

Project-Based Learning/Fieldwork report

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Introduction

Miyakonojo City is located in the southwestern corner of Miyazaki Prefecture, and it is a warm and abundant nature place. The city has been successful in its efforts to become Japan's largest agricultural producer for three years since 2019, and the largest recipient of hometown tax donations (*Furusato nouzei*) in Japan. However, the city faces challenges such as a decrease in the number of tourists from outside of Miyazaki and a decrease in the number of young people living in the area. To propose the way of solving this problem and revitalization, we learned about the current situation and history by visiting Kanbashira Shrine, Miyakonojo City Library, Kirishima Shochu Brewery, Miyakonojo Historical Museum, Shimazu-tei, and Hotel TERRASTA and asking local people. Among them, we focused on the Miyakonojo City Library, Kirishima Shochu Brewery, and Hotel TERRASTA and proposed a retreat tour linked to the SDGs. It can be said that it is important to deepen the connections between the communities and inform the attractive points to people both inside and outside of Miyakonojo.

Method of research

First of all, we set the purpose of the field work, which is local tourism revitalization in Miyakonojo. We visited Miyakonojo to understand the current situation of tourism in the town. We went to some of the places and chose which to focus on as this project. The spots are the hotel TERRASTA and the Shochu brewers called Kirishima. Both of them contribute to the sustainability of the local community and even our planet in some ways. In the hotel, a guide was in charge of showing us around the inside of the hotel and she introduced several rooms. Then thankfully, we could ask questions we wanted to know in terms of the structure of each room and its attraction, plus SDGs. Those rooms were well designed and appealing. However, it seemed that they are quite expensive so not everyone can afford them so we felt we should think of another way to use them effectively. After the small tour in the hotel, the next place to visit was the shochu factory. We participated in a tour of the factory with detailed information by a guide. She introduced the process of how it is made, starting from the potato called Kogane Sengan. Fortunately, there was a chance to drink multiple kinds of alcohol and we enjoyed them. After the field project, we had several weeks to plan the presentation which was supposed to be done in front of the people from Miyakonojo. We came up with ideas to incorporate the sources collected during the field research but our plans were initially not organized and we struggled finding out the best way to revitalize the local tourism, using local resources. We spent a lot of time working on it and did the first presentation and were given advice by our professor. We reconsidered and fixed our scheme. Then finally, we conducted our presentation online towards the people from Miyakonojo who later gave useful feedback to us.

TERRASTA

Located in Miyakonojo City, TERRASTA is a hotel with the theme of omotenashi, diversity, and promoting the city. The name comes from the "terrace," which is open to the outside, and the concept of the "stage," and it provides services as a place where people of various generations can spend their life stages. There are five main initiatives in which the hotel contributes to the SDGs.

The first is the guest rooms, each with a different design and concept. Local traditional craftsmen made the guest room decorations and furniture with wood from Miyazaki. Also, there are

craft rooms created by local high school students. Therefore, this would relate to goals 4 “Quality Education” and goal 8 “Decent Work And Economic Growth” of the SDGs.

Secondly, the restaurants in this hotel use local ingredients, such as Miyazaki beef and Shochu. Thus, it can be said that SDGs 12th goal “Responsible Consumption and Production” is accomplished.

The third is that it is full of plants. There are many plants in the lobbies, hallways, and every other place. A flower store is attached to the ground floor, providing nature to guests. For that reason, TERRASTA contributes to SDGs goal 13 “Climate Action”.

The fourth feature is Ohsumi Sazen. It allows guests to know tea’s history, culture, tradition, and future. Spending time with the products of Shibushi's tea farmers can bring peace of mind. This tea experience is related to goal 3 “Good Health And Well-Being” and goal 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production”.

Lastly, this hotel is connected to the local public library. It uses technology to provide citizens with education. Guests can use their room keys as cards for borrowing books. Moreover, there are a lot of books or materials on Miyakonojo City, so people can learn about the city. Consequently, this feature has an important role in SDGs goal 4 “Quality Education”.

Miyakonojo City Library

The Miyakonojo City Library “mall mall” which reformed a shopping mall. The interior of the library is well designed with a modern atmosphere based on natural colours, so people can enjoy a relaxing atmosphere that is different from a normal library. Also, there are several unique ways of providing an educational opportunity in this library. For example, in the index section, there is a stamp with a QR code for each word, so visitors can select a word they are interested in, stamp it, and read it by using device, then it takes them to a book in the library. In addition, It is possible for hotel guests to borrow books with their room card key from the hotel TERRASTA, making it easy for guests to use the library. We expect that by including the library into the Retreat tours, people will be able to experience the relaxing and stress-reducing effects that reading can offer. From those things, this library has a role in SDGs goal 4 “Quality Education”.

Kirishima Shuzou

We also visited one of Miyazaki's most well-known companies, Kirishima Shuzou. Here they make a variety of shochu to complement food with local water “Kirishima Rekkasui”.

This company has been involved in various SDG initiatives. For example, all materials used to make shochu are produced in Japan. They are Kirishima Rekkasui, Japanese sweet potatoes and rice. They also produce and ship their own products. Moreover, they conduct “Satsumaimo Cycle” that convert and recycle sweet potato derived by-products into biogas. There is also a power generation business that uses this biogas. In addition, the factory also has a technology that uses wastewater from shochu production to clean the machinery. Furthermore, they are conducting tree-planting activities and setting goals to reduce CO2 emissions. From the above, they have made significant contributions to the SDGs, especially Goals 12 and 15.

In order to produce their contributions to the SDGs, we would like to suggest some plans. First, we came up with many ways to drink shochu. We want to suggest them because we want people who don't like strong alcohol and young people to drink shochu. Also, we expect publicity via Instagram. For instance, mixing shochu with fruit and cinnamon softens the flavor and makes it easier to drink. These are colorful in appearance and will be popular among young women.

Finally, we considered how to take advantage of the colorful and easy-to-drink shochu arrangements. For example, we would like to propose a shochu tasting and drinks party in the suite in

cooperation with TERRASTA. Also, it would be a good idea to place fruit and green tea in the tasting corner of Kirishima Shuzou to give people on the factory tour an experience. Additionally, we also came up with the idea of launching a new product of shochu mixed with fruit and other ingredients.

To sum up, Kirishima Shuzou contributes very much to the SDGs, and we think it is important to promote the appeal of shochu itself to make more people aware of this attraction.

Conclusion

Based on these, it can be said that providing people with a place of refreshment through Retreat tours while taking advantage of Miyakonojo's advantages can be regional revitalization. In terms of the SDGs, Hotel TERRASTA's efforts to build relationships with the local community and use local resources and ingredients, the Miyakonojo City Library's use of various ways to provide educational opportunities, and Kirishima Shuzo's establishment of local production for local consumption in the factory and zero waste are all contributing to the SDGs. In the feedback we received from the people of Miyakonojo on our presentation, they suggested that the content should be enjoyable regardless of gender, and we realized that our proposal was from a female perspective. We learned that we need to take into account various perspectives and situations in order for everyone to enjoy and relax equally without bias. It was a very meaningful experience for us to actually see, hear and learn about the current situation through this fieldwork, to think about ways to revitalize the Miyakonojo, and to make proposals to the people that community.