

Possibility of Utilization and Challenges of Visitor Center for Cultural Value Inheritance in World Heritage Shirakami Sanchi

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The number of tourists to Tohoku region which is located at northeast of Japan decreased drastically just after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The number has been increasing gradually afterwards and has generally returned to levels before the disaster in Aomori prefecture. Aomori prefecture is far more than 300km far from Fukushima Nuclear Plant and the sharp decline immediately after the disaster is thought to depend on the plants accident. But the state of being unlikely to return is thought to be related to harmful rumors which would cause enormous negative impact to the affected local areas.

This study focused on Shirakami Sanchi visitor center which is located in Aomori prefecture and can provide positive information with visitors to the area. Generally, Visitor centers are primarily responsible for promoting local tourism products and services and consequently have direct impacts upon the economic, social, and recreational well-being of the region in which they are located (Ballantyne, 2009).

On the other hand, this study also paid attention to the characteristics of visitor center, which serves as an information and orientation gateway for visitors to natural sites World Heritage Shirakami Sanchi. Historically, Shirakami Sanchi has been used for hunting in a sustainable way by a quite very few people called “matagi”. However, there is a possibility that this kind of unique aspects of a culture because the heritage was registered as a natural site of world heritage.

This study, having the above-mentioned awareness, treats Shirakami Sanchi visitor center and examines the possibilities and challenges of the succession of local classical culture by using visitor center.

Shirakami Sanchi Visitor Center (SVC) and Aqua Green Village Anmon (ANMON) were selected as the case study areas. SVC is distance of 16km from ANMON that the base of walking and staying of the world heritage area in Aomori Prefecture side. The action observation survey for visitors to SVC in 2017, focusing on the what kind of display is interested in. While going around the display hall with the regular route to the opposite direction every ten minutes, we recorded the display in the direction that the visitors watched. In addition, the monitoring survey employed a questionnaire for domestic visitors in 2017, focusing on the following aspects: (1) visitor attributes (e.g. age, gender), (2) characteristics of using Visitor Center (e.g. rate of using Visitor Center), (3) visit experience and visit intention of SS world heritage site, (4) Tour intention with the guide to the Anmon-no-taki-Waterfall, (5) awareness to SS including the questions about the culture and history (5 phases), (6: SVC only) satisfaction about administration and the management of SVC, (6:ANMON only) characteristics of visit (e.g. number of visits, staying time in ANMON). Self-administered questionnaire sheets were distributed at SVC on July 22-23 and August 12-13, post-recalled questionnaire sheets were distributed at ANMON July-November. The action sample data were collected 1,202. The questionnaire data were collected from a sample of 19 to 87-years-olds from the Japanese visitors to the SS. In total, 431 respondents participated in the survey (SVC: n=301, ANMON: n=130).

We compare the quantity of attentive action occurrence per unit area, there were not the culture and the natural big difference. The possibility that we could secure an opportunity to have visitors deepen understanding to culture as well as natural ecosystem was suggested by the laborer which derives visitors to display of the culture and Re-design of SVC., ” There is mountain worship in the SS.” Either survey material was higher than three points of the middle of the evaluation standard. SVC was significantly higher than ANMON($P<.05$,T-test).Therefore, it was thought that VC promoted understanding to mountain worship. Besides, ” the hand of the person does not enter SS at all” , SVC was significantly higher than ANMON($P<.01$,T-test).However because the historic inflection of the forest resource and hunting by Matagi have been performed in the SS, even if it was VC, information dispatch of the culture included a problem.

Although visitors had a shallow understanding of the historical backgrounds between beech forest and the local people registered as a World Heritage, cultural information was viewed in the visitor center. It is suggested that cultural information could be incorporated into ecotours being held in World Heritage natural sites.

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