A study on the "Patterns" of outdoor public spaces in tourist destinations that make the sight attractive

Satoshi KASAMA, Civil Engineering Research Institute for Cold Region, Japan, kasama@ceri.go.jp
Yasuaki MATSUDA, Civil Engineering Research Institute for Cold Region, Japan

Introduction

There are 34 National Parks in Japan. And there are some hundreds of villages offering lodging and other visitor services in those areas. Some of them are onsen villages and attract many tourists every year.

But the problem is that, in most villages and other types of tourist destinations in Japan people stay only one night. They are not attractive enough for most of tourists to spend whole day long in or around the village. So they are promoting themselves and developing tourist attractions and activities for tourists to stay 2 nights or more.

But it's not easy to make vast investment in a situation of economic deterioration; therefore, methods for improving their attractiveness as tourist destinations and encouraging tourists to stay much longer with less investment or effort are highly expected.

Purpose of the research

To solve the situations described above, we are working on some research and analyses in order to clarify "factors" that make tourist destinations so attractive, from the viewpoint of outdoor public spaces or environments. By applying our future results, we aim at making it possible to analyze the attractiveness of each tourist destination and to propose effective methods to improve the attractiveness of the destination.

In this presentation, our first research results and draft will be described with some case studies.

Procedure

First, six tourist destinations were picked up from the onsen villages that hold the highest admiration in Japan, with reference to some destination rankings by private research institutes or travel guide books such as the "Michelin Green Guide." The six onsen villages are Kurokawa onsen, Yufu-in onsen, Kinosaki onsen, Arima onsen, Kaga-Yamanaka onsen and Nozawa onsen. Similarities in the arrangements of the outdoor public spaces around the destinations (onsen villages) were investigated, which may be factors that make those tourist destinations so attractive.

Those similarities were arranged into "patterns" following a framework called "Pattern Language" proposed by C. Alexander *1. Then, the "patterns" were tested, through verifying correlation between the correspondences to the "patterns" and the reputation of 24 tourist destinations in Japan.

Finally, following the arrangement of the "patterns," we worked out some case studies to diagnose the attractiveness of outdoor public spaces at tourist destinations, and tried to point out the pros and cons of each destination.

Result

Found "eight possible patterns that make tourist destinations attractive"
First, six patterns were found from similarities in the arrangements of those outdoor public spaces. We categorized those into four groups, then added two patterns, and, finally, eight patterns in four categories were ascertained, as described below.

We call these patterns "eight possible patterns that make tourist destinations attractive."

List of eight patterns and four groups
Group 1: Scenery / Visual Impression
  Pattern 1*: A symbolic scene that express the personality of the destination

  Pattern 2*: Nature in the area and views of the surrounding landscapes from the area

    Pattern 7: Cleanly manicured facade and front yard

Group 2: Walkable

  Pattern 3*: Streets or walkways with fun and pleasant scenery

  Pattern 4*: Car-free environment

Group 3: Rest-able

  Pattern 5*: Square or plaza in the middle of the sights

    Pattern 8: Rest-able or stoppable places everywhere

Group 4: Stay-able

  Pattern 6*: Activities or other good reasons for spending time in the open air

  (other than walking around the scenery: pattern 3)

Calculated correspondences to the "patterns" as a case study
For 12 onsen villages and 12 tourist destinations listed in Table 1, correspondences to the "patterns" (for six major patterns, 1.5 points max. for each pattern, total nine points max. for each destination) was calculated. Calculated correspondences are also mentioned in Table 1.
The highest were Kurokawa onsen and Kinosaki onsen, which reached 8.5 points.
The lowest were Sakaimachi-dori in Otaru and Aidsu-Wakamatsu, which received only 2.0 points.

Tourist Destinations: Onsen Villages

Name	Kurokawa*	Yufu-in*	Arima*	Kinosaki*	Kaga-Yamanaka*	Nozawa*	Kusatsu
Location	Kumamoto/Kyushu	Oita/Kyushu	Hyogo/Kinki	Hyogo/Kinki	Ishikawa/Hokuriku	Nagano/Chubu	Gunma/Kanto
note						also known as Ski Resort	also known as Ski Resort
Image							
Calculated correspondences to the "Patterns"	8.5	6.5	7.0	8.5	6.5	4.0	8.0

... Destinations with * means 6 destinations first picked up

Tourist Destinations: Onsen villages in Hokkaido, as well as village centers of National Parks

Name	Noboribetsu	Toya-ko	Jozankei	Akan-ko	Souunkyo
Location	Hokkaido	Hokkaido	Hokkaido	Hokkaido	Hokkaido
note	National Park	National Park	National Park	National Park	National Park
Image					
Calculated correspondences to the "Patterns"	4.5	4.0	6.0	5.0	5.5

Tourist Destinations: Town sites

Name	Otaru/ Otaru Unga	Otaru/ Sakaimachi-D	Aidsu-Wakamatsu	Obuse	Nagahama	Omi-Hachiman
Location	Hokkaido	Hokkaido	Fukushima/Tohoku	Nagano/Chubu	Shiga/Kinki	Shiga/Kinki
note						National Heritage
Image						
Calculated correspondences to the "Patterns"	8.0	2.0	2.0	7.5	6.0	7.0

Name	Matsue	Tsuwano	Kurashiki	Miyajima	Hagi	Mojiko
Location	Shimane/San-in	Shimane/San-in	Okayama/Chugoku	Hiroshima/Chugoku	Yamaguchi/Chugoku	Fukuoka/Kyushu
note		National Heritage	National Heritage	UNESCO World Heritage	UNESCO World Heritage	
Image						
Calculated correspondences to the "Patterns"	5.5	6.5	7.5	6.5	5.0	7.0

Table-1 Tourist destinations in the research and calculated correspondences to "six patterns"

Verifying the "patterns" via correlation between correspondences to the "patterns" and reputation as a tourist destination

For the 12 onsen villages listed in Table 1, onsen site ranking by the research institute "Jalan" *2, which published the results of a survey asking respondents which onsen sites they want to visit again, was cited.

Then, correlation between correspondences to the "patterns" and reputation as a tourist destination was verified. From the results, the correlation was sufficiently high (R^2 = 0.609).

This could be showing that tourist destinations with more correspondence to our "patterns" tend to have a higher reputation as tourist destinations.

Considerations on the pros and cons regarding outdoor public spaces at the tourist destinations through the calculated correspondences to the "patterns"

From the results of the calculated correspondences to the "patterns" mentioned in Table 1, the findings are as follows.

At onsen villages in Hokkaido like Noboribetsu and Toya-ko, although they rank as high as village centers of the national parks, their scores are not sufficiently high compared to onsen villages on the mainland and Kyushu; therefore, their outdoor public spaces are thought to be not sufficiently attractive for tourists.

Sakaimachi-dori in Otaru and Aidsu-wakamatsu are destinations with the lowest scores among the destinations in the research, being especially poor in car-free environments, nature in the area and views of the surrounding landscapes, and having a square or plaza in the middle of the sights; therefore, they might improve their attractiveness as tourist destinations through improvement of these weak points.

Conclusions

"Eight possible patterns that make tourist destinations attractive" were found through research on the similarities in the arrangements of the outdoor public spaces of six onsen villages in Japan with the highest admiration through the following process.

Through some analyses, it was pointed out that these "patterns" are rather reliable. And it was demonstrated through some examples that we can discuss the pros and cons of tourist destinations by checking correspondences to these "patterns."

Want to discuss on...

What do you think about these proposals of ours?

We are now proceeding with our research and would like to discuss this matter with you (MMV participants), on whether these "patterns" are effective or not, for tourist destinations to be attractive not only in Japan but all over the world.

Please imagine some tourist destinations in your surrounding areas that are attractive or some that are not, and please come to discuss such "patterns" that make tourist destinations attractive and charming.

References

*1 Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, 1977, "A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction", Oxford University Press

*2 Jalan Research Institute, 2016, "Popular onsen sights ranking 2016", http://jrc.jalan.net/j/surveys.html referred on 4/16/2018 (In Japanese)