

# Factors Influencing Visitor Acceptance Awareness: A Regional Branding Perspective

Hajime Takebayashi, Sotaro Sasaki, Akihiro Takeda

## Abstract

The paper proposes brand-building with an underlying assumption that the area inhabitants' visitors' acceptance awareness is a key to regional activation; this is a concept that organically integrates the somewhat contradictory concept of "good living, good visit." The results of a questionnaire survey point to the importance of affective commitment to the community as a significant factor influencing inhabitants' acceptance awareness of visitors / strangers. Additionally, community satisfaction and the affective commitment and effectiveness of the community to the area are correlated. For successful regional activation, it is important to start the cycle; a functioning area community -> area satisfaction -> visitor acceptance is needed. Some regional brand-building strategies based on this concept are also suggested.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, there has been frequent discussion on the topic of regional revitalization.<sup>1</sup> The revitalization of commercial districts in regional centers is often mentioned in this context as well. There has also been an increase in talk about competition between cities. According to statistics provided by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan's total population is in a long-term declining trend, having peaked in 2006.<sup>2</sup> Over the period from 2015 to 2020, the population is projected to decline in all cities and prefectures except for Tokyo and Okinawa. As the population of people making up the market declines, the people are faced with decisions about where to visit, where to engage in consumption, and in which region to live. For the regions, this is a significant issue in terms of regional revitalization. In a country where these population trends are occurring, regions that fail to be selected as attractive places by outside visitors, such as consumers and tourists, will face difficulty in preventing regional decline. Meanwhile, attractive residential regions must consider how to attract many people and how to keep their current residents satisfied with life to prevent them from leaving the region.

There are two main directions for regional revitalization strategies. One is to receive visitors and tourists from outside the region. Tourism is a typical example of this strategy. Methods for

attracting visitors include rural inns and experience-type tourism, as well as local delicacies and special regional dishes and ingredients. Through these and other means, regions plan to become new tourist spots. This is the so-called “good to visit” strategy. The other strategy is to support high-quality living standards for regional residents. A typical example is holding a rich array of festivals and regional activities. This approach to regional revitalization mainly involves planning comfortable living for local residents and initiatives aimed at providing residents with emotional satisfaction. This is known as the “good to live in” strategy.

This paper will focus on the “good to live in” strategy. In particular, it will seek to examine the factors influencing local residents’ visitor acceptance awareness, while proposing a strategy that organically links “good to live in” and “good to visit.” A satisfaction level among local residents will probably make them want to promote the region to other people and encourage other people to like it. This, in turn, will promote feelings of hospitality. Conversely, if local residents have low satisfaction levels, they will be unlikely to feel positively toward other people. Residents of regions that are considered good to live in are therefore likely to develop feelings of positive hospitality toward visitors, resulting in regions that are good to visit for visitors. In other words, increasing the satisfaction of local residents may facilitate acceptance awareness (a sense of hospitality) that could influence the success of the region’s tourism.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, many residents tend to gather in towns that are considered to be desirable living places. In this paper, we will examine the effectiveness of regional branding targeting the “good to live in” strategy.

## **2. “Good to live in, good to visit” and regional revitalization**

For local governments aiming to achieve regional revitalization, the easiest strategy to choose may be to attract tourists and increase tourism revenues. However, since most local governments have selected this strategy, new tourist spots are being created one after another. In the same way, a recent slump in domestic tourism demand has stoked fierce competition between domestic tourist spots. With new players entering the tourism market one after another despite the market slump, domestic tourism is facing the toughest competitive environment.

To achieve success as a tourist area in this adverse environment, tourist spots and tourism resources must have a strong, unique character. Many regions claim to have an abundance of mountains, coastal areas, tasty dishes, and so forth, and in Japan these tourism resources are present in many regions outside of the major cities. Naturally, other regions do not have exactly the same scenery and facilities, so in that sense they have uniqueness. However, since many tourism areas and local governments have positioned tourism as their primary means of regional revitalization, neighboring regions are highly likely to have similar tourism resources. Even when they intend to

differentiate themselves, ultimately, they fall into commodity competition.

Furthermore, even if regions succeed at utilizing tourism resources that have some sort of advantage to receive more tourists and visitors, there is no guarantee that the competitive advantage will be retained over the long-term. In recent years, competition between regions has heated up, and all regions have been aggressively gathering information about initiatives and successful examples of other regions in an attempt to incorporate them. New initiatives are certainly open to imitation. In their attempts to attract tourists, rival regions may copy successful initiatives immediately or create offerings that develop the initiatives even further. When tourism services fall into commodity competition, the regions are highly likely to transition to cost competition (competition on low prices or providing higher value-added services for the same price). In the design of new tourism attractions, the increase in visitor attraction and tourism revenues over the long term may not be commensurate with the expenditures made by local governments; indeed, these revenues may not even be able to contribute significantly to earnings. From the perspective of “good to visit” (i.e., tourism), the issues seem to be how to acquire management resources that cannot be easily imitated and how to build sources of sustainable competitive advantage.

On the other hand, there is the strategy of targeting satisfaction for local residents. Not all of the residents in a region will necessarily benefit directly from an increase in visitors. Many people living in a region do not depend on tourism as a source of income; for example, they may work in a different location or may not be significantly affected by tourism revenues. Many residents may place more emphasis on considering the negative aspects of increasing tourists and other visitors, such as noise and litter. To address this, strategies to increase the level of satisfaction among local residents may be employed, such as enhancing the healthcare or education environment or expanding cultural facilities. Other strategies may be aimed at creating emotional satisfaction among residents by enhancing the sense of pride or affection for the region. These could include policies or efforts for enhancing residents’ bonds or the identity of the region.

Incidentally, strategies for “good to visit” and “good to live in” may be aiming at completely different targets. Certainly, choosing which to invest resources in is a zero-sum game. To avoid conflict between the two, it may seem appropriate to select an investment strategy based on compromise by pursuing both strategies on a reduced scale. However, in a highly competitive society, having a foot in each camp could result in failure to achieve the objectives of either strategy. The important question is not which to choose, but how to organically integrate the objectives of both or how to achieve both.

The 2007 “Leisure White Paper” indicates that the current types of travel formats have changed from tour- and group-oriented travel to formats emphasizing personal experience, interaction, and individual travel. The paper introduced the expression “new tourism,” which

includes six formats: long-term residential-type tourism, eco-tourism, green tourism, cultural tourism, industrial tourism, and health tourism. These new formats have the four characteristics of “theme,” “contribution to regionality and the region,” “participation and experience,” and “interactions in the local area.” A common thread running through all of these is engagement with the region. The view that individual residents actually comprise service encounters is an important starting point for considering the relationships between local residents and visitors or tourists. The interaction and communication between a visitor and a local resident in a service encounter have a powerful influence on the visitor’s impression of the region. Increasing visitor acceptance awareness is a precondition to this.

However, a one-off regional effort involving sporadic engagement with visitors by only a limited number of people does not constitute an engaging region in the true sense. It is more meaningful for a region to have a widespread and enduring awareness of engaging with visitors in a spirit of hospitality. Such a region has the appeal to attract outsiders and will be able to draw more tourists, new residents, and others. Transmitting this kind of regional image to many people is likely to leave an impression on people of a town that is desirable to live in or visit. This is the essence of regional branding centered on acceptance awareness.

Incidentally, regional revitalization refers to diverse regions, including those regions described as regional cities, regions where industries are primarily agriculture or fishing, and tourism areas. In the regional cities, the decline of regional commercial districts is often discussed as the central topic of regional revitalization. For revitalizing central city districts, Fujinami (2010) points out the importance of shifting the basis of policies from protecting small and medium-sized retailers to increasing the number of regional residents. Increasing the number of residents living close to commercial districts will increase the number of people who shop there. Through this process, commercial districts will be revitalized. Kolb (2006) emphasizes that even amid discussion about approaches to urban tourism, policies for attracting visitors will fail if the residents that make up urban and regional communities are ignored. Tada (2008) shows through an interview survey conducted in the Yaeyama Islands that residents have developed a new awareness of a “shift from prioritizing tourists to prioritizing citizens” where residents are the primary focus, rather than making tourism an end unto itself. Recently, “good to visit” has been the focus of many regional revitalization strategies; however, attention should also be paid to “good to live in” strategies focused on regional residents. Before examining the key aspects of this kind of regional branding, we will touch on the regional brands themselves.

### 3. Regions and brands

Brands are defined as “symbols, marks, designs, and names (Kogawa 1994, 15) for distinguishing the company’s products from those of other manufacturers.” A broader and easier definition is that they are the names that we apply to products. However, those product names are more than merely names. According to Keller (2009), the names or logos that are applied to products are not alone sufficient to be considered brands; a brand also requires market recognition, evaluation, and presence. Modern brands fulfill functions as shown in Table 1. However, as can be seen from the table, the names that were originally applied to products to differentiate them from those of other companies and clarify manufacturing responsibility came to offer convenience for consumers by reducing the perception risk and cost of searching in a way that gave rise to the behavior of confidently purchasing products based on their brand. Brands also came to have symbolic meaning as devices for the company to project its own image.

**Table 1 Functions of Modern Brands**

Roles expected by consumers	Roles expected by manufacturers
Identify manufacturing source	An identification means for simplifying the handling and tracking of products
Clarify manufacturing responsibility	
Reduce the cost of searching	A means for legally protecting proprietary characteristics
A promise, bond, or commitment with the manufacturer (project own image)	Signaling the quality level to satisfied consumers A means of assigning a unique association with products
Symbolic device	A source of competitive advantage
Signal of quality	A source of financial accomplishment

Cf. Keller (2009) and (2008).

In terms of the argument for customer base brand equity proposed by Keller (2008), the point of brand management is the customers’ knowledge of the brand, as well as brand awareness and brand image. This applies exactly to regional brand value as well. Table 2 is the municipality appeal ranking published each year by Brand Research Institute, Inc. In this survey, scores are assigned based on answers from over 30,000 respondents throughout Japan to a survey regarding 1,000 domestic municipalities.

**Table 2 Ranking Appeal of Municipalities (2010)**

Rank	Municipality name	Prefecture	Score	Rank	Municipality name	Prefecture	Score
1	Sapporo City	Hokkaido	57	11	Yakushima Town	Kagoshima	37.8
2	Hakodate City	Hokkaido	55.5	12	Naha City	Okinawa	37.1
3	Kyoto City	Kyoto	52.2	13	Karuizawa Town	Nagano	36.2
4	Yokohama City	Kanagawa	49.6	14	Sendai City	Miyagi	35.5
5	Otaru City	Hokkaido	47.3	15	Ishigaki City	Okinawa	35.3
6	Kobe City	Hyogo	46.4	16	Okinawa City	Okinawa	34.9
7	Kamakura City	Kanagawa	44.5	17	Nara City	Nara	34.1
8	Furano City	Hokkaido	44	18	Beppu City	Oita	33.6
9	Kanazawa City	Ishikawa	38.6	19	Hakone City	Kanagawa	32.7
10	Nagasaki City	Nagasaki	38.3	20	Fukuoka city	Fukuoka	32.1

Source: Created based on the “Regional Brand Survey 2010”<sup>4</sup> by Brand Research Institute, Inc.

The municipalities near the top of this ranking have undoubtedly received high evaluations in terms of both popularity and image. However, it is certainly not the case that every region in Japan should aspire to reach the top of rankings such as these. In this survey, municipalities are scored on their overall evaluation in terms of the following survey items: recognition, appeal, level of information encountered, desire to visit for tourism, desire to stay, visiting experience, evaluation of regional resources, and desire to purchase local products. Considering this in reverse, there should be plenty of regions that have irresistible appeal and high brand value even though they do not have nationwide popularity and an image that is easily understood by everybody. It is regions such as these that we seek to point out here.

The expression “regional brand” is used with two different meanings: 1) referring to products and services that bear the region’s name and 2) referring to the brand value of the region itself. It is necessary to note, however, that since the introduction of the regional organization trademark system in 2006, a trend has emerged of considering regional brands only in the sense of products and services bearing the region’s name. Without a doubt, trademarks that include a region’s name

are effective for protecting the region’s high brand value from imitation products; however, a discussion focused only on product sales risks neglecting the true nature of regional brand value.

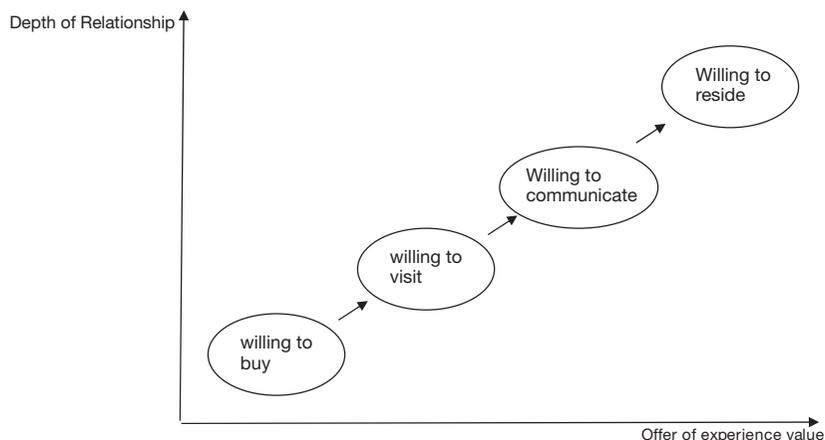
The Dentsu Abic Project raises the following questions regarding the regional branding discussion, which has tended to be limited to trademarks including regional names.

Is this kind of special product and tourist spot branding really the ultimate goal of regional brands? Should not the ultimate goal of regional brands be not just to sell products and have people visit, but to encourage people involved in the region to have pride and affection for the region and a sense of identity? (Dentsu Abic Project 2009, pp.2-3)

Meanwhile, Tohoku Kaihatsu Kenkyu Center (2005) positions the regional brand as the brand value of the region itself and claims that the target group for regional branding is not consumers and visitors outside the region, but the residents who live in the region and those sympathetic to them. What is needed is for the region’s residents to have “pride and confidence” to establish a regional identity.

The Dentsu Abic Project (2009) shows regional branding in the four levels of shopping, visiting, interacting, and residing, in terms of the correlation between the experience value that the region can propose and the depth of the relationship between regional residents and visitors or tourists (Fig. 1.). As the level increases, the role played by regional residents grows larger. The problem here is how the relationship between the local residents, who are supposed to be the main focus, and the visitors and tourists is to be interpreted. Below, we will explore the importance of contact points between local residents and visitors and tourists while examining the development of acceptance awareness, from the perspective of increasing a region’s brand value.

**Fig. 1 Deepening Relationship by Experience Value**



## 4. Survey structure

Region creation and regional branding founded on acceptance awareness play an extremely significant role in regional revitalization. Visitors to a region evaluate it by various standards, not just its tourism facilities, accommodation, and scenery. The awareness of local residents differs from visible regional resources such as tourism and accommodation facilities, but it is also an important evaluation standard. Resident awareness is not only difficult to see; it is also difficult to manage directly. For this reason, it tends to be overlooked, but its invisibility also makes it important.

The interaction between visitors and local residents naturally has an important impact on visitors' impression of a region. Furthermore, new tourism centered on interaction with the region is widely used as a means of revitalization. Local resident awareness seems highly likely to increase regional brand value. Moreover, since this kind of regional culture takes time to develop, it cannot easily be imitated, making it an easy source of sustainable competitive advantage from the perspective of competitive strategy. Naturally, regions that are open to outsiders like this are labeled by people as being desirable and are able to attract many people. In this paper, the perceived desire of local residents to be involved with visitors and tourists (outsiders) is referred to as acceptance awareness and treated as a dependent variable. The reason for this is that it appears to be an important factor in building regions that are attractive and that have high brand value, as we have shown.

Next, we consider the independent variables that are factors influencing acceptance awareness. One that comes immediately to mind is the level of expectation of tourism. It seems natural to consider that higher expectations would be associated with a higher acceptance awareness. Antipathy toward tourism would probably have a reverse effect (i.e., a reaction against the undesirable behavior of tourists). A mixed sense of this expectation and annoyance is probably observable in many regions.

Hypothesis 1a: Expectations of tourism have a positive influence on acceptance awareness.

Hypothesis 1b: Antipathy toward tourism has a negative influence on acceptance awareness.

However, the point to be emphasized here is that the affection and pride for the region felt by residents certainly plays a major role, as expressed at the start of this paper by the words "good to live in, good to visit." In other words, residents' sense of region satisfaction and participation in their community are factors that have a positive effect. Another factor to mention is residents' sense of commitment to the region. To cite management organization theory, Allen and Meyer (1990) view the commitment of the individual to an organization in terms of three aspects: affective,

normative, and continuous. To explain these simply, they refer, respectively, to the commitment that comes from the individual's love or affection for the organization, the ideological commitment of considering that one should be loyal to one's affiliated organization morally and ethically, and the commitment arising from the personal loss that would be experienced by separation from the organization. For the question of why an individual would feel a sense of commitment to the region, it is necessary to divide the discussion accordingly. Here, a sense of liking the region, as with affective commitment, would have a positive influence on acceptance awareness, such as a desire to express this feeling to others. Other factors influencing affective commitment are a sense of region satisfaction derived from participation or presence in the community. An individual's sense of affective commitment seems likely to be stronger precisely because the individual feels satisfied with the region and is participating in the community. Normative commitment is a moral or ethical conception. It is an innate emotion that should be considered separately from feelings of love or region satisfaction. For this reason, it is probably unrelated to factors influencing acceptance awareness.

Hypothesis 2a: Affective commitment has a positive influence on acceptance awareness.

Hypothesis 2b: Region satisfaction and community satisfaction have a positive influence on affective commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Normative commitment is unrelated to acceptance awareness.

## **5. Survey results**

To achieve the objective of this survey, we conducted a questionnaire survey targeting local residents of Wakayama Prefecture. The survey focused on three regions: Wakayama City, which is the prefectural capital and has an abundance of tourism resources including Wakayama Castle and Kimiidera Temple; Shirahama Town, which is the prefecture's largest tourist spot featuring hot springs and resorts; and Yuasa Town, which has been taking steps to promote tourism in recent years. The survey was distributed randomly to residents of these regions in November–December 2009, and responses were sent in by post afterward. In total, 2,000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed (700 in Wakayama City, 650 in Yuasa Town, and 650 in Shirahama Town), and 508 responses (25.4%) were received. By region, there were 161 responses from Wakayama City (response rate of 23.0%), 175 from Yuasa Town (response rate of 26.9%), and 157 from Shirahama Town (response rate of 24.2%). By gender, there were 238 male respondents (composition ratio of 47.5%) and 263 female respondents (52.6%). The average age of respondents was 60.6 years (standard deviation of 13.5), and the range of ages was from 21 to 89.

The questionnaire (refer to Table 3) comprised statements about region satisfaction (six statements), statements about relationships with the local residents (10 statements), statements about commitment to the region of residence (20 statements), statements about opinions regarding tourism (18 statements), and statements about acceptance awareness and hospitality toward others (seven statements). The questionnaire format offered five responses to the statements: “5. Agree,” “4. Somewhat agree,” “3. Neither agree nor disagree,” “2. Somewhat disagree,” and “1. Disagree.” The questionnaire form cited Allen and Meyer (1990) for the statements about commitment, with expressions modified to correspond to regional commitment. The section regarding awareness of tourism was designed with reference to Sasaki (2006).

To conduct the analysis, we checked for the ceiling effect and floor effect to identify distortions in the data regarding statements about region satisfaction, statements about relationships with local residents, statements about commitment to the region of residence, statements about opinions regarding tourism, and statements about acceptance awareness and hospitality toward others. We found a ceiling effect and floor effect in four of the statements about region satisfaction, two of the statements about commitment to the region of residence, and five of the statements about opinions regarding tourism. These effects were not observed in the statements about relationships with local residents and the statements about acceptance awareness and hospitality toward others. The analysis of the survey was conducted on the remaining statements for which these effects were not observed (Table 3).

**Table 3 Statistics Recorded for Questionnaire Statements (Ceiling Effect and Floor Effect Displayed with Gray Highlight)**

Statement	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Statements about region satisfaction			
1. I like this region.	497	4.27	0.96
2. I am satisfied to live here.	492	4.01	1.05
3. If I could, I'd like to live somewhere else within this prefecture.	471	1.9	1.25
4. If I could, I'd like to live somewhere else outside this prefecture.	464	1.82	1.3
5. I feel joy in my life in this region.	482	3.66	1.07
6. I feel proud of this region.	488	3.55	1.15
Statements about relationships with local residents			
1. There is good communication in the region.	485	3.47	1.02
2. I have many neighborhood acquaintances.	491	3.42	1.12

3. My relationships with neighbors are good.	489	3.81	1.04
4. My children have made friendships as they have grown up.	465	3.32	1.28
5. Many friends and acquaintances live nearby.	488	3.61	1.24
6. My parents or many of my relations live in this region.	489	3	1.49
7. Citizens have a sense of camaraderie.	490	3.27	1.1
8. Regional organizations such as youth clubs and housewives' associations are functioning.	488	3.09	1.17
9. People who live near each other in the region help one another.	487	3.28	1.06
10. In many cases, residents have the same impression of this region.	483	3.04	0.99
Statements about commitment to the region of residence			
1. I want to continue living in this region my whole life.	499	3.99	1.15
2. I enjoy telling people from other regions about the region where I live.	492	3.47	1.11
3. I feel that the problems that occur in this region are basically like my own problems.	488	3.36	1.09
4. I think that even if I were to move to another region to live, I would easily be able to get used to it.	485	3.28	1.03
5. I feel as though this region is like my family.	487	3.18	1.11
6. I don't feel that much affection for the region where I live.	482	2.47	1.21
7. Living in this region has major significance for me personally.	486	3.54	1.12
8. I feel that I am a member of the region.	490	3.68	1.13
9. Even if I wanted to, it would be difficult for me to move from this region immediately.	483	3.64	1.39
10. If I were to move from here now, it might be difficult for me to maintain my lifestyle.	478	3.26	1.41
11. Even if I moved away from this region, I wouldn't suffer much economic loss.	488	2.9	1.34
12. The reason I continue to live here is that it would be difficult for me to secure the same income I have here in another region.	475	2.68	1.4
13. It is normal for young people to leave the region where they grew up in order to find work.	482	3.57	1.15
14. People should have affection for their region.	489	4.12	0.89
15. It is wonderful to leave the region where you grew up in order to improve your standard of living.	482	3	1.06

16. The reason I continue to live here is that I believe I should have affection for my region.	481	2.83	1.18
17. Even if I were to be transferred for work, I probably wouldn't move away from here immediately (if self-employed, even if I had to work in another region).	466	3.16	1.3
18. I have been taught the value of having loyalty to one region.	488	2.68	1.17
19. It is good to live in the same place for your whole life.	494	3.4	1.19
20. I no longer think it wise to continue living in one region.	485	2.79	1.12
Statements about opinion regarding tourism			
1. The tourism business will play a major role in this region going forward.	489	3.8	1.18
2. I prefer to work in a tourism-related business.	484	3.8	1.02
3. This region should make its tourism facilities more sophisticated.	479	3.94	1.06
4. The tourism industry is essential for this region.	486	4.02	1.1
5. Tourists are important.	489	4.38	0.92
6. The tourism business should be actively promoted in this region.	487	4.12	1.07
7. The tourism business increases the living standard in this region.	486	3.86	1.12
8. The tourism business increases my income.	477	3.51	1.29
9. Developing the region's tourism businesses will create more jobs.	484	3.9	1.1
10. I would like to see the tourism business become the main industry for the region.	484	3.85	1.15
11. The tourism business has a negative impact on the environment.	477	2.52	1.12
12. The current tourism facilities are extremely noisy.	469	2.12	0.99
13. I don't want to see any more outdoor recreation facilities built.	477	2.54	1.2
14. The tourism business has increased crime in the region.	475	2.25	1.03
15. I am opposed to the creation of new tourism facilities for attracting tourists.	475	2.31	1.24
16. The tourism business has increased litter in the region.	479	3.13	1.23
17. This region should not increase the number of tourists any further.	474	2.09	1.1
18. This region should be further developed as a tourist destination.	478	3.72	1.19

Statements about acceptance awareness and hospitality toward others			
1. I don't mind looking out for people who are new to this region, and I am happy to be of service.	487	3.69	1
2. I think that this district has a helpful atmosphere that makes it easy for newcomers to join the community (community associations or neighborhood gatherings).	484	3.03	0.95
3. I myself want to help make it easy for newcomers to join the community (community associations or neighborhood gatherings).	486	3.7	0.98

A factor analysis was conducted for the relationship with local residents, commitment to the region, and opinion regarding tourism to extract the operating variables. The maximum likelihood method was used for the factor analysis, and a varimax rotation was applied to extract the factors. The optimal factor was extracted by eliminating statements whose commonality on the first-factor analysis was less than 0.3. The average score of the statements whose factor loading had an absolute value of 0.4 or higher among these factors was set as the lower dimension. Statements that had a negative factor loading were processed in reverse. Since there were just two statements relating to region satisfaction and three related to acceptance awareness, the simple average of their scores was taken as the lower dimension.

Table 4 shows the results of a factor analysis of the statements related to local residents. The first factor included statements showing community functioning, such as "My relationships with neighbors are good" and "There is good communication in the region," and this factor had a high loading. It was named "Community effectiveness." The second factor included statements showing the presence of friends, acquaintances, or relatives, etc. in the region, such as friends or acquaintances living there, rather than community function. This factor was named "Acquaintances."

Table 5 shows the factor analysis result for statements about commitment to the region. Allen and Meyer (1990) extracted three factors in their inventory: affective commitment, continuous commitment, and normative commitment. In this study, we expected to obtain a similar result. However, the factor loadings of all statements relating to continuous commitment were small, so they were eliminated from the study. After repeating the factor analysis, two factors were extracted; the first was comprised of statements relating to affective commitment, as in Allen and Meyer (1990), and was named "affective commitment," and the second was comprised of statements related to normative commitment and was named "normative commitment."

Table 6 shows the factor analysis result for statements about attitudes to tourism. The first factor included statements that related to expectations for tourism to contribute to aspects such as the economy, employment, and living standards. This factor was named "Tourism expectation."

The second factor comprised statements related to recognition of the negative impacts of tourism experienced by the region, such as litter, crime, and noise. This factor was named “Tourism annoyance.”

**Table 4 Factor Analysis of Statements about Relationships with Local Residents**

	Factor	
	Community effectiveness	Acquaintances
9. People who live near each other in the region help one another.	.83	.27
7. Citizens have a sense of camaraderie.	.80	.31
1. There is good communication with the region.	.74	.30
2. I have many neighborhood acquaintances.	.72	.30
3. My relationships with neighbors are good.	.72	.40
10. In many cases, residents have the same impression of this region.	.68	.22
8. Regional organizations such as youth clubs and housewives' associations are functioning.	.66	.20
5. Many friends and acquaintances live nearby.	.23	.97
4. My children have made friendships as they have grown up.	.20	.50
6. My parents or many of my relations live in this region.	.33	.46
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.92	.70

**Table 5 Factor Analysis of Statements about Commitment to the Region**

	Factor	
	Affective	Normative
8. I feel that I am a member of the region.	.77	.28
5. I feel as though this region is like my family.	.73	.30
3. I feel that the problems that occur in this region are basically like my own problems.	.70	.18
2. I enjoy telling people from other regions about the region where I live.	.68	.23
7. Living in this region has major significance for me personally.	.67	.26
18. I have been taught the value of having loyalty to one region.	.16	.99
16. The reason I continue to live here is that I believe I should have affection for my region.	.44	.52

19. It is good to live in the same place for your whole life.	.28	.49
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.87	.75

**Table 6 Factor Analysis of Statements about Opinion Regarding Tourism**

	Factor	
	Tourism expectation	Tourism annoyance
7. The tourism business increases the living standard in this region.	.84	.16
9. Developing the region's tourism businesses will create more jobs.	.77	.23
18. This region should be further developed as a tourist destination.	.76	.02
3. This region should make its tourism facilities more sophisticated.	.76	.07
8. The tourism business increases my income.	.72	.31
2. I prefer to work in a tourism-related business.	.71	.01
1. The tourism business will play a major role in this region going forward.	.69	.17
17. This region should not increase the number of tourists any further.	-.52	.44
12. The current tourism facilities are extremely noisy.	-.17	.75
14. The tourism business has increased crime in the region.	-.17	.72
11. The tourism business has a negative impact on the environment.	-.14	.62
13. I don't want to see any more outdoor recreation facilities built.	-.28	.60
16. The tourism business has increased litter in the region.	-.04	.56
15. I am opposed to the creation of new tourism facilities for attracting tourists.	-.49	.51
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.82	.81

Table 7 shows the correlation between the operating variables as Pearson correlation coefficients. Generally, a correlation coefficient exceeding 0.4 is considered to indicate a moderate correlation. Looking at the analysis results, the factors that are moderately correlated to acceptance awareness are community effectiveness, affective commitment, normative commitment, and tourism expectation. Tourism annoyance appeared to have virtually no correlation with acceptance awareness. Somehow, whether or not someone views tourism negatively does not appear to influence their acceptance awareness. Community effectiveness and affective commitment showed

a strong correlation, which is said to be indicated by a correlation coefficient higher than 0.6. There was also a relatively high correlation coefficient of 0.53 between community effectiveness and region satisfaction.

**Table 7 Correlation between Operating Variables**

		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Acceptance awareness	Correlation coefficient	.50**	.33**	.56**	.43**	.47**	-.06**	.46**
	N	452	448	463	469	432	433	466
2. Community effectiveness	Correlation coefficient		.56**	.66**	.39**	.28**	-0.01	.53**
	N		437	451	455	420	419	448
3. Acquaintances	Correlation coefficient			.43**	.21**	.14*	0	.30**
	N			445	451	412	417	446
4. Affective commitment	Correlation coefficient				.57**	.36**	-0.06	.70**
	N				466	431	432	463
5. Normative commitment	Correlation coefficient					.33**	0.04	.43**
	N					433	435	466
6. Tourism expectation	Correlation coefficient						-.20**	.33**
	N						415	429
7. Tourism annoyance	Correlation coefficient							-.17**
	N							431
8. Region satisfaction	Correlation coefficient							
	N							

\*... p<0.5 \*\*...p<0.01

Now, let us examine the results of a multiple regression analysis taking acceptance awareness as the dependent variable and the remaining operating variables as independent variables (Table 8). Multiple regression was performed using the forced-entry method. Moreover, since there is a

possibility of multicollinearity from correlation analysis, we also checked the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the tolerance. As shown in Table 8, the factors influencing acceptance awareness are community effectiveness, affective commitment, and tourism expectation. Moreover, the adjusted  $R^2$  was 0.43, indicating that the model is a relatively good fit.

These two analysis results support the hypothesis in Hypothesis 1 that expectations of tourism have a positive impact on acceptance awareness. However, they do not support the hypothesis that antipathy toward tourism has a negative influence on acceptance awareness. We can see that antipathy toward tourism does not influence the acceptance awareness of other people. For Hypothesis 2, the result also supports the hypothesis that affective commitment has a positive influence on acceptance awareness. Moreover, with regard to the relationship between region satisfaction, community satisfaction, and affective commitment, the correlation analysis of Table 8 also provides partial support, although a caveat is required. Looking at Table 8, these three show a strong mutual relationship, and it is clear that they are closely connected. The important point is the route of cause and effect. What kind of relationship would it be appropriate to estimate for the three statements “I am satisfied with the region,” “I have affection for the region,” and “The region’s community is functioning well?” Why would the respondent feel affection for the region in the first place? Probably because the respondent has some feeling of satisfaction toward the region.

It is natural that a sense of affection would arise if the respondent had good relationships in the region. Of course, satisfaction toward the region would also arise from having good relationships in the region. In either case, regarding the route of cause and effect, it seems appropriate to consider that region satisfaction and community satisfaction would have an influence on affective commitment. Finally, the relationship between normative commitment and acceptance awareness was not statistically significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported. Clearly, it is not simply commitment to the region that influences acceptance awareness. We can see that it derives not from moral or ethical ideas, but from the commitment that arises from love and affection for the region.

**Table 8 Factors Influencing Acceptance Awareness**

	Overall		Collinearity statistic amount	
	Standard regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t value	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		3.77		
Community effectiveness	.15**	2.59	0.47	2.11
Acquaintances	0.07	1.39	0.69	1.46
Affective commitment	.26**	3.83	0.34	2.95
Normative commitment	0.07	1.53	0.66	1.53
Region satisfaction	0.06	1.03	0.47	2.15
Tourism expectation	.30**	6.74	0.8	1.25
Tourism annoyance	0.02	0.40	0.91	1.10
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.43			
F value	40.55**			

\*\* p&lt;0.01

## 6. Remarks – Toward Regional Branding

Regional branding is an extremely important issue for regions that seek to achieve revitalization. However, in an era in which inter-regional competition is intensifying, many regions share similar characteristics. In this situation, regions must consider how to brand themselves in terms of concepts and regional features. They must also consider whether or not a concept will receive the consensus of regional stakeholders such as local residents. Finally, they must consider where to start in terms of strategy. These are essential challenges to be considered in regional branding.

In this paper, we have proposed brand building centered on the awareness of local residents around accepting others, with the objective of seeking regional revitalization that organically integrates the partially opposing concepts of “good to live in, good to visit.” To explore the keys to successful brand building on this basis, we conducted a substantive study that revealed several insights. To increase acceptance awareness among local residents, it is naturally important to foster a positive relationship between residents and tourism; however, it is of paramount importance that residents come to like their region and have strong feelings that cause them to love it more. Rather than a feeling that their region is simply their current place of abode, they must experience an integration of their whole personality with the region. To this end, the highest priority should be policies for making regional communities function. The loss of strength of regional connections in Japanese society was first commented on long ago. We are in the age of the disconnected society

with weak regional, family, and social bonds (Tachibanaki 2011). Of course, this is the path that we have chosen as a nation, and it is difficult to resolve the issue through self-effort. Revitalizing regional communities relies to a large extent on the public sector. Attempts at branding centered on acceptance awareness might do well to start with making communities function, although this may seem an indirect route. This research has shown that we should implement a smooth cycle of functioning communities -> region satisfaction -> acceptance awareness -> successful tourism destinations, and that branding centered on acceptance awareness lies at the heart of that cycle.

### Acknowledgements

In the writing of this paper, we would like to express our gratitude to the anonymous reviewers who provided helpful comments and to the members of the Wakayama Regional Economy Research Organization Hospitality Study Group (Fiscal 2009)<sup>5</sup>.

### References

1. Allen N.J. and Meyer J.P. (1990), "The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization" *Journal of Occupational Psychology* (1990), 63, 1-18
2. Dentsu Abic Project (Ed.) (2009), *Chiiki Brand management*, Yuhikaku Publishing.
3. Fujinami T. (2010), *Chiho toshi saiseiron kurashitsuzukeru tameni*, Nikkei Publishing.
4. Keller, Kevin Lane (2009), "Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment" *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol.15, No.2-3, pp139-155.
5. Keller, Kevin Lane (2008), *Strategic brand management, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, Prentice-Hall.
6. Kogawa, Kousuke (1994), *Brand senryaku no jissai*, Nikkei Publishing.
7. Kolb Bonita M. (2006), *Tourism marketing for cities and towns*, Elsevier.
8. Japan Productivity Center (Ed.) (2007), *Leisure Hakusho*.
9. Sasaki, Toshiji (2006), "Tourism no impact to chiikijumin no taido: kankoushinrigaku de torinokasaretakadai nikansuru bunnkennno gaikan", *Bulletin of the Faculty of Sociology*, Kansai University 37 (3), 197-269.
10. Tachibanaki, Toshiaki (2011), *Muenshakai no shotai – jien, ketsuen, shaen wa ikani houkaishitaka*, PHP Institute.
11. Tada, Osamu (2008), *Okinawa image wo tabisuru: Yanagita Kunio kara ijuu buumu made*, Chukoron-Shinsha.

12. Tohoku Kaihatsu Kenkyu Center (Ed.) (2005) *Souzou chiiki brand: jiritsu wo mezashita machidzukuri*, Kahoku Shimpo Publishing Center.

### Notes

1. Of course, the expression “regional revitalization” is a broad and diverse concept of revitalization that includes aspects ranging from the economic level, such as increasing the circulation of money within the region and increasing tax revenue, to psychological aspects, such as the psychological satisfaction of the people living in the region.
2. Basic population data are found on the website of the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (<http://www.ipss.go.jp/>).
3. Such associations have points in common with notions of internal marketing discussed in the service marketing field (for example Kogawa (1994)).
4. According to Brand Research Institute Inc.'s website ([http://www.tiiki.jp/corp\\_new/pressrelease/2010/20100908.html](http://www.tiiki.jp/corp_new/pressrelease/2010/20100908.html)).
5. This research was conducted as part of a research project by the Wakayama Regional Economy Research Organization Hospitality Study Group.