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WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS FOR SUBORBITAL SPACE TOURISM IN JAPAN?

Abstract

Suborbital space vehicles as new spaceflight platforms have been nearing commercial operation, developed by companies such as Virgin Galactic, XCOR and so on. These brand new platforms have innovative characteristics, such as reasonable cost, high frequency flight, low G loads, payload friendly environments, late access, human rated reliability, and passenger availability. It is expected that the use of these vehicles is not only for space tourism but also microgravity experiments, small satellite launching, test verification, education training, earth observation remote sensing, ignerosphere science observation and other new applications.

Especially, space tourism has been expected utilizing suborbital space vehicles that can realize space-flight for the general public. Compared to orbital space tourism, suborbital space tourism is 1/100 and more different cost so that suborbital space tourism will create completely different and new market opportunities.

Recently, a new Japanese space tourism sales company was established in January 2014. This company has performed a new space tourism market survey in collaboration with JAXA. This will be the first new primary market research on consumer preferences for space tourism in Japan in 20 years, since the ground-breaking Kanko-maru RLV market studies by the Japanese Rocket Society in 1993, 1995 and 1996.

Also, a space tourism research paper has been issued which is based on interviews with suborbital space tourism paying customers in Japan. This is the first interview survey and analysis from the view point of the tourism industry. The survey includes the type of customers, space tourism safety aspects, lead time in delay of space flight, cost, things to do in space and so on. The first generation paying customers, who are called founders and pioneers must be different from the second generation. They are regarded as part of the project of space tourism literally called founders and pioneers. However, it must be common that they have high curiosity with positive thinking and challenge and pioneer spirit. The survey data will make the best use for marketing and business development as well as vehicle development.

Space tourism by suborbital space flights will create new markets in Business to Consumer (B to C). It will make dramatically change space business landscape. The first generation suborbital space tourist will create suborbital space tourism culture and following generation market. This paper will describe the results of these new Japanese market studies and the conclusions reached in mapping future industry development in Japan.