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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines residents' perceptions of objects that visitors could focus on in a historical district as the aspects of the local lives. Aspects elicited from visitors' responses in a preceding study were rated by residents in terms of the extent to which each portrays the local lives and to which it depicts an intention to attract visitors. Cluster analysis of the ratings surfaced two types of aspects, which are touristic and non-touristic local lives, and analysis of variance illustrated that some touristic and non-touristic aspects were rated as so more clearly by residents in rigidly preserved areas. The results also imply some similarities between visitors' and residents' perceptions.*

**Keywords:** *historical district, local lives, residents' perceptions*

### **INTRODUCTION**

A historical district is a form of tourism destination that has not emerged primarily to attract visitors and in many cases has served principally as living places for locals while also functioning as historical assets and often as tourism resources. Whereas elucidation of the aspects that visitors could regard as reflecting local lives may merit those who wish to enrich the array of inducements for visitors, such an attempt should be followed by investigations of residents' perceptions in order to foster tourism in appropriate consideration of residents' views. This study, drawing on a previous study, aims to investigate residents' views of objects that visitors may perceive as the aspects of local lives.

### **LITERATURE**

Besides historical and physical traits as given by the preservation of old houses and townscapes (Orbasli, 2000), aspects that reflect lives of local population have also been argued to drive visitation (Jansen-Verbeke, 1995 as cited in Orbasli, 2000, p.47). Such aspects seem to vary in their scarcity values and uniqueness. Some observations of local living culture suggest that they may include not only intangible traditional components like rituals but also more ordinary elements, such as daily routines, which stem "from the dynamics of local everyday social life" (Ooi, 2002, p.157; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). In fact, in the outcome of a study in Hungary (Ricky-Boyd & Metro-Roland, 2010), rather secular aspects involving the Hungarian language, behaviors and appearance of the locals, and unidentified architectures and graffiti on them are listed. An empirical study of visitors' perceptions of local lives in a historical district (Naoi et al., 2011) also revealed that commercial and residential uses of historical houses as represented by acts of planting flowers and sprinkling lanes with water are perceived as the facets of local lives, particular by visitors who stepped into less touristic and antiquated areas.

It should here be noted that aspects that visitors associate with the local lives may be

seen differently by residents. As mundane sides of the local lives are often not easy to notice, what catches visitors eyes may actually be framed as things to see under influences by performative norms and habits (Edensor, 2000). Such an observation also accords with MacCannel's (1976) remark about front and back regions, which says that tourists may appreciate what is contrived for their pleasurable experiences while considering it to be in an authentic backstage. That is, there may be a gap between visitors and residents in terms of what is seen as local. In fact, according to Nawate's (2001) empirical study of a mountainous Japanese village designated a world heritage site, the features of the local lives that visitors felt attractive are regarded by the locals as emanating from their past lives. Examination of residents' views of aspects that visitors perceive to reflect local lives is necessary to see whether residents and visitors have similar or different views of what local aspects are. Urry (1992) further points to the possibility that locals could behave in ways appropriate for visitors' gaze whether such gaze is actually placed on their lives or not.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The on-site research was conducted in Takayama-shi, Japan. Takayama-shi has two districts that are designated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (n.d.) as Japan's Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings (IPDGTB): Sanmachi and Shimoninomachi-oojinmachi (Shimoninomachi). Compared to Sanmachi, which was designated in 1979, Shimoninomachi was designated more recently in 2004.

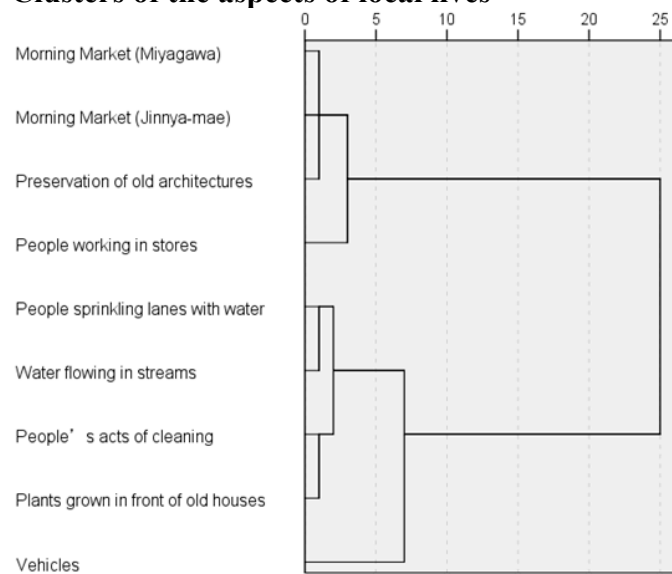
Questionnaires enclosed in stamped, self-addressed envelopes were posted in mailboxes of 410 households within municipal land divisions that include either of the IPDGTBs on 6 and 7 March 2011. The questionnaire asked one respondent per each household to indicate the municipal land division of their residence and whether they lived within either of the IPDGTBs. Respondents were also required to rate the nine aspects of the historical districts (See Figure 1 and Table 1), in terms of the extent to which each portrays the local lives there (Local Dimension) and to which it depicts an intention to attract visitors (Touristic Dimension) on 5-point scales. These aspects were taken from those that appeared to be perceived by visitors as the aspects of local lives in the previous study in Takayama-shi (Naoi et al., 2011). In total, 182 questionnaires were returned, and 154 were used for further analysis after the exclusion of respondents with no or inconsistent responses about the areas of their residence or with inappropriate answers on the scales.

The nine aspects were categorized with use of cluster analysis (Ward Method, squared Euclidean distance, Z score) based on the average ratings. Thereafter, analysis of variance taking the rating of each aspect on each dimension as the dependent variable and two types of divisions showing their places of residence, which are whether they lived within an IPDGTB (Residence Division 1) and whether they resided in a municipal division that has Sanmachi or Shimoninomachi (Residence Division 2), as the independent variables were performed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Through the cluster analysis, there have emerged two clusters of aspects. One, which involved the morning markets, preservation of old architectures and people working in stores, was perceived to be objects for visitors. Also, these aspects, except people working in stores, were also suggested to be regarded moderately as the reflection of the local lives. The remaining five aspects appeared to fall in the other cluster, which was perceived strongly to be the aspects of local lives. The aspects in this cluster, except people's acts of cleaning, were also regarded weakly as objects intended for visitors (See Figure 1 and Table 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Clusters of the aspects of local lives**



**Table 1**  
**Average Ratings of the Aspects**

	Ratings	
	Local	Touristic
Morning Market (Miyagawa)	3.47	3.88
Morning Market (Jinnya-mae)	3.49	3.87
Preservation of old architectures	3.42	3.64
People working in stores	2.84	3.55
People sprinkling lanes with water	4.28	2.56
Water flowing in streams	4.34	2.48
People's acts of cleaning	4.24	3.18
Plants grown in front of old houses	4.08	2.93
Vehicles	3.63	1.74

As to the analysis of variance using ratings on Local Dimensions as the independent variables, a significant main effect showing that respondents living in the IPDGTBs tended to rate preservation of old architectures more strongly as the aspects of local lives ( $F(1,142)=5.43, p < .05$ ) was detected. A significant interaction effect was observed between Residence Divisions 1 and 2 ( $F(1,142)=5.43, p < .05$ ), and, according to the simple main effects, respondents in the IPDGTB of Sanmachi saw people sprinkling lanes with water as more representative of the local lives than respondents in the IPDGTB of Shimoninomachi ( $F(1,147)=4.90, p < .05$ ). Similarly, among residents in the municipal divisions that included Sanmachi, those who resided within the IPDGTB tended to perceive acts of sprinkling lanes more strongly as the aspects of the local lives than residents outside the IPDGTB ( $F(1,147)=11.21, p < .01$ ). As the results of the same analysis with ratings on Touristic Dimension as the independent variables, two significant main effects were found. Respondents who resided in the IPDGTBs appeared to consider the Miyagawa Morning Market ( $F(1,139)=6.65, p < .05$ ) and the Jinya-mae Morning Market ( $F(1,139)=4.50, p < .05$ ) more intensely to be of touristic nature than those outside the IPDGTBs. These findings suggest that residents in rigidly preserved areas may be inclined to regard some touristic aspects like morning markets as more touristic and some non-touristic aspects such as preservation and people's act of caring townscapes as more non-touristic. That is, residents in preserved areas could have clearer views of what parts of their lives are or are not for visitors.

This study also offers insights into similarities and differences between visitors' and residents' views as the aspects rated by the residents here were based on objects that visitors regarded as the local aspects in the earlier study. Some of the aspects were implied to be seen as inducements for visitors by residents, but they were also felt to depict local lives by visitors and also by residents. This implies that the residents may acknowledge their lives' somehow touristic nature although it is unknown how they perceive such a state of their lives. In contrast, some water-related elements and acts of caring houses and townscapes may be regarded as parts of local lives both by residents and visitors. This may imply that visitors may gaze on what is also regarded as the aspects of local lives by locals, which may shed light on the dichotomy of front and back regions (MacCannell, 1976).

## CONCLUSION

This study researches how residents could regard the aspects that, in visitors' view, reflect the local lives, and the outcomes offer some insights into the concepts of front and back regions, residents' recognition of the touristic nature of their lives, and relatively clear lines drawn between touristic and non-touristic aspects of local lives by residents in strictly

preserved areas. The results also imply some agreements between visitors' and residents' views of the local lives. However, the findings here though may not be sufficient for generalization as the effects of diverse contexts surrounding visitors, residents and other stakeholders have not been considered. It should especially be noted that this study required residents to assess what visitors', not residents themselves, gaze on as the local lives, and, as a result, might have failed to detect residents' perceptions that might be different from visitors'. To take this study's implications further, other forms of studies, such as in-depth investigations of various stakeholders, would be awaited.

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