



*Case Study*

**Residents' Awareness of Inbound Tourism in Rural Community in Japan: Case Study on Tambasayama City, Hyogo Prefecture**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the awareness of residents who had not yet begun long-stay tourism undertakings in rural area in Japan, to understand their basic intentions concerning agricultural and rural-experience exchange business, farm-stay business, and receiving foreign tourists. The factors that influence the intentions are defined based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB). A survey questionnaire was employed to collect data from the residents in three communities in the Murakumo area of Tambasayama City. A structural equation model (SEM) was used to analyze the level of the factors' influence on the residents' intentions. With regard to the residents' intentions toward the three types of business, a large proportion of residents tended to hold negative attitudes. Residents almost held more negative attitude to farm-stay business and receiving foreigners than to carry out agricultural and rural-experience exchange businesses. There existed significant differences in intentions according to gender, and the intentions of males were stronger than females. In the analysis of influence factors, the factor of attitude had a significant positive effect on residents' concerns about rural-exchange experience businesses, farm-stay businesses, and receiving foreign tourists. The factor of perceived behavioral control only had a significant positive effect on the concerns about receiving foreign tourists. The subjective norm had no significant relationship to residents' intentions.

ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received: 17 March 2019

Accepted: 6 April 2020

Published: 25 September 2020

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*Keywords:* Farm-stay, inbound tourism, residents' awareness, rural community, theory of planned behavior

**INTRODUCTION**

Japan has been undergoing serious problems with respect to population and aging. Since

2011, the population has declined for five consecutive years. The aging rate (the proportion of people over 65 years old) reached 27.3% in 2016. This situation is particularly serious in the rural areas. The rural population has been declining since 1970, and the aging rate of the farming population reached 39.7% in 2016, which is higher than that in urban areas. Rural areas have begun to lose vitality and appear to be experiencing a recession. In such a serious situation, promoting urban-rural exchanges can have a great effect on regional revitalization and rural invigoration.

In recent years, urban residents are increasingly showing interest in nature and rural life. To maintain rural residents' enthusiasm and inspire the desire to visit in rural area, the development of tourism is of great practical significance. Promoting tourism and the subsequent increase in visitor numbers can bring about various social and economic benefits. Since the establishment of Japan Tourism Agency in 2008, Japan has been pursuing a tourism-based country strategy. The government is making continuous efforts to increase the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan. The number of foreign visitors is increasing rapidly, and reached 24.03 million in 2016. The Tokyo Olympic Games will be held in 2021, which provides an opportunity to attract more foreign tourists to Japan. The Japanese government has set the goal of attracting 40 million foreign tourists and 8 trillion yen of travel consumption by 2020. In such a situation, urban-rural exchange needs to pay more attention to collaboration

between tourism sectors and rural areas to promote new exchange demand, with foreign tourists as the target.

Cultivating talent plays an important role in developing tourism. The exploration of talent and the formation of an enthusiastic team are important premises on which to base this development. With regard to rural tourism, developing local resident-led tourism activity is necessary. Thus, to ensure the project is carried out smoothly, local residents' awareness of the promotion of residency tourism like farm-stays is important so as to make it easy for the formation of sightseeing talent teams.

In regard to the research of rural-experience activities and local residents' awareness of them, a study about residents' awareness investigated residents' interest in exchange activities, their evaluation and reasons for engagement, and the requirements of the activities in resident-oriented exchange activities (Honjo et al., 2000). An intention survey of farm stays was conducted to evaluate the possibility of operating the farm stay in terms of operating patterns, institutional, psychological, and labor barriers as well as operational trends and expected supports (Saruishi, & Fujisaki, 2000). A study introduced farm stays from the perspective of management and space, using the area of Ajimu in the Oita Prefecture as an example (Kim et al., 2006). They concluded that coordination of the farm stay, application of the public facilities, and cultivation of the instructors should be promoted. A survey with Japanese and different groups of foreign tourists

was conducted to prove that they differ in motivations and behavior (Funck, 2012). Through interviews with key persons from the accommodation industry, they examined the innovations induced by an increase in foreign tourists. A study from the perspective of "Green Tourism" for foreign tourists through marketing research (indicated that the problems of business accounting, residents' intention, system and cooperation are existing in receiving the foreign tourist (Tsutsui & Sawabata, 2010). The importance of Product strategy and Price strategy are also pointed out in facing the international needs (Ryohei, 2014). An intention survey was carried out about farmers who hosted agricultural experiences and learning activities for students (Tamura & Ishida, 2007). Reception motivations, feelings, and continuous reception conditions were investigated among the experienced farmers while reasons for not receiving visitors, the conditions of reception, and proposals for the expansion of the system were examined among the inexperienced farmers. A study (investigated the reasons for farmers to join in green tourism activities, the benefits they gained, as well as some future issues; they also analyzed the relationship between types of farmers and their involvement (Saito et al., 2001).

Most existing studies investigate the awareness, participation, and statements of residents who had already participated in farm-stay tourism, but they lack analysis of the factors influencing residents' intentions. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the awareness of residents

who have not yet started long-stay tourism in Tambasasayama City. The aging of Tambasasayama is thought to outweigh the whole of Japan, which has resulted in anxiety, a deterioration in the education environment and the environment generally, and losses in Tambasasayama's unique landscapes. Tourism in Tambasasayama is mainly of the one-day type or has short residency times that are insufficient for allowing it to fully display its attractions and ensure a significant income. Thus, Tambasasayama still needs to vigorously develop tourism with relatively longer residency times that can boost the local economy. Investigating the residents in Tambasasayama permits an understanding of their basic intentions with regard to the agricultural and rural-experience exchange business, the farm-stay business, and the reception of foreign tourists; it also allows us to analyze how each factor influences intentions based on the TPB, and to offer viable suggestions for promoting long-stay tourism.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Summary of the Investigation Area

The investigation was carried out in the Murakumo area of Tambasasayama in three communities: Kusanokami, Mukai, and Saikusho. The total population in Murakumo area is 995 in 2016. In the Kusanokami community the population is 90; in Mukai there are 134 people, and in Saikusho there are 129 people. Tambasasayama enjoys easy access to Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. It takes only an hour to get to

Tambasayama from these cities by train or highway. Tambasayama is also rich in tourism resources. It has beautiful scenery throughout the year, and has cultural activities such as Tanba yaki. The richness in the variety of specialty agricultural products such as black soy beans, is another advantage of Tambasayama. Tambasayama also has a rich food culture. Tambasayama's plan—"Tambasayama Tourism City Development Vision" — has provided guidance to developing tourism since 2007. In 2009, the government established a tourism strategy based around three ideas in this vision: increasing the number of people who is interested in Tambasayama, promoting exchange, and strengthening regional powers. The current tourism in Tambasayama is developed in only a small region, and tourists thus spend only a short time in the area, which makes it hard to boost cultural consumption and the local economy. The proportion of accommodation for tourists is relatively low. The number of tourists to Tambasayama was 2,345 of whom just 120 people were accommodated. Moreover, domestic demand is shrinking. Therefore, it is of great importance to expand the region for tourism, develop long-stay tourism, and develop the foreign market.

### Survey Method

**Questionnaire Distribution.** In 2018, a total of 272 questionnaires were distributed to all the households across three communities—Kusanokami (38 households), Mukai (48 households),

and Saikusho (50 households)—in the Murakumo area, Tambasayama city. From these, 186 questionnaires were collected, out of which 165 were completed, for an effective recovery rate of 68.4%. An envelope containing two questionnaires was distributed to each household by the presidents of the community associations. They entrusted the envelopes to the household heads and asked two members over the age of 18 years in each household to fill the questionnaires.

The research aimed to ascertain residents who were still not aware and had not started the farm-stay business. We found that the Murakumo area did not offer such undertakings, and the area's directors intended to promote regional vitality by starting the farm-stay business and inbound tourism. This prompted them to help with the survey. The investigation of the Murakumo area helped us understand how ordinary rural area views such undertakings. This underlies our selection of the three communities in the Murakumo area with large populations and a willingness to partake in the survey.

**Personal Characteristics of the Respondents.** The basic information of the respondents was collected and organized, and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, residence, and occupation were analyzed.

As shown in Table 1, the number of male and female respondents were almost equal, with 50.9% male and 49.1% female. Of the respondents, 38.2% were aged

above 70 and 22.4% of were between 60 and 69. The majority of respondents were elderly. The living arrangements of the majority (77.6%) consisted of either two generations living together or couples. The majority were respondents for whom

agriculture provided the main source of income (62.4%). Most respondents had no experience of communicating with foreigners. The respondents were almost evenly distributed in the communities.

Table 1

*Demographic characteristics of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Males	84	50.9
	Females	81	49.1
Age	Under 20	1	0.6
	20s	8	4.8
	30s	18	10.9
	40s	18	10.9
	50s	20	12.1
	60s	37	22.4
	Above 70	63	38.2
Residence Conditions	Single	9	5.5
	Couple	61	37.0
	Two generations	67	40.6
	Three generations	28	17.0
Main job (income source)	Agriculture	47	28.5
	Self-employed	16	9.7
	Full-time job	21	12.7
	Part-time job	30	18.2
	Housework	28	17.0
	Retirement	10	6.1
	Student	2	1.2
	Others	11	6.7
Days off work	Very few	42	25.5
	1 day a week	48	29.1
	2–3 days a week	55	33.3
	4–5 days a week	8	4.8
	Almost every day	12	7.3

Table 1 (Continued)

		Frequency	Percent
Communicate with foreigners	Never	125	75.8
	Several times so far	37	22.4
	Daily (including in the past)	3	1.8
Community	Kusanokami	46	27.9
	Mukai	56	33.9
	Saikusho	63	38.2

**Method of Analysis**

Analysis of residents’ awareness in the research is based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which is one of the most widely used and influential theoretical models for studying the relationship between attitudes and behavior (Davies et al., 2002).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which posited that behavioral intention was a factor that directly determined behavior. Behavioral intentions are influenced by two variables: attitudes and subjective norms.

In 1991, a new variable was added to the TRA, which contributed to the formulation of the TPB. Within this framework, the individual performance of a particular behavior is predicted by three variables: an individuals’ attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. All three lead to the formation of the intention toward behavior, which finally affects the behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2002).

Figure 1 depicts the basic theoretical framework of TPB. Attitude has been explained as the degree to which individuals have a favorable or negative assessment

when they perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Han et al., 2009; Tonglet et al., 2004). Subjective norms refer to the social pressures that individuals feel when performing a particular behavior. They reflect the opinion of an individual’s “important other” on his or her particular behavior. Perceived behavioral control reflects the degree of perceived difficulty when an individual performs a particular behavior. More precisely, perceived behavioral control assesses an individual’s perception of how efficiently he/she can control factors that may enable or hinder the actions required to deal with a specific situation (Verma & Chandra, 2018).

**Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was designed based on the TPB as indicated in Table 2. Three questions focused on behavioral intentions, including the residents’ concerns about the agricultural and rural-exchange experience business, concerns about the farm-stay business, and concerns about reception of foreigners. A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the items.

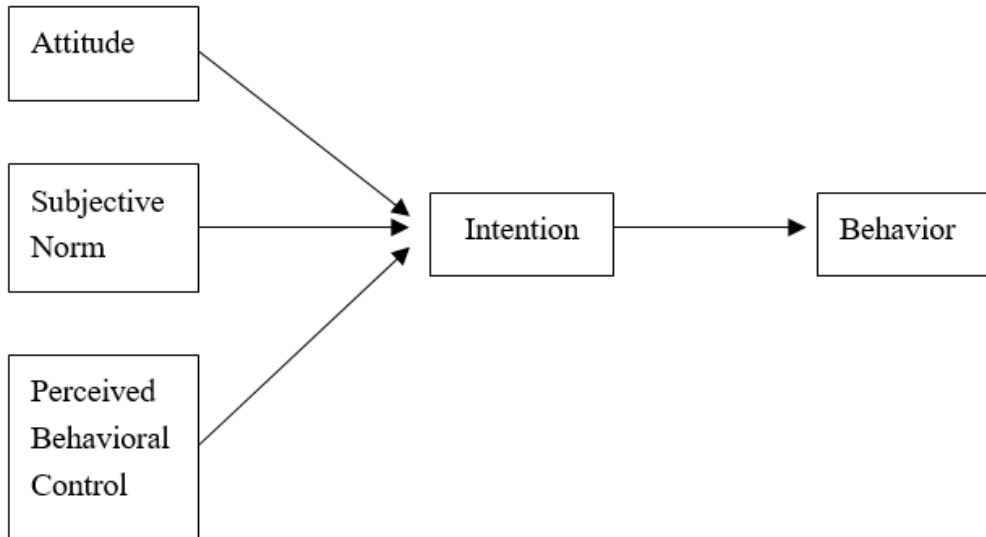


Figure 1. Theory of planned behavior

Table 2  
Questionnaire items

Items	Details
Behavioral Intentions	BI1. Agricultural and rural-exchange experience business BI2. Farm-stay service business BI3. Experience exchange business for foreigners
Attitudes	AT1. I think that it would be better if more people visited Murakumo AT2. I like to talk to people AT3. I'm interested in talking to foreigners AT4. I would like to increase my income through tourism
Subjective Norms	SN1. When starting a new career, I am more concerned with the opinions of others SN2. When starting a new career, I care about the opinions of my family SN3. I am concerned about the opinions of others when I host tourists

Table 2 (Continued)

Items	Details
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC1. I hope to play a core role in the community
	PBC2. I can cope with tourists from the city
	PBC3. I can cope with foreign tourists
	PBC4. I can provide housing for homestay tourists
	PBC5. I have knowledge of the related systems and support policies regarding the establishment and operation of farm stays

**Process of Analysis**

The framework of the analysis is shown in Figure 2. The research first analyzed the magnitude of the three intentions, and then elaborated the degree of influence of each factor on these three behavioral intentions.

The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1 - Residents tend to hold negative attitudes regarding intentions toward the agricultural and rural-experience exchange

business, implementing farm-stays, and receiving foreign tourists.

H2 - There is a significant difference in the intentions of different genders, and the intentions of males are stronger than those of females.

H3 - Attitudes have a significant effect on residents' intentions.

H4 - Subjective norms have a significant effect on residents' intentions.

H5 - Perceived behavioral control has a significant effect on residents' intentions.

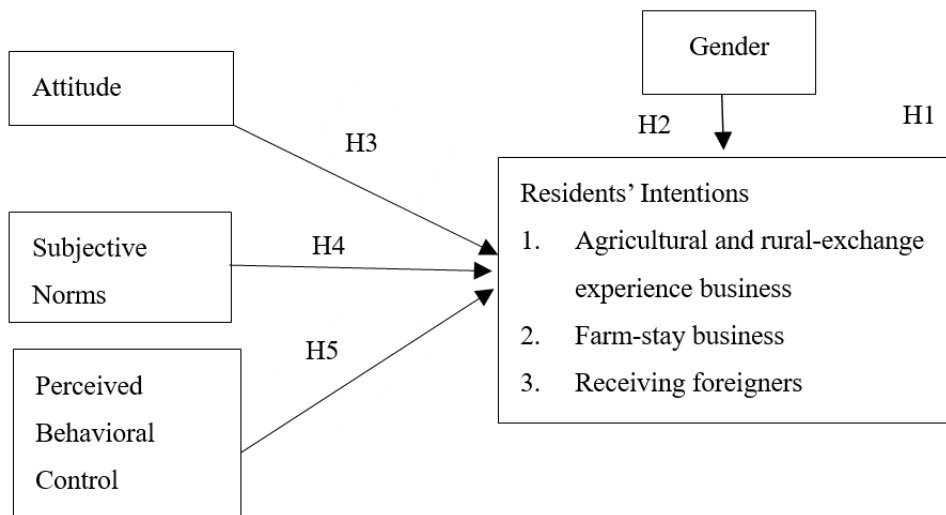


Figure 2. The framework of the analytic process.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Residents' Intentions

Table 3 presents residents' concerns. In terms of exchange experience businesses, 30.9% of the respondents were concerned or absolutely concerned about it, whereas 35.8% had no concerns or absolutely no concerns. In terms of farm-stay businesses, 15.7% of respondents were concerned or

absolutely concerned while 55.2% had no concerns or absolutely no concerns. In terms of the reception of foreigners, 18.1% of the people were concerned or absolutely concerned while up to 55.2% had no concerns or absolutely no concerns.

To understand how gender influences intentions, independent-sample t-tests were conducted.

Table 3

#### *Residents' intentions*

		Frequency	Percent
Agricultural and rural-exchange experience business	Absolutely no concern	15	9.1
	No concern	44	26.7
	Indifferent	55	33.3
	Concern	44	26.7
	Absolute concern	7	4.2
Farm-stay business	Absolutely no concern	25	15.2
	No concern	66	40.0
	Indifferent	48	29.1
	Concern	18	10.9
	Absolute concern	8	4.8
Receiving foreign tourists	Absolutely no concern	28	17.0
	No concern	63	38.2
	Indifferent	44	26.7
	Concern	23	13.9
	Absolute concern	7	4.2

First, the mean values of male and female concerns about agricultural and rural-experience exchange business, farm-stays, and receiving foreign tourists were analyzed. As Table 4 suggests, the mean

values of male concerns about these three businesses are higher than those of females, indicating that men are more concerned about the development of the various businesses than women.

Table 4  
*Mean value of degree of intention by gender*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Agricultural and rural-experience exchange business	Male	84	3.1	1.048
	Female	81	2.7	0.980
Farm-stay	Male	84	2.7	1.095
	Female	81	2.3	0.928
Receiving foreign tourists	Male	84	2.6	1.116
	Female	81	2.4	0.991

Table 5 presents the results of analyzing the independent-samples t-tests. The sig (2-tailed) values of gender with respect to the experience exchange business and farm-stay are less than 0.05, indicating that there is a significant difference between the genders with regard to types of business and

that men are more concerned about these two businesses than women. The sig value of gender in the reception of foreign tourists is greater than 0.05, suggesting that gender has no significant impact on the reception of foreign tourists.

Table 5  
*Independent-samples t-tests by gender*

		Levene-test of variance equation		t-test of mean equation		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Agricultural and rural-experience exchange business	equal variances assumed	0.143	0.705	2.476	163.000	0.014
	unequal variances assumed			2.479	162.848	0.014
Farm-stay	equal variances assumed	3.295	0.071	2.565	163.000	0.011
	unequal variances assumed			2.573	160.369	0.011

Table 5 (Continued)

		Levene-test of variance equation		t-test of mean equation		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Receiving foreign tourists	equal variances assumed	1.299	0.256	1.731	163.000	0.085
	unequal variances assumed			1.735	161.934	0.085

### Reliability Test of the Questionnaire

The research estimates reliability by employing the internal consistency statistic Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . The value is between 0 and 1. The closer the coefficient is to 1, the higher the reliability is. The total Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of this questionnaire is 0.862, indicating that the data are very reliable.

### Factor Analysis

The three components of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control

were analyzed according to the theoretical model. It was necessary to determine that the selected factors to measure the structures in question are accurate. The KMO test value was equal to 0.823 and Bartlett's sphericity test shows that chi-square is 0.000. Thus, factor analysis is applicable.

As Table 6 shows, three common factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted that are consistent with the theoretical basis of the research.

Table 6

*Rotated component matrix a*

	Component		
	1	2	3
AT3. I'm interested in talking with foreigners	0.845		
AT1. I think that it would be better if more people visit Murakumo	0.802		
AT2. I like to talk with people	0.794		
AT4. I would like to increase income through tourism	0.780		

Table 6 (Continued)

	Component		
	1	2	3
PBC5. I know the related systems and support policies regarding the establishment and operation of the farmhouse		0.942	
PBC4. I can provide house for homestay tourists		0.763	
PBC2. I can cope with tourists from the city		0.700	
PBC3. I can cope with foreign tourists		0.651	
PBC1. I hope to play a core role in community		0.538	
SN3. I am concerned about the opinions of others when I am hosting tourists			0.862
SN1. When starting a new career, I am more concerned with the opinions of others			0.859
SN2. When starting a new career, I care about the opinions of my family			0.770

a Extraction method: principal component analysis  
 b Rotation method: promax with Kaiser normalization  
 c Rotation converged in four iterations

**Influence Factors of Residents’ Intentions**

**Correlation between Factors and Residents’ Intentions.** The Pearson correlation analysis is used to examine the correlation between the three factors and residents’ intentions. The results shown in Table 7 demonstrate that attitude, the subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control are significantly correlated with the concern levels of residents regarding rural experience and exchange, farm-stays, and receiving foreign tourists.

**Structural Equation Model.** The hypothetical model was tested using SEM with the software AMOS 21.0. First, the maximum likelihood method was used to verify the factor analysis. In using

confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the degree of model fit, it is best to consider a perfect adaptation degree, value-added adaptation degree, simple adaptation degree, and multiple indicators.

The goodness of fit of the measurement models are presented in Table 8. The values of the measurement models were all within the reference standard. Thus, it is concluded that the measurement model fit the data well. After the measurement model was verified, the structural model was further tested by AMOS 21.0. Table 9 presents the standardized path coefficients and their significance levels of the TPB model. The significance levels of paths indicated whether the hypothetical relationship was supported. The value of C.R. is the t value

of the t-test. When this value is greater than 1.96, it means the regression coefficient has a significance level of less than 0.05. As can be seen in the table, three of the nine paths

had significance levels less than 0.001 and one path had a significance level of less than 0.05.

Table 7

*Correlation analysis of factors and intentions*

		Rural- experience and exchange business	Farm-stay business	Receiving foreign tourists
Attitude	Pearson correlation	.776**	.670**	.744**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0
	N	165	165	165
Subjective norm	Pearson correlation	.293**	.289**	.238**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0.002
	N	165	165	165
Perceived behavioral control	Pearson correlation	.572**	.651**	.562**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0
	N	165	165	165

\*\*p < 0.05

Table 8

*Fit indices of the TPB Model*

Model fit indices	$\chi^2/DF$	RMR	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	TLI	PNFI	PGFI
Reference standard	< 2.00	< 0.08	< 0.08	> 0.80	> 0.80	> 0.80	> 0.50	> 0.50
Measurement model	1.947	0.056	0.076	0.899	0.949	0.930	0.661	0.577

Table 9

*Standardized path coefficients and significance level of TPB Model*

Path	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Attitude ----- Experience exchange business	0.971	0.190	7.713	***

Table 9 (Continued)

Path	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Attitude ----- Farm-stay	0.912	0.190	7.299	***
Attitude ----- Foreigner reception	1.162	0.227	7.928	***
Subjective Norm ----- Farm-stay	0.010	0.116	0.127	0.899
Subjective Norm ----- Experience exchange business	0.023	0.109	0.316	0.752
Subjective Norm ----- Foreigner reception	-0.048	0.125	-0.583	0.560
Perceived Behavioral Control ----- Foreigner reception	0.290	0.238	2.327	0.020
Perceived Behavioral Control ----- Farm-stay	-0.074	0.204	-0.678	0.498
Perceived Behavioral Control ----- Experience exchange business	-0.156	0.196	-1.481	0.139

\*\*\*p < 0.001

## CONCLUSIONS

This research investigated residents' intentions toward implementing agricultural and rural-experience exchange businesses, farm-stay businesses, and receiving foreign tourists in three communities in the Murakumo area of Tambasayama City. Based on the framework of the TPB, this research puts forward the hypothesis that attitudes, the subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control affect residents' intentions to some extent. Conclusions derived from the empirical analysis can be summarized as follows.

Regarding intentions toward the agricultural and rural-experience exchange business, implementing farm-stays, and receiving foreign tourists, the proportion of residents that tended to hold negative

attitudes was large. Moreover, residents almost held more negative attitude to farm-stay business and receiving foreigners than to the experience exchange business. The above conclusions confirm H1 proposed in the research.

With regard to the impact of gender on residents' intentions, it can be concluded from the t-test that gender has a significant influence on concerns about agricultural and rural-experience exchange businesses and farm-stays but no significant influence on concerns about receiving foreign tourists. H2 has not been fully supported. With regard to the mean values of degrees of intention, females held relatively lower degrees of intention than males. Considering the conservative attitude of females toward starting a new business, the pivotal role that

females play in the exchange activities, and the additional responsibilities that females will be required to undertake, females hold more negative attitudes toward these businesses.

This research mainly used SEM to analyze the factors influencing residents' intentions. The factor of attitude had a significant positive effect on the concern levels of residents with regard to rural-exchange experience businesses, farm-stay businesses, and receiving foreign tourists. This confirms H3. The factor of the subjective norm had no significance on residents' intentions. Thus, H4 is rejected. Perceived behavioral control only had a significant positive effect on the concern about receiving foreign tourists. H5 has not been completely proven. Therefore, in the Murakumo area, residents' intentions toward rural tourism, farm-stays, and receiving foreigners are mainly influenced by their own attitudes and feelings; when residents consider receiving foreigners, their own abilities and perceptions of difficulty will have an impact on their intentions.

The research also examined the issues that residents cared about in starting farm-stay businesses and receiving foreign tourists. The factors that residents cared about most with farm-stays were guest room and facilities preparation, labor problems, operational capabilities, and disease and safety management problems which were associated with hardware conditions and operation management systems. The factors with the most concern when receiving foreigners were language, food and customs,

and disease and safety management problems, which were associated with learning capability, information, and management systems. Given the factors that residents cared about most, it is suggested that establishing a group for tourism business promotion should be considered as a means of providing support and assistance to the farm-stay business. The group can formulate a clear management system and provide learning resources and information; this will go some way to eliminating unease among residents, and will enhance their enthusiasm and motivation.

The results of the data collection and analysis show that attitude has a significant impact on the intention to start the farm-stay business and accept foreign tourists. This requires the leaders and relevant staff in charge of the area to educate people about the merits of such undertakings, thereby changing and deepening people's attitudes toward the business, and strengthening their intentions to start the farm-stay business and inbound tourism. However, in terms of the real condition, among those who have relatively high intentions to start the business, some people care about how others feel and find it difficult to accept the tourists. Therefore, it is necessary to create an atmosphere for promoting the farm-stay business and inbound tourism in the whole area. Further, there should be campaigns to promote the business along with support for specific commercialization.

There are some limitations to the research. With regard to the factors influencing residents' intentions, other

factors can be considered for analysis that provide supplementary instructions to the TPB. The degree of influence of the population characteristics' attributes on residents' intentions should be discussed.

The research has mentioned the establishment of a group or organization to promote the development of rural tourism and farm-stays. Future studies are needed to research the relation between residents and this group, and to consider the effect of the organization's support on residents' motivations and behaviors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge Tambasayama Field Station of Kobe University and local vitalization cooperator. We are also very grateful to the local residents in Tambasayama for their cooperation during the data collection process.

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