

COMPLETION REPORT

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Subject of Research Project: **A Study on Orchard Tourism in Tohoku Region, Japan.**

Japan's premium fruits contribute significantly to the country's agricultural sector. Despite the challenges posed by the small size of Japanese orchards and the high cost of living, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of farmers, particularly from older generations. In response, Japanese orchard owners have strategically shifted their focus towards cultivating high-quality fruits and marketing premium products at elevated prices. Some have gone a step further by diversifying their offerings to include tourism services, embracing the concept of agritourism.

Notably, there is a shortage of comprehensive case studies on orchard tourism in developed nations like Japan, where advanced technology and robust infrastructure are seamlessly integrated into the agricultural sector. Consequently, this research aims to achieve three primary objectives: first, to investigate the array of products and services available within orchard tourism; second, to categorize the various types and models of tourist orchards within Japan's Tohoku Region; and third, to analyze orchard tourism operation management in the study area.

The study, conducted from April 2022 to September 2023, utilizes qualitative research methods involving both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was gathered through on-site observations and semi-structured interviews conducted with thirteen either the owners of these tourist orchards or their designated representatives and an officer at the Agricultural Tourist Information Center (ATIC). Meanwhile, secondary data was compiled from diverse sources, including articles, textbooks, official websites, and insights from local guides. The review of prior research explores themes related to orchard tourism, tourist orchard products and services, models of tourism orchard, and orchard tourism operational management.

The results indicate that the majority of the thirteen tourist orchards specialize in selling various agricultural products, including fresh fruits, processed items, souvenirs, and food and beverages. These orchards also extend Pick-Your-Own (PYO) activities during brief harvesting seasons, typically around three months. They offer educational initiatives such as farm tours to visitors. Additionally, one ATIC plays a pivotal role by providing valuable information about tourism orchards in the area to visitors.

Ultimately, the tourist orchards in the study area can be classified into four distinct models. The first is the Traditional Management Model, which exclusively offers PYO activities. The second is the Rural Landscape Model, combining a village setting with fixtures of the rural landscape. The third is the Eco-creation Model, providing opportunities for visitors to partake in outdoor recreational activities. Lastly, the Comprehensive Recreation Model arranges tourist facilities, including agricultural shops, souvenir shops, and restaurants.

In terms of orchard tourism operations, the majority of the thirteen tourist orchards operate as family-owned businesses. Although, one ATIC is organized by the local government. Among these, eleven tourist orchards fall into the category of working farms, offering direct contact and authentic agritourism experiences. Activities such as fruit-picking and tasting, considered foundational for an authentic agricultural experience, are meticulously orchestrated within demarcated areas by the orchardists themselves. The dynamics between orchardists and tourists reveal an intimate, direct contact with the working orchards and the individuals behind their cultivation,

fostering a much closer relationship than initially anticipated.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1 February, 2024, Swissotel Bangkok Ratchada, 8th Thailand International College Consortium (TICC), Integrating Perspective from Different Disciplines for Current and Emerging Society towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Orchard Tourism and the three Ps Sustainability: Case Studies in Japan, Phomphan Roopkrom, Ph.D.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Not yet available. Under preparation to be submitted to tourism field journal (Target: Tourist Study Journal)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)