





How Different Tourist Sites Evoke Different Emotions: Investigation Focusing on the Urban and Rural Sites in Japan

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Abstract. In this research, we examined the affective values realized by two different tourist sites: Sannomiya (Kobe) and Asago. We conducted interviews based on the Evaluation Grid Method with 14 participants. The result of the interviews revealed different affective values according to the site and valence. For Sannomiya, “increasing return motivation” and “enjoyable” were extracted as attractive factors, whereas “unwillingness to walk around,” “feeling dangerous,” and “uneasiness” were perceived as unattractive aspects. In contrast, for Asago, “relaxing,” “feeling of novelty,” “feeling of sightseeing,” “enjoyable,” and “feeling of extraordinariness” were identified as attractive factors, whereas “decreasing return motivation,” “decreasing visit motivation,” and “feeling of wasting” were determined as unattractive aspects. We also examined the kinds of impressions and tourist resources that influence these affective values. In addition to these qualitative analyses, we conducted a quantitative analysis to verify that these affective factors could distinguish these two sites. These differences in affective values, impressions, and tourist sites enable us to visualize the attractiveness and unattractiveness of each site. The approach used in this research is helpful in investigating different affective values realized in different tourist sites and for describing the characteristics of the sites.

Keywords: Affective Value · Tourist Site · Evaluation Grid Method

1 Introduction

For many countries, sightseeing is one of the most critical industries. Travel and tourism accounted for 10% of the GDP until the outbreak of COVID-19 [1]. Although some changes might be made in the tourism industry after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic [2], sightseeing is still perceived as an effective method for regional vitalization [3].

Although many people enjoy tourism, their motivations for traveling are not necessarily shared. In addition to a general interest in tourism, they have different and specific motivations and evaluate events and items differently depending on the relevance to the motivation for their trip [4]. For example, a suburban area with abundant nature would be an excellent place for those who seek calm and relaxing travel. However, the same area might not satisfy those who want to experience energetic events. To avoid this mismatch,

tourists need to understand the affective values that should be satisfied (e.g., whether they want to be relaxed or energized.). For tourist sites to attract tourists, they need to know what affective values they can impact by using their resources.

Considering the different evaluations of the same events and items, we focused on the affective value generated by the tourist site rather than the items or events of the tourist site itself and attempted to investigate the characteristics of the tourist sites through their affective value. To accomplish this purpose, in this research, we extracted data on how tourist sites evoke different affective values through impression, which is evoked by their tourist resources. We examined two tourist sites (Sannomiya, a central urban area of Kobe city, and Asago, a suburban area full of nature) that would produce different affective values and visualized the affective values they created. In other words, this research focused not on push factors but on pull factors [5]. A pull factor is defined as a factor that emerges due to the attractiveness of a particular tourist site, which distinguishes it from other sites. In contrast, a push factor is defined as a component of the tourists' socio-psychological factors that influences travel decisions and demand.

2 Related Research

2.1 How Tourists Determine Whether to Go and Where to Go

Whether one wants to go on a journey and where he/she goes are matters of decision-making. To examine the process, Mansfeld constructed the conceptual model of tourist destination choice [6] to explain the decision-making process of tourists. In the model, the tourists' decision-making consists of eight steps. In the first step ("travel motivation"), tourists are motivated to travel. In the second step ("information gathering"), they gather information to ascertain the attractive destinations that are within constraint limits and to evaluate the alternative destinations based on "place-utility." In the third step ("establishing alternatives"), the tourists list several alternatives that meet their motivation, constraint limits, and place utility. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth steps ("eliminating destination alternatives," "assessing destination alternatives," and "choosing the best alternative"), tourists select one destination and eliminate the alternatives. In the seventh step ("undertaking the travel"), tourists actually travel to the selected destination. In the eighth step ("choice evaluation"), they evaluate the destination they visited.

In each step of Mansfeld's model, the information about the destination (tourist site) is perceived and processed. Therefore, the aspects perceived as an attribute of the site will determine the tourists' evaluation of the site and whether they will select the site as the destination.

2.2 How Tourists Perceive Tourists Perceive Tourist Sites

Some studies focus on the site's resources that attract tourists to a site. For example, eight factors that relate to the satisfaction of the tourists to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA, have been identified: beach opportunities, cost, hospitality, eating and drinking facilities, accommodations, campground facilities, environment, and commercialization

[7]. Since each site has different factors, tourists have various motivations for choosing different sites. For example, tourists who visited Turkey had stronger cultural and physical motivations than those who visited Mallorca [8].

Another study pointed out that the tourist's attributes, not the site's characteristics, affect the tourist's satisfaction. For example, the tourist's preconceived image of the site influences their expectations and loyalty [9]. In addition, the tourist's nationality has an effect on their motivation [8]. These motivations are also known to affect evaluations of tourist resources [10].

3 How Tourist Sites Generate Different Affective Values: An Investigation Using the Evaluation Grid Method for Interviews

3.1 Approach

In this research, we adopt the three-layer hierarchical model of Kansei [11], where the top layer (affective value) is realized by the middle layer (impression), and the middle layer is formed by the bottom layer (physical feature). Physical features are perceived by and used to form impressions, generating value. In the case of tourism, the bottom layer (physical feature) corresponds to concrete tourist resources such as facilities, historic landmarks, and natural environments, the middle layer corresponds to impressions of the site, and the top layer corresponds to the affective value of the site.

3.2 Method

Participants. Fourteen participants participated in the study (seven males and seven females). Thirteen participants were graduate and undergraduate students in architecture courses, and one was a working adult who graduated from an architecture course. Their average age was 21.14 (ranging from 20 to 28). We selected participants who had visited both sites because a previous study pointed out that the visiting experience changes tourists' perception of the site [12]. All participants visited Sannomiya regularly, and the graduate and undergraduate students visited Asago immediately before the interview as a hands-on learning experience for the course.

Materials. For this study, we selected two tourist sites for the theme: Sannomiya and Asago. Both are in the Hyogo prefecture of Japan. Sannomiya is the central urban area of Kobe city with a population of around 1.5 million (Fig. 1). In contrast, Asago is a rural city with a population of around 30 thousand (Fig. 2). These areas were selected for two reasons. First, all of the participants had visited these areas and knew what kind of tourist resources are available and what kind of impressions and values are provided at the sites. Second, the two areas are contrary to each other in characteristics (urban vs. rural) and will provide different values.



Fig. 1. Sites in Sannomiya



Fig. 2. Sites in Asago

Procedure. *Participants' Information.* Participants were asked how many times they have visited Sannomiya and Asago (1: Never, 2: Once, 3: Twice or Thrice, 4: More than four times, 5: I live there or have lived there) and when they had last visited each site (1: A month, 2: Three months, 3: Half a year, 4: A year, 5: More than a year).

Interview. We conducted interviews based on the Evaluation Grid Method [13], which is a semi-structured interview process with a series of open questions. In the Evaluation Grid Method, we premise the interview with a hierarchical information processing mechanism called a construct system, which consists of concrete understanding (bottom layer), sensory understanding (middle layer), and abstract value judgment (top layer). In this system, people first form concrete understandings about an item from perceived information. Afterward, they form sensory understandings based on concrete understandings. Finally, they judge the abstract value using sensory understanding. Through this construct system, people will process outside information, understand their circumstances, and decide on what actions to take.

The Evaluation Grid Method is executed in two steps. In the first step, respondents are asked to compare two items, select the better one, and explain why that item is better than the other one. In the second step, participants were asked to respond to “ladder-up” and “ladder-down” questions. The ladder-up question asks participants about the upper concept of the response with an open question (e.g., “What is the advantage of xxx for you?”). In contrast, the ladder-down question asks participants about the lower concept of the response with an open question (e.g., “What is needed for xxx to be realized?”). By repeating these two questions, the interviewer will develop an evaluation structure of each respondent in a hierarchical network style to visualize how the objective factors conceive the abstract values via sensory understanding. After accumulating the evaluation structures of each respondent, the interviewer will develop an evaluation structure for the whole group of respondents.

The Evaluation Grid Method has three advantages [13]. First, using open questions allows the interviewer to elicit respondents' construct system without relying on the a priori hypothesis. Second, the fixed interview procedure enables the interviewer to collect results while minimizing the bias derived from the interviewer's subjective hypothesis. Third, the results are visualized in a hierarchical network based on the human information processing, which helps the researcher understand the results easily.

In the present research, we modified the procedure in the following ways. First, participants were asked to list attractive aspects of Sannomiya. Second, they were asked to respond to ladder-up questions to extract an abstract value judgment (e.g., “Why is it attractive?”) and to ladder-down questions to extract objective understandings of the items (e.g., “What is needed to make the item attractive?”). They responded to all of the attractive/unattractive aspects of Sannomiya/Asago. The order of the four interviews was counterbalanced, and the interviews were about 90 min long in total.

3.3 Results

Participants' Familiarity with Sannomiya and Asago. Figure 3 shows the participants' number of visits to Sannomiya and Asago. All participants have visited Sannomiya more than four times. More than half of the participants have visited Asago once, and the rest have visited it two or more times.

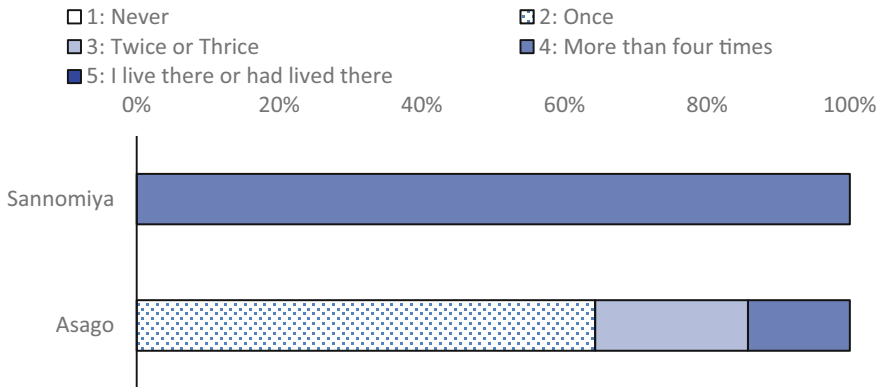


Fig. 3. Participants' experience visiting the sites

Figure 4 shows the participants' last visit to Sannomiya and Asago. Most of them visited both sites within the month before the interview, indicating that their evaluations of the sites are relatively free of recall bias caused by long periods between a visit and an interview.

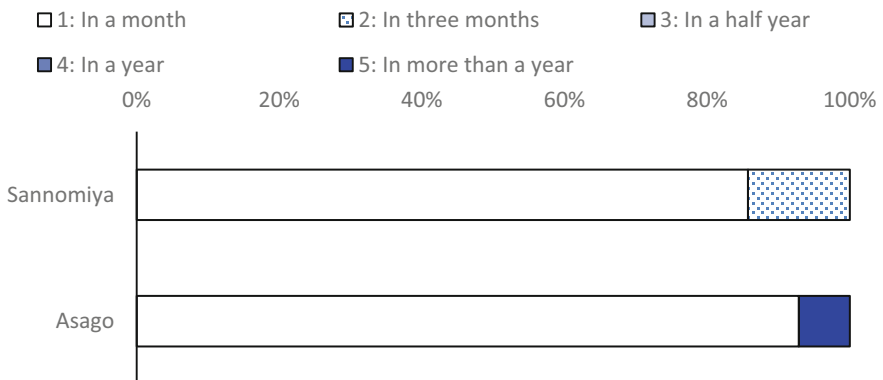


Fig. 4. Participants' last visit to the sites

Qualitative Difference in Tourist Sites and Valence. The interview data were summarized using the Evaluation Structure Visualization system, which was developed based on [14].

In the data analysis, we first categorized the interview responses with similar meanings. For example, responses such as “I can be relaxed,” “I feel relaxed,” and “It soothes the mind” are categorized into the “relaxing” category.

The software allows the analyzer to raise or lower the threshold of the results based on Katz’s centrality to ensure that more important nodes are enhanced in the graph. In the analysis, we adopted 0.1008 in Katz centrality to make the graph comprehensive and detailed.

Figure 5 shows the attractive aspects of Sannomiya. At the higher level (abstract value judgment), the graph is characterized by words such as “increasing return motivation” and “enjoyable.” In the middle level (sensory understanding), the attractive factors are recognized as “enjoy oneself,” “easiness to visit,” “pleasure of the table,” “lively atmosphere,” and “convenience.” In the lower level (objective and concrete understanding), the participants highlighted “various shops,” “many people,” “cafe,” “store,” and “gathered stores.”

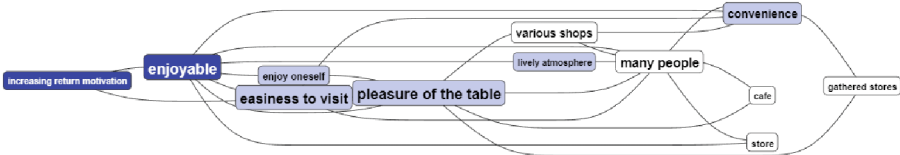


Fig. 5. Evaluation structure of the attractive aspects of Sannomiya (the thick blue nodes indicate affective value, the thin blue nodes indicate impression, and the white nodes indicate tourist resource)

Figure 6 shows the unattractive aspects of Sannomiya. At the higher level, the graph is characterized by words such as “unwillingness to walk around,” “feeling dangerous,” and “uneasiness.” In the middle level, the graph is characterized by words such as “bad atmosphere,” “restrictions in walking around,” “poor public peace and order,” “uncleanliness,” “need time to travel,” “crowdedness,” and “pleasure of the table.” In the lower level, the graph is characterized by words such as “danger in disaster,” “many cars,” “touting,” “suspicious people,” “drunken people,” “busy street,” “many people,” “station and around,” and “Center Street.”

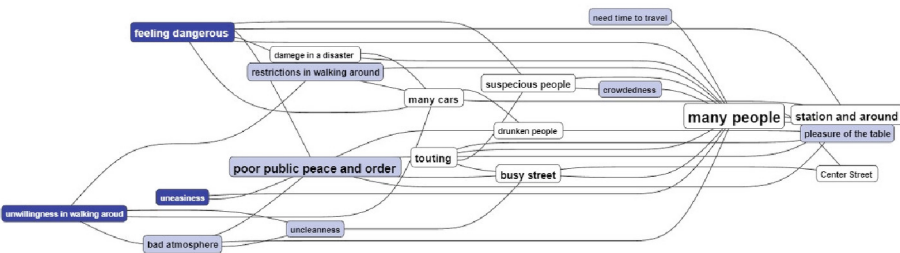


Fig. 6. Evaluation structure of the unattractive aspects of Sannomiya (the thick blue nodes indicate affective value, the thin blue nodes indicate impression, and the white nodes indicate tourist resource)

Figure 7 shows the attractive aspects of Asago. At the higher level, the graph is characterized by words such as “relaxing,” “feeling of novelty,” “feeling of sightseeing,” “enjoyable,” and “feeling of extraordinariness.” In the middle level, the graph is characterized by words such as “attractive scenery,” “distinctive scenery,” “quietness,” “events that never can be experienced in another place,” “pleasures of the table,” “being a historical place,” “abundant nature,” and “beautiful nature.” In the lower level, the graph is characterized by words such as “snowfall and snow coverage,” “Takeda castle,” “station and around,” “mountains,” “Ikuno area,” and “Ikuno silver mine.”

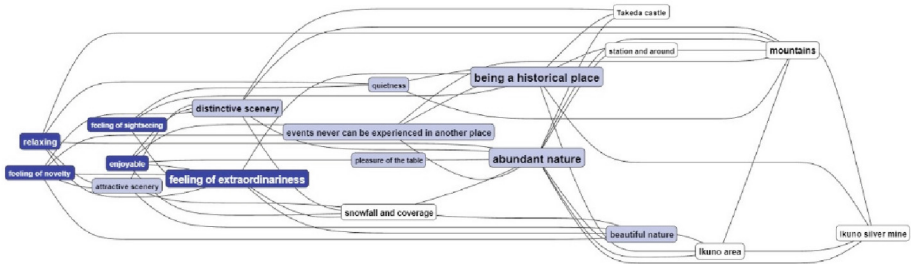


Fig. 7. Evaluation structure of the attractive aspects of Asago (the thick blue nodes indicate affective value, the thin blue nodes indicate impression, and the white nodes indicate tourist resource)

Figure 8 shows the unattractive aspects of Asago. At the higher level, the graph is characterized by words such as “decreasing return motivation,” “decreasing visit motivation,” and “feeling of wasting.” In the middle level, the graph is characterized by words such as “not making use of the tourist attractions,” “no pleasures of the table,” inconvenience,” “difficulty to visit,” “no sense of uniqueness,” “need time to travel,” “limited numbers in options to take.” In the lower level, the graph is characterized by words such as “limited numbers in people,” “limited numbers in shops,” “snowfall and snow coverage,” “staying for a short time,” “castle town,” and “Takeda castle.”

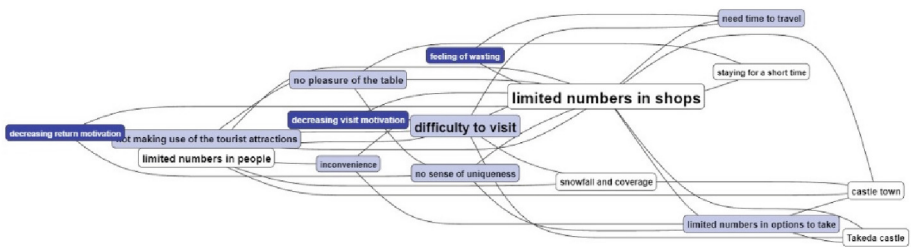


Fig. 8. Evaluation structure of the unattractive aspects of Asago (the thick blue nodes indicate affective value, the thin blue nodes indicate impression, and the white nodes indicate tourist resource)

Quantitative Difference in Tourist Sites and Valence. To determine whether there is a quantitative difference between each site’s affective value, we conducted four (site and valence: Sannomiya (attractive)/Sannomiya (unattractive)/Asago (attractive)/Asago (unattractive)) by two (response: referred/did not refer) chi-squared tests on 12 affective values. Figure 9 shows the rate of participants who referred to each affective value in the attractive and unattractive interviews. The chi-squared tests showed significant differences in reference rate ($p < 0.05$) for almost all affective values, excluding “uneasiness,” “unwillingness to walk around,” and “decreasing return motivation.” Among the nine words that presented significant differences, “enjoyable” was referred to more frequently in the attractive interview on Sannomiya, whereas “feeling dangerous” was referred to more frequently in the unattractive interview. In comparison, “increasing return motivation,” “relaxing,” “feeling of novelty,” “feeling of extraordinariness,” and “feeling of sightseeing” were referred to more frequently in the attractive interview on Asago, whereas “decreasing visit motivation” was referred to more frequently in the unattractive interview on Asago. “Feeling of wasting” was not frequently referred to in any condition.

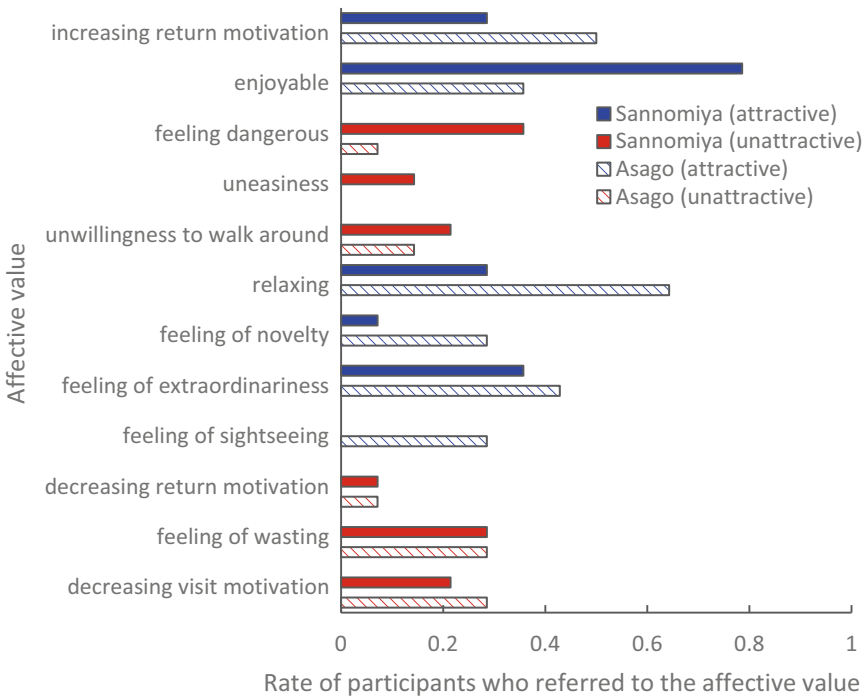


Fig. 9. Rate of participants who referred to each affective value during the interviews.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Summary of the Results

In this research, we conducted interviews on the attractive and unattractive aspects of two tourist sites: Sannomiya and Asago. The results of each interview qualitatively presented different affective values according to the tourist sites and valence. The quantitative analysis revealed the differences between the tourist sites.

From the qualitative analysis of the interview data, Sannomiya was revealed to be an enjoyable site that tourists want to visit more than once (“increasing return motivation”). The attractiveness of Sannomiya was derived from the visitors’ impression that it is a lively and accessible city where they can find many places to enjoy themselves and eat delicious foods. These impressions were influenced by the various shops, cafes, and people there.

However, Sannomiya was also revealed to be an uneasy, dangerous place where visitors do not want to walk around. These affective values are a result of the visitors’ impression that it is an unclean and crowded place with a bad atmosphere, poor public peace and order, and restrictions on walking around. This impression was derived from many people, who mentioned witnessing touting, suspicious behavior, and drunken people on the busy street near the station.

In contrast, Asago was described as an enjoyable place with a relaxing atmosphere and feeling of novelty, with plenty of sightseeing opportunities and an overall impression of extraordinariness. These affective values were extracted from the visitors’ impression that Asago is a quiet and historical place with affective and distinctive scenery and abundant and beautiful nature. These impressions are influenced by artificial (e.g., Takeda castle and Ikuno silver mine) and natural (e.g., snow and mountains) tourist resources.

Unfortunately, Asago was revealed as a tourist site that people don’t want to visit. The unattractive aspects of Asago resulted from visitors’ belief that they could not feel the uniqueness of the place. This is most likely due to the difficulty to visit and the limited options available, which were derived from the fact that there are few shops there and visitors cannot stay there for a long time.

These feelings of novelty and extraordinariness might reflect people’s familiarity with the sites. For most of the participants, Sannomiya was a familiar place that they had frequently visited, whereas Asago was a place that they had only visited once. Because of this difference, the participants might have perceived Asago as a novel and extraordinary place.

The quantitative analysis supported most of the affective differences. The result indicated that Sannomiya is an enjoyable but dangerous place, whereas Asago is a relaxing town with a feeling of novelty and extraordinariness and numerous sightseeing opportunities. One interesting point is that Asago is both attractive (“increasing return motivation”) and unattractive (“decreasing visit motivation”), potentially because it is difficult to visit, which prevents Asago from attracting first-time visitors.

The factors of the two tourist sites illustrate their characteristics distinctively. From a valence viewpoint, some factors reflect the attractive aspects of the sites, whereas others reflect the unattractive aspects. From the viewpoint of the site, some factors shed light

on the characteristics of Sannomiya, and others describe the characteristics of Asago. This distinctiveness could be useful for grasping the nature of various tourist sites.

4.2 The Novelty and Importance of This Research

This research is novel because we focused not on the tourist resources themselves, but on the affective value created by them. The affective value is realized by the interaction between the site and tourists, which could be a helpful clue for understanding tourism. Considering the increasing interest in co-creating tourist experiences [15], the interactive affective value will play an essential role in future tourism.

Moreover, this research is important because we focused on both the attractive and the unattractive aspects of the sites. Although most sites emphasize their attractive factors exclusively, analyzing the unattractive factors would also be useful. In a previous study, researchers demonstrated the usefulness of examining both sides by investigating both the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of tourists. It revealed that evaluations of the positive attributes and negative attributes lacked concordance [16]. In this research, the opposite of the attractive factors are not the unattractive factors. For example, the attractive affective values of Sannomiya (i.e., “increasing return motivation” and “enjoyable”) are not the opposite of the unattractive affective values (i.e., “unwillingness to walk around,” “feeling dangerous,” and “uneasiness”). In addition, unlike the affective values realized in the Sannomiya and Asago, whose levels of urbanization are opposite, the lack of concordance between attractive and unattractive factors were not opposite. By conducting interviews on the attractive and unattractive aspects of different sites, we were able to reveal the characteristics of the sites more specifically.

This study succeeded in estimating the characteristics of the sites based on affective values, sensory impressions, and tourist resources. By using this method, it is possible to index the affective value of various tourist attractions. In the future, it will also be possible to classify tourist types by examining the degree to which visitors seek out each of the affective values that various tourist sites offer. It will also enable tourist sites to target tourists to whom the region is likely to appeal and allow tourists to select appropriate travel plans.

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