

The role of geospatial information of public signs in navigating foreign tourists to central Tokyo

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The number of foreign tourists visiting Japan has continued to increase exceeding 20 million in 2015, especially Tokyo in preparation for the 2020 Olympic Games. However, guiding system as navigational aids for foreign tourists in Tokyo is still insufficient. The aim of this study is to clarify the current conditions and problems of guiding system for foreign tourists to central Tokyo by focusing on public signs. To examine the existing information for navigating tourists, we made the fieldwork to check the local directional signs in major tourist sites of central Tokyo, viz., Shinjuku, Ginza and Asakusa. Based on the information obtained, we identified three problems of local signs for guiding foreign tourists: uneven distribution of signs, lack of coordination between tourist sites, and confusing pictograms. We further conducted a questionnaire survey for foreign tourist visiting study area to examine the wayfinding behavior and the role of public signs. Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that navigation by GPS/smart phone is a more effective tool than conventional maps or local signs though the role of navigational aids varies with tourist sites owing to the different spatial structure.

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