

Evaluation of explanation panels setting at Geopark' s site 2 - case study of the explanation panel at Obama Hot springs in Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan -

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Introduction

Explanation panels are essential for tourists who visit Geopark sites to understand the value of the site. However, since the present explanation panels were made by the experts of geography or geology, many tourists who don' t have such knowledge might not be able to understand them smoothly. Therefore, we did a survey about the panels set at "a memorial park of houses destroyed by debris flows " in Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark in 2018 (Ota *et al.*, 2019). Then we made a new draft of explanation panel based on the results of the survey and investigated visitor' s impressions on the panel at the Geopark' s site.

As a reflecting points of the investigation of last year, we changed the design of explanation panels without considering of tourists' backgrounds and their needs. So this time, we took questionnaire in order to know the purpose of their visit first. And we chose "Hot Foot 105" in Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Geopark Site as a target of survey.

Methods

We picked up "Hot Foot 105" in Obama Hot spring district, which was a 105-meter-long footbath opened in February 2010, as a point of survey. On August 7th and October 5th, 2019, we looked into the visitor' s gender, age, hometown, and impression on the panel. The impressions are evaluated from 1 to 6 points on four different perspectives: total impression, pictures, content of explanation, the number of letters, and font size. 6 points is the highest score while 1 point is the lowest evaluation. As for font size, 1 means too small and 6 means too large. As for the number of letters, 1 means too small and 6 means too much.

Then, based on the results, we redesigned the panel and had the same investigation on November 16th and December 7th, then compared the results from both studies.

Results

[original panel]

The number of visitors who answered the questionnaire was 89. The average points were as follows;

content 4.1 / picture 4.2 / number of letters 4.2 / font size 2.8

Based on the opinions of visitors, we redesigned the panel. We decreased the number of letters, enlarge the font size and pictures. We thought the drawings on the right side of panel a little too complicated. So we simplified the drawings so that children could easily understand. As for the number of letters, we removed English explanation because there were no Westerners among the visitors. We added some quiz, pictures of local foods with hot spring water, process to become tourist site, and the effect of hot spring to

catch visitors' eyes.

[redesigned panel]

The number of visitors who answered our questionnaire was 44. The results are as follows;

content 5.1 / picture 5.0 / number of letters 5.0 / font size 4.8

The perspective "explanation" and "picture" were more highly evaluated than original panel. On the other hand, the evaluation on "number of letters" and "font size" became worse than original.

Future prospects

Geopark site is sure to have academic value. We define that good explanation panels enable us to know the value properly and easily. This time, we redesigned the panel taking only visitors' needs into consideration. From now on, we will keep improving the panel by changing the contents and design.

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