

論文審査の要旨
Summary of Dissertation Review

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〔論文審査の要旨〕 Summary of Dissertation Review			
<p>Focusing on disadvantaged areas, this thesis study explores rural tourism (RT) development from the perspectives of small tourism enterprises (STEs) and tourists in a holistic way, by targeting three countries: Laos, China, and Japan. It has tried to answer the following seven research questions: (1) how do STEs perform rurality in operation and what affects their motivation and performance?, (2) how are STEs likely to continue their business under different policy scenarios?, (3) how do tourists perceive rurality and what affects their behavior intentions?, (4) how are tourists likely to choose rural products, activities, and destinations under different rurality settings?, (5) how do tourists/visitors perceive the services provided by STEs?, and (6) how do STEs make connections to the main stakeholders and how does social network influence the sustainability of business operation and destination development?. These research questions are important; however, no answer can be found in literature.</p> <p>To fill the above research gaps, the author first built a <i>conceptual framework by reflecting the intertwined relationships between STEs and rural tourists in terms of behaviors and preferences</i>, where <i>rurality</i> is one of the key concepts to connect the whole research. Rurality is captured by using various question items in <i>several questionnaire surveys implemented the author</i>. Actual behavior (via revealed preference (RP) survey), subjective factors (attitudinal survey), and future behavior (stated preference (SP) survey) were extensively investigated by targeting tourism along the inconvenient Mekong River region in Laos (178 STEs and 469 tourists), rural tourism nearby Chongqing, China (226 STEs (+526 SP responses) and 426 tourists (+1,404 SP responses)), and roadside rest areas (Michi-no-eki and service areas: 1,002 visitors (+3,006 SP responses)) at the depopulated areas in Japan. Complicated cause-effect mechanisms are captured based on generalized structural equation models (GSEM), respondents' heterogeneous responses are reflected by building mixed and multilevel choice models, in response to different types and scales of data, where decision-making mechanisms are addressed as much as possible.</p> <p>Based on such a relatively large-scale set of data and advanced behaviorally-oriented models, this study has advanced the tourism research from both theoretical/methodological and empirical aspects. <i>It is the first attempt in literature in terms of the following points, respectively</i>: (1) collecting enterprise-level STEs tourism data from a social sustainability perspective in the context of Laos; (2) incorporating policy attributes into SP experiment to measure the preferences of STEs; (3) applying SP experiment to measure tourist preferences for not only local products and activities but also rural destinations; (4) applying GSEM in the literature of general tourism research; (5) applying MXL model in the RT research on STEs; (6) applying MXL and multilevel logit model to address unobserved heterogeneities of respondents; (7) applying the reflective-formative hierarchical latent variable model and implementing multi-group analyses based on partial least squares structural equation model; (8) confirming the sustainability value of social network for STEs and local communities; (9) exploring the rurality in the context of roadside rest areas via visitors' RP and SP; and (10) expanding the forms and patterns of RT tourism market with the theory of leisure-tourism continuum. This study has further derived various unknown but significant insights into RT policymaking.</p> <p>The author published six refereed papers (three in SCI/SSCI-indexed journals; three in books published by Elsevier and Springer). The author also made six presentations at international conferences and five at domestic conferences in Japan.</p> <p>With the above evidence, all the committee members unanimously judged that the applicant is qualified to be awarded a doctor degree of philosophy (i.e., PhD).</p>			