

TOURISM INFO-FAX

By Sam
Yokoyama

In July, 1992, the tourism section of the Canadian Embassy – Tokyo started a unique service to provide travel information to the public via facsimile. This was the first attempt of its kind in the Japanese travel industry.

The consumer who wants to access the system simply dials our Tokyo number from their fax machine (the machine must be "on-hook") and makes their choices via voice prompts. After the caller enters their gender, age and occupation, he or she is connected to the travel information box. The contents of which is again explained by the voice instruction.

As of April 1995, we expanded and upgraded the service to include 6 main boxes covering: 1) general information; 2) transportation; 3) shopping, dining and entertainment; 4) destination information; 5) events and festival; 6) unique tours, sports and others. Destination information (box #4) has been further divided into 6 sub boxes consisting of 1) B.C.; 2) Alberta; 3) Ontario; 4) Québec; 5) Prairies (Sask. and Man.); 6) Atlantic Canada (NFLD, N.B., N.S., P.E.I.); 7) Canada North (Yukon and N.W.T).

Not only does the Info-Fax provide travel information to the consumer, it also provides useful market information to us. We receive monthly demographic data which consists of 1) gender; 2) age; 3) occupation of callers; as well as the number of enquiries by box, by day, and by hour. This data is collected when the caller accesses the system by asking three simple

questions "if you are male press 0# or if you are female press 1#", etc.

We obtain important information from this data. For example, the system is most popular with females in their twenties which clearly tells that "young professional women" should be our priority market segment. The destination access data shows that most consumers accessed the system in the following order: 1) Alberta; 2) B.C.; 3) Ontario; 4) Atlantic; 5) Québec; 6) Canada North; 7) Prairies

The basic information is up-dated every quarter, except the events and festivals box which is revised monthly. All provinces that have tourism offices in Tokyo are consulted and cooperate in updating their information.

The total number of enquiries has increased from 7,134 in 1993 to 13,642 in 1994 (the biggest month was August 1994 with 2,182 enquiries) reflecting the rapid growth of home-fax installation.

The success of Canadian Tourism Info-Fax has encouraged other countries to adopt the system. Now, the same fax number is being shared by Australia, France, Spain, England and Hong Kong. Each country promotes the use of this fax service and its number, therefore, the availability of this service has become more and more well known to consumers which in turn has contributed to increasing the number of enquiries we receive.

Sam Yokoyama is a Commercial Officer with the Tourism Program in Tokyo.

Briefings Held This Summer; More to Come in October



Briefing sessions on current International Business Development operations and issues were held over the summer for Trade Commissioners being posted and crossposted. This October, another briefing will be held for those officers returning to Canada. If you are interested in attending a one day session please call TOO at 992-8050.