

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GUIDE AT THE JYOMONSUGI-CEDER TRAIL IN YAKUSHIMA ISLAND, JAPAN

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Key Words: Recreation, Overuse, Eco-tourism, Guide, Visitor's perception, Congestion, Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

As visitor numbers increase to an area, impacts tend to become more prevalent. The intensity of recreation impact is affected by frequency or amount of use. In the latest recreation, "degradation of environment" and "deterioration of the quality of recreation experience" associated with recreation in natural areas tend to become issue. Guides are believed to be conducive to solving these problems. There are, however, some doubts as to whether guides contribute to environmentally friendly use. The aim of this research is to assess "visitor's perceptions" and to understand "the degree of fullness of information and equipment" with existence of a guide at a Jyomonsugi-ceder trail in Yakushima Islands. It aims at clarifying protection of natural environment, the role of the guide as a coordinator of use. In addition, visitor's perception means as follows, "evaluation to the environmental harm and congestion caused by recreation use", "satisfaction" and "perception of individual impacts."

2. STUDY AREA AND METHOD

Tourist perceptions were measured via visitor surveys, which were administered at the last week of September of 2004 as the peak time. The study area was the Jyomonsugi-ceder trail in Yakushima Islands, Kagoshima prefecture. The Jyomonsugi-ceder is located in a national park area and a world heritage area where about 40,000 people visit here every year. I distributed the question vote every ten visitors, and had the reply filled in on that spot. Question items are visitor's consciousness, such as evaluation to a visitor's attribute of individual recreational impacts on nature and the congestion, the degree of information and equipment fullness, etc. Visitor's perceptions were analyzed using the statistical method whether a difference in the existence of a guide.

3. VISITOR'S PERCEPTION AND GUIDE SIGNIFICANCE

The survey showed the following results. (1) "Guide are raising the visitor's recognition to influence on natural environment by individual recreation use." (2) "Guide reduce a visitor's congestion of trail." (3) "Guide mitigate a visitor's equipment burden and considered their physical strength."

Chart: Mann-Whitney test results for effects of experience and guide on visitor's perceptions

Mann-Whitney test		experience	guide
		<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
list of overuse problems	outdoor lavatory congestion	0.448	0.331
	Willson's stump congestion	0.925	0.519
	Jyomonsugi-ceder congestion	0.644	0.392
	resting-place congestion	0.437	0.630
	trail congestion	0.619	<0.01
	starting point congestion	0.667	0.108
	trample moss and plants	<0.05	0.269
	trail erosion	0.149	0.847
	reduced vegetation cover	<0.05	0.767
	pollution by excretion	0.676	0.809
	littering	0.758	0.659
	feeding	0.122	0.942
satisfaction level	0.872	0.116	
perception of individual impacts	0.734	0.184	

Research results	With Guide	Without Guide
<i>Perception of overuse problem</i>	More sensitive to individual recreation impacts on nature	Less sensitive to individual recreation impacts on nature
<i>Congestion of trail</i>	More acceptable	Less acceptable
<i>Amount of equipment</i>	Small amount	Large amount
	Small differences among individuals	Large differences among individuals

This trail has abundant history of logging and culture of forest religion. Whole trail area has cultural diversity, so there are so many resources for next eco-tourism. Guides are required society-wide action for the future. Kerley, Graham I.H. et al.(2003) suggested that the quality of wildlife viewing may be significantly improved through the use of guides. Guiding offers an opportunity to expand the community involvement (through employing guides) and environmental education components of ecotourism. Reference: Kerley, Graham I.H., Geach, Bev G.S., Vial, Claire (2003), Jumbos or bust: do tourists' perceptions lead to an under-appreciation of biodiversity? , South African Journal of Wildlife Research, Vol. 33, Issue 1/2, p13-22