Activity Models for Tourists of Medium and Long Term Stay in Japan

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Abstract. We conducted an investigation for the tourists at Niseko in Japan in order to build the as-is activity models of them. As a result, we could clarify the two types of tourist activities; one is to focus a steady life and another is to enhance a tourism experience. Both types of activities use often rent-a-car although each pattern of using transportation is different a little. In addition they collected by themselves the main information by using word of mouth.

Based on the results we are planning to envision the mobility services for them.

Keywords: Activity model, Tourist of medium and long term stay, mobility service.

1 Introduction

Niseko district is located in Hokkaido, in the northern area in Japan. The district is raising the brand awareness as ski resort. Especially in recent years, the populations of tourists of the medium-and-long term stay have been increasing rapidly there. With respect to their transportations, there are various types such as a privately-owned car, a route bus, a taxi, a train, a rent-a-car and so on. Although each service has its own feature, the existing services are said that these do not always meet the needs of the tourists during the on season in winter [1][2].

Our final objectives of the research project are to envision the mobility services for the tourists in order to satisfy the needs of them and to promote their new tourist experiences in the district. In this phase of the project we conducted an investigation to clarify the challenges of the means of transportation by building the as-is activity models of the tourists.

2 Investigation

Policy Bureau of MLIT (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism) in Japan recommends to grasp the needs of the tourists by analyzing their actual

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activities to develop tourism services for them [3]. In this study, we carried out an investigation to grasp their activities and information environment for supporting their activities in the district. Specifically we collected information related to the following;

— Stakeholders concerned with Niseko tourism,
— Tourists' activities and their knowledge,
— Available means of transportation,
— Tourist information.

Regarding the stakeholders concerned with the tourism, we explored the documents related to Niseko and the Web site of the Niseko administrative section and interviewed the persons concerned.

To reveal tourists' activities and their knowledge were main goal of the investigation. We planned and conducted the questionnaire survey for the tourists. For approximately 173 tourists, we could have done the survey in some area where the tourists took a break. We distributed the questionnaire directly to them and asked them to answer the questions. The investigation period was from January 2014 to March 2014.

About information of the available means of transportation, we collected the information by inquiring the tourist information centers in the district and checking the Web sites or the brochure related to the transportation.

In terms of the information the tourists can collect, we divided it into two types; "before coming" and "after coming". About "before coming" information, we investigated some Web sites that were assumed to be used by the tourists. About "after coming" information, we checked the Web site and collected the information which was located in the tourist information center, the train station, the road side station, hotels or restaurants etc. in the district.

3   The Problems about the Tourism at Niseko

After we analyzed the information collected by investigation, we could firstly clarify the following problems.

— Stakeholders concerned with Niseko tourism

- Some organizations provide the information about the tourism, however they do not necessarily cooperate to do it.
- No organization unifies the means of transportation based on the purpose of the tourist's activity.

— Tourists' activities and their knowledge

- It is difficult for the tourists who visited Niseko only several times to understand how to use the transportation and consequently their activities were very limited.
- Only tourist who uses a rent-a-car can go to a surrounding or nearby area.

— Available means of transportation

- Shuttle bus runs between only specific skiing areas.
- Some service offices providing a rent-a-car are scattered in the district.
- A bus to the adjacent town is difficult to use for the foreign tourists even for Japanese because of the difficulty of understanding of the timetable and the route map.
- In order to go to the adjacent big city, the tourist by himself or herself has to edit the timetable for the transit of the transportation.
- The number of the taxi is limited and the tourist may wait more than one hour even if he/she makes a reservation.

– Tourist information

- The information involved with playing ski could be available from various Web sites before visiting Niseko, however, the other information was difficult to collect except the word of mouth (e.g., [4]).
- There is no portal site that unifies all web sites related to the Niseko tourism.
- In tourist information centers there are various type of the tourist information such as a brochure, a magazine, a leaflet, a web site and so on, however they are not necessary organized for the tourists.

4   Discussion about the Tourist Activities

(1) Two patterns of tourist activities

We are analyzing the pattern of the tourist activities after basic statistical analysis. Although it is still in progress, by using the statistical method - Hayashi's quantification method, we could find two key factors that characterize the tourist activities.

One factor characterizes a tourist group who goes to a supermarket, a drugstore or a confectionery in the adjacent middle size town. We regarded the activities as a pattern for a stable and calm lifestyle and called "livelihood focus". On the other hand, another factor characterizes a tourist group who often visit tourism area that is adjacent to the skiing area at Niseko. The activities are regarded as a pattern for enjoying Hokkaido tourism except playing winter sports and called "tourism orientation".

(2) Means of transportation

We also found that each activity type we clarified above used different means of transportation.

Those who belong to "livelihood focus" type use a rent-a-car exceed seventy percent. On the other hand, although those who are in "tourism orientation" type use mainly a rent-a-car as well, they use the other transportation methods more than "livelihood focus" type (Figure 1). This leads us that it would be necessary to enhance rent-a-car services mainly. However, as we described above, the service offices for a rent-a-car are scattered at Niseko district, consequently it is very inconvenient to use the services. Considering many of tourists use the service actually, immediate improvement should be needed.
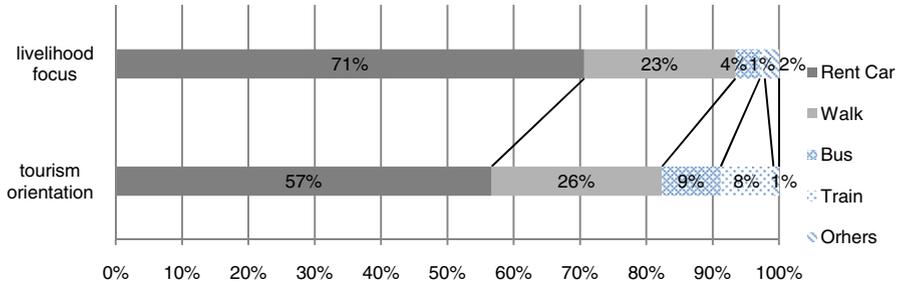
Fig. 1. The Means of Transportation

(3) Information environment

We also found main information resource for both of tourists was word of mouth. Both rate of collecting information exceeded fifty percent. Although many of web sites provided at Niseko are multilingualized, they do not always provide enough information to the tourists actually.
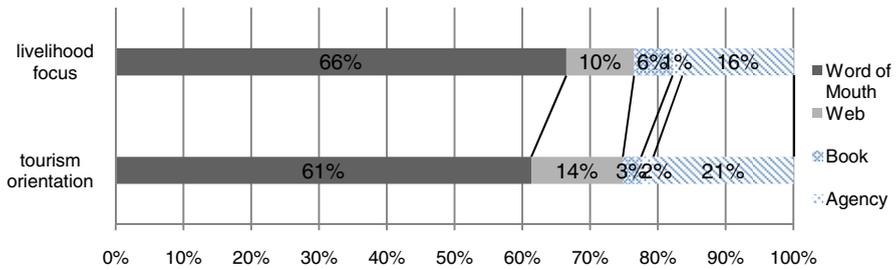

Fig. 2. The Means of Information Collection

Based on the analysis above, even in progress, we could understand that the typical tourists could manage to collect information while trial and error and try to achieve their goal of activities by using a rent-a-car.

5   Conclusion

We conducted an investigations for the tourists at Niseko in order to build the as-is activity models of them.

While we are still analyzing the results of the investigation, we could clarify the two types of tourist activities; one is to focus a steady life and another is to enhance a tourism experience. Both types of activities use often rent-a-car and collect the information by using word of mouth mainly. This shows that the as-is services at Niseko are not necessary enough for the tourist.   As the background that caused the situation, we presumed our country has not had little experience to support the tourist for medium-and-long term stay.

In some tourism area in Japan, the introduction of new technologies such as AR [5] or O2O service [6] are validated by a real-world testing. Additionally MLIT pushes forward the infrastructure for the electric car in tourism area [7]. These effects are promising, however, these are not always for the tourists we target at Niseko district. Taking the effectiveness of those technologies into consideration, we decided to focus the types of tourist we clarified in this project phase and to envision the new mobility services involved with rent-a-car services.

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