can enjoy sightseeing without stress factors such as language barriers, getting about and payment procedures.

Overseas visitors registered with JTB's GENESIS or JAPANiCAN sites, which offer reservation management and sale of travel products to travelers visiting Japan, will be assigned an authentication number or 2D barcode for use during their stay in Japan, and by authenticating via TRM, the business providing a service can access information necessary to provide that service, including lodging arrangements and itinerary. Amidst a lack of human resources with multilingual skills, this system can be expected to greatly simplify and improve the convenience of responding to foreign visitors, such as time-consuming application procedures.

As the first TRM-based service, JTB and Panasonic aim to launch JAPAN FITTER and LUGGAGE-FREE TRAVEL, a "hands-free travel" service that allows travelers to check large-size luggage they want to have forwarded and issues delivery slips without the need for the travelers to fill out delivery forms in Japanese. LUGGAGE-FREE TRAVEL will be offered in cooperation with the Yamato Group, the transport partner.

2. JAPAN FITTER

This is aimed to aid concierge work, helping direct interaction between facility staff and overseas tourists. It uses the combination of four-language compatible audio translation (Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean) using multilingual translation technology currently under development by Panasonic together with the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), and a simple search function based on selection of fixed sentences by pointing. In addition to allowing for storage and browsing of original content, such as information about inside the lodging facilities and local tourism, JAPAN FITTER also works with the Tourism Forecasting Platform that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is promoting to vitalize Japan's service industry.

This will centralize the gathering and updating of information on local governments, transportation and medical institutions which are otherwise difficult for individual facilities to carry out, and enable route searching and map display for destinations such as tourist attractions and restaurants. The JAPAN FITTER service will also be introduced throughout Japan as the touch point to offer TRM-based services, which will be expanded in the future, as well as enabling users to search and purchase JTB's optional tours.

JAPAN FITTER Field Trial

During the trial period prior to commercial deployment aimed by the end of 2016, terminals will be set up at lodgings and tourist information centers in Nagasaki and Unzen cities on the southern island of Kyushu that were chosen for the Leading Tourism Nation, as well as lodging facilities of the Inbound Committee of the JTB-Affiliated Ryokans & Hotels Federation, and hotels in Shinjuku and other parts of Tokyo. This trial will provide support for community-based customer service, where staff use the terminals to provide guidance while communicating with overseas visitors using everyday language.

Period: Sep. 1-Oct. 31, 2016

Participating Locations :

- (i) Lodging facilities and tourist information centers in Nagasaki and Unzen (10 locations)
- (ii) Lodging facilities of the Inbound Committee of the JTB-Affiliated Ryokans & Hotels Federation (11 locations)
- (iii) Hotels in Tokyo (6 locations)

Objectives:

- (1) Technology verification: Verification of voice recognition, translation accuracy, screen linkage of search information, etc.
- (2) Operation verification: Experiments in actual customer service for overseas visitors will help confirm the usefulness of and needs for services provided at the above-mentioned locations, including usability of the tablet and content access frequency

List of Facilities Participating the Trial

(1) Lodging facilities and tourist information centers in Unzen and Nagasaki (10 locations)

- Hotel New Nagasaki (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- ANA Crowne Plaza Nagasaki Gloverhill (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Best Western Premier Hotel Nagasaki (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Inasayama Kanko Hotel (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Hotel Okura JR Huis Ten Bosch (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Unzen Miyazaki Ryokan (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Yuyado Unzen Shinyu (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Unzen Kyushu Hotel (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Mingei Modern no Yado Unzen Fukudaya (Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Machibura Information Center Motenashi ya (Nagasaki Prefecture)

(2) Lodging facilities of the Inbound Committee of the JTB-Affiliated Ryokans & Hotels Federation (11 locations)

- Akan Yuku no Sato Tsuruga (Hokkaido Prefecture)
- Zao Onsen, Miyamaso Takamiya (Yamagata Prefecture)
- Hotel Matsushima Taikanso (Miyagi Prefecture)
- Kinugawa Grand Hotel, Yume no Toki (Tochigi Prefecture)
- Wakura Onsen, Kagaya (Ishikawa Prefecture)
- Takayama Honjin Hiranoya Kachoan (Gifu Prefecture)
- Katsuura Gyoen (Wakayama Prefecture)
- Sakuranoshou Kotohira Grand Hotel (Kagawa Prefecture)
- Yuda Onsen, Nishi-no-Miyabi Tokiwa (Yamaguchi Prefecture)
- Asonotsukasa Villa Park Hotel and Spa Resort (Kumamoto Prefecture)
- Hotel Nikko Alivila (Okinawa Prefecture)

(3) Hotels in Tokyo (6 locations)

- Keio Plaza Hotel (Tokyo)
- Hotel Sunroute Plaza Shinjuku (Tokyo)
- Hotel Sunroute Higashi Shinjuku (Tokyo)
- ibis Tokyo Shinjuku (Tokyo)
- Hotel Sunroute Ariake (Tokyo)
- Hotel InterContinental Tokyo Bay (Tokyo)

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