



Research Summary

This research is to investigate the model of rural tourism in Japan for learning the successful lessons and then to apply for rural tourism in Mekong Delta, specifically, for the case of Vinh Long province. Although, it is difficult to compare between Japan and Vietnam because of big differentiations in terms of political, social and cultural conditions, therefore, in order to learn lessons from rural tourism from Japan., this research focus on operation of household scale – small scale of family or household is objective of the research. With this scope, the operation of rural tourism by households between Japan and Mekong Delta were investigated and compared. After that, some successful lessons will be benefit for households in Mekong Delta.

Through investigation of rural tourism in Japan, this research found out that there are some successful determinants of rural tourism: (1) First important determinant is the “effort of farmers themselves”. With this effort, in accompanying with their passion and love to birthplace, the farmers have more enthusiasm and motivation to operate, promote and diversify agricultural activities and tourism activities. (2) The second is that the successfully transmitted the “rural soul” or intangible asset of agricultural and traditional culture, especially through the role of old women in the rural villages. (3) The third is the multiform of rural tourism based on each season to satisfy the customers’ need and keep them revisit. (4) One of the important mainstays of rural tourism in the backing of government and the outside interaction to discover and understand the strength of local resources and realize the market need. (5) The next is the participation of local community. Because of partnership, teaming together to supply the diversity rural tourism activities following seasons, the large numbers of tourists could be served carefully at the same time.

When marking comparison between rural tourism in Japan and Mekong Delta, it is realized there are some similarities and differentiations. Regarding similarities, both Japan and Mekong Delta have the same problem with foreign language. However, tourists and farmers have used their body languages and it also made them more closely and they can understand and sympathy each other. Another point is that both were caused by the outside interaction to discover the potential capacity of local region. Besides, the next generation seems to have the same problem for both. Youth generation do not want to stay at rural region, almost they want to have a job in urban or city even though it has great potential development in rural tourism at local region.

In terms of differentiation, it found out that so many differentiations between two countries, especially a developed country like Japan and a developing country like Vietnam. However, in the operation of rural tourism level, this research found that it has big and important differentiation between Japan and Mekong Delta in developing rural tourism. That is the process of creating and increasing value added based on the traditional products and natural resources. In Japan, rural tourism was developed based on the strong and stable agricultural activities. Rural tourism as a means to transmit the traditional value of rural region and rural tourism is one of the activity based on diversify agricultural activities. Therefore, in Japan, traditional agricultural and rural tourism stay parallel and supplementary each other. Rural tourism help strengthen traditional agricultural activities. For the case of Vinh Long province, Mekong Delta, the research found that rural tourism and agricultural activities is separated and farmers considered tourism as the alternative strategy to increase income. Rural tourism in Mekong Delta now based on the existing natural resources without investment or based on agricultural activities for diversify. Therefore, there can not create value added for agricultural activities based on rural tourism.

In sum, rural tourism in Mekong Delta is just in its beginning stages and uncompleted in a tourism product, the farmers, for a long time, just only have connected to farming, fields, and agricultural activities; they are now step by step engage in the new domain of service business; and it is surely that farmers are very embarrassed and confused with this kind of activities. If farmers do not have correct and concrete instructions from the government, local government, and other tourism developers, they can not operate rural tourism successfully.

The important factor in Vinh Long province is that farmers they recognized natural landscape and ecological system is the attractive point of tourists. Therefore, their investments at present have not yet damaged these natural resources. However, the weak point is that Mekong Delta's farmers have not yet transmitted the beautifully cultural value of rural life as tourists expected. It means that intangible asset are not taken care and it is found out that it is very difficult for both farmers and tourist companies to carry out this.

Through learning from successful lessons from the case of Japan, Mekong Delta have concrete model in operating rural tourism, knowing some specific cases in deploying rural tourism which is both preserve the natural landscape and ecological system, and developing and transmitting particular characteristics in cultural values of rural regions and from that, rising up the pride of homeland and the loving to traditional agricultural activities. Mekong Delta's farmers, tourism company, and local government can have some ideas regarding to how to cooperate and support together to develop and strengthen agriculture, and after that, develop tourism activities based on good foundation of traditional agriculture.