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KOJIMA Hiroki

Tourism Education and Transitions to Higher Education: A Case Study of Commercial High Schools in Okinawa, Japan

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Abstract

This presentation introduces an ongoing study of how tourism education at commercial high schools in Okinawa, Japan, relates to graduates' transitions to universities and vocational schools. The study builds on interviews conducted in March 2026 with five teachers at three commercial high schools, all of which offered tourism-related courses. The teachers reported that approximately 70% of students went on to universities or vocational schools, while the remaining 30% entered employment. Among students who sought employment immediately after high school, few expressed interest in working in tourism. The teachers cited concerns about job security and pay, as well as difficulties getting weekends and public holidays off. They also noted that many students hoped to continue living with their parents and preferred jobs within commuting distance of home.

These accounts raise questions about how tourism education figures in graduates' choice of program, what they carry forward from high school into further study, and whether they intend to work in tourism after completing their studies. The presentation will outline how the current study will address these questions from graduates' perspectives. A questionnaire survey of graduates of tourism-related courses will document their pathways after high school, including further study and employment. Semi-structured interviews with graduates currently enrolled in universities or vocational schools will explore how they chose their programs, which aspects of their high school tourism education they find useful in their current studies, and how they view tourism as a career option. Together, the survey and interviews will help identify where high school tourism education provides a foundation for further study and where graduates encounter difficulties in building on what they learned.

Keywords:

tourism education, commercial high schools, Okinawa, Japan

Street Art Role in Place-Making and Suburban Tourism: Evidence from Osaka, Japan

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Abstract

This research project uses a mixed-methods approach to assess the extent to which street art murals can serve as tools for place-making and tourism development in suburban areas. It focuses on three recent mural initiatives in Osaka, Japan: Semba Mural Park, Konohana Mural Town, and YODOKABE. These initiatives indicate a positive shift in Japanese public perception of street art, a stigmatized urban subculture in Japan. Therefore, we first explored the indicators and drivers shaping this shift in public perception. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents and artists in Osaka, who recognized murals' multifaceted values: aesthetic, social, cultural, economic, educational, and spatial. Other factors increased acceptance of murals and stimulated local interest in such projects, including public-private collaboration, local engagement in some projects, artists' adherence to social norms, and social media promotion. Second, in October 2026, we used wearable skin conductance devices combined with GPS location tracking and self-report questionnaires to measure visitors' emotional arousal and their cognitive/conative responses pre-, during, and post-an arranged guided tour at Konohana for 19 participants. This was complemented by an in-depth semi-structured interview with each participant to support the statistical findings. However, we are still analyzing the data collected from this experimental tour.

Keywords:

Suburban, mural, place-making, perception, emotion, Japan

Event Representation: Measuring the Degree of “Our Community’s Event”

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Abstract

Recurring events are valuable tourism resources for destinations, yet their sustainability (or viability) depends partly on support from host-community residents. Recent event research has conceptualized locally supported events as “ours” in contrast to “theirs,” which suggests that alignment with local culture and values may contribute to event viability (Jani, 2023; Yamakita, 2026). However, event research lacks a tool for measuring the extent to which residents perceive an event as “ours,” particularly as a multidimensional construct. Drawing on Pitkin’s (1967) concept of representation and Asada and Reifurth’s (2023) community-oriented sport team representation study, the purpose of this study is to develop a scale of event representation that captures the extent to which residents perceive an event as representing their community. Following MacKenzie et al.’s (2011) six-stage scale development procedure, the study conceptualized event representation and developed measurement items based on five dimensions: formal, normative, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation. The items were reviewed by an expert panel comprising five event researchers and four practitioners. Based on their feedback, a reflective–formative measurement model was specified, with five items measuring each dimension. The scale is currently being pretested through a household survey in a small community in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan (population: approximately 1,300), which hosts the Kinokuni Miyama Marathon. Exploratory factor analysis and partial least squares structural equation modeling will be used to evaluate and refine the scale. Results from this stage will be presented at the forum. By introducing the concept of representation into event research, this study offers a multidimensional approach to understanding how events come to be perceived as “ours.” The resulting scale may also provide event managers with a diagnostic tool for assessing and strengthening the relationship between recurring events and their host communities.

Keywords:

Scale development, event evaluation, household survey, recurring events, local community, Japan

A Study on the Formation and Implementation of Destination Brand Concepts — Project Update and Future Research Directions

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Abstract

This presentation first provides an overview of the CTR-funded research project, "A Study on the Formation and Implementation of Destination Brand Concepts," and outlines its objectives. The project examines how destination brand concepts are formed, shared among stakeholders, and implemented in destination management, with particular attention to the management systems, organizational conditions, and governance arrangements that support these processes.

As part of this ongoing project, this presentation reports findings from research on the development of Japan's Destination Management Organization (DMO) system over the past decade. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of DMOs in the Kansai region to examine changes in the understanding and acceptance of the DMO concept, as well as issues related to funding, human resources, and organizational operations.

The preliminary analysis suggests that the DMO concept has become more widely understood and accepted since the initial stage of the registration system. At the same time, persistent challenges remain, including dependence on public funding, shortages of professional personnel, and difficulties in accumulating organizational knowledge under staff secondment arrangements. These findings suggest that the development of Japan's DMO system should be examined not only in terms of its quantitative

expansion, but also in terms of the development of DMOs' organizational capabilities and functions in destination management.

The presentation concludes by discussing how these findings contribute to the broader research project and by outlining future research directions, particularly in relation to the formation and implementation of destination brand concepts and the role of governance arrangements in these processes.

Keywords:

Destination Management Organization (DMO), J, destination management, funding, human resources

Revitalising Regional Cities through Cultural Heritage Tourism: Local Communities and DMOs Interpreting Heritage to Shape Sense of Place

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Abstract

Many regional cities are experiencing decline due to ageing populations and low fertility rates. Cultural heritage tourism is often adopted by local governments as a strategy for regional revitalisation, as cultural heritage contributes to a place's unique character and distinguishes it from other destinations. Existing literature on regional revitalisation has mainly focused on rural destinations and economic outcomes, with less attention given to urban contexts and the sociocultural processes through which revitalisation shapes a sense of place. Furthermore, although community participation is increasingly recognised as important for sustainable tourism, limited attention has been given to how local communities actively engage in heritage interpretation and shape heritage narratives. Existing studies on heritage interpretation have predominantly emphasised visitors' experiences and top-down governance approaches, giving insufficient attention to local communities as key contributors to bottom-up heritage interpretation. This study, therefore, aims to examine how regional historical cities with limited resources can pursue revitalisation through cultural heritage tourism by exploring the roles of local communities and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in interpreting heritage and shaping a sense of place. Using Tanabe City in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, as a case study, the research adopts a qualitative methodology comprising Photovoice and LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY workshops with local community members associated with the tourism industry, alongside semi-structured interviews with DMO representatives. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis. The study is expected to contribute to academic discussions on community involvement in heritage interpretation and the sociocultural dimensions of regional revitalisation, while offering practical insights for policymakers and tourism practitioners developing inclusive tourism strategies for regional cities facing demographic decline.

Keywords:

cultural heritage tourism, regional revitalisation, community engagement, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), heritage interpretation, sense of place

A Consideration of "Humanness" in the Tourist Guide Profession in the Age of AI

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Abstract

This presentation reconsiders the meaning and value of tourist guiding in the age of AI, particularly generative AI based on large language models (LLMs). Generative AI is transforming tour guiding by automating translation, information provision, and narration. Existing research has addressed AI replacement and collaboration by emphasizing human comparative advantages and AI's functional limitations. However, these boundaries shift with technological advances. Although guiding research has examined language, performance, and meaning-making, it has rarely revisited these issues through the philosophy of language and technology in the age of LLMs.

Against this background, this presentation moves beyond "searching for what AI cannot do" to reconsider the meaning of tourist guiding. Guided by Kojima and Doering's (2026) 3C ethos (Contemplation, Conversation, and Cross-disciplinarity) of philosophizing tourism and adopting the conceptual research approach of Xin et al. (2013), it critically examines assumptions about guiding exposed by LLMs through a conceptual comparison of writing and guiding.

At the current stage, drawing on Coeckelbergh and Gunkel (2025), this presentation re-examines the value of human linguistic expression as LLMs increasingly automate and standardize linguistic output. Its authors challenge traditional author-centered understandings of meaning, emphasizing the role of reading and interpretation in meaning-making and advancing the thesis that the future of writing lies in reading. This presentation critically examines this thesis by exploring the nature of writing and tourist guiding. In particular, it considers whether the increasing standardization of linguistic output may paradoxically heighten the importance of the relationship between discourse and the subject who interprets and expresses it, rather than simply diminishing authorship. This possibility may be particularly significant in tourist guiding, where discourse is interpreted and performed by a particular guide in a particular context, foregrounding the question of "who speaks." This inquiry may offer a philosophical basis for understanding and cultivating guides' individuality and agency.

Keywords:

tourist guiding, artificial intelligence, LLMs, *Communicative AI*, philosophy of technology, philosophizing tourism



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