

Seeking Components of Geotours Attractive to Visitors

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Geological conservation, education, and revitalization of geotourism are important issues for geopark activities. Of these, it is expected that geotourism's revitalization will bring sustainable development to the regions. Itoh et al. (2015) grasped trends and needs of tourists who were potential customers of geotourism via online surveys, and found that tourists would look for "relaxation" and "extraordinariness" in travels. In this study, we quantitatively ascertained directions of attractive geotours for general tourists who are potential customers of geotourism, using an online survey.

We used NTTCom Research Light provided by NTTCom Online Marketing Solutions for the survey, which was conducted on September 27th and 28th, 2015. We set the target respondents as 400 and collected 433 responses.

Among the respondents, 29.8% are in their 50s, and 64.0% are male. Their places of residence are mainly metropolitan areas of Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa, and prefectures with big cities such as Aichi, Osaka, and Fukuoka.

In the survey, we asked which tours respondents would like to participate in, from specific geotours at member geoparks of the Japanese Geoparks Network as well as those in general package tours from travel agents' websites, such as "Rurubu" and "Jalan". Respondents could give multiple answers. As a result, the more ordinary the tours are, such as "hot springs" and "to enjoy local cuisines," the more positive the responses. On the other hand, general geotours, such as "to take in the scenery and topography" and "to observe strata and gather fossils," are not so popular. Also, the tours "to visit historic spots" and "to visit shrines, temples, and castles" do not seem to be so popular, either. We did not observe any significant trends by age.

Therefore, we set these tours as variables to conduct principal component analysis using a variance-covariance matrix, and then performed cluster analysis using principal component points as variables (SPSS Statistics ver. 23 produced by IBM). As a result, items representing "to visit shrines, temples, and castles" and "to visit historic spots" were extracted as the first principal components and items representing nature observation such as "bird/animal watching," "botanical observation," and "mountain climbing and trekking" were extracted as the second principal components.

The respondents were sorted into four clusters, of which Cluster 3 especially had a tendency to show strong interests in both items relating to nature and those relating to history and culture. From these results, it could be suggested that expressing seamlessly themes of not only natural phenomenon but also history and culture could attract more visitors to geotours.

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