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Sámi Indigenous Tourism and Snow & Ice in the Arctic

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Abstract

Recently, the global warming causes rapid environmental changes and Covid-19 pandemic affected the tourism industry as well as the local communities in the Arctic. In northern Finland, for example, traditional reindeer herding practices have suffered from difficult winters and the pandemic prevented the visits of foreign tourists. While tourism is generally regarded as “fragile,” these environmental changes indeed posed a challenge to both sustainable tourism and community resilience. In the field of indigenous tourism, on other side, questioning concerning authenticity has attracted attention for long time, not least because of the cases where indigenous cultures have been misused when creating improper services to tourists. According to our understanding, the interactive matching both desires of supply side and demand side are at the core of authentic tourism experiences as well as sustainability and resilience of the field. Thus, this study examines the authentic experience through a case study of Sámi indigenous tourism in Inari region in Finland. We also clarify how the global warming affects the Sámi reindeer tourism practices under the snow & ice thaw situation, and consider it as future challenges based on relationship between the authenticity and snow & ice in the context of Sámi culture.

Key words: Authentic Tourism Experience, Reindeer herding and snow & ice, Sustainability and Resilience

1. Introduction

The content of this study report consists of mainly following three sections. Firstly, we briefly explain about our study project funded by ArCS II, titled as “Elucidation of how local community resilience can be improved through encouragement of appropriate indigenous tourism in the Arctic and its social implementation.”

Secondly, we will show the actual Sámi reindeer tourism practices in Inari in the perspective of authenticity. Besides, we discuss on this authenticity with community resilience and potential domestic marketing of Sámi tourism in Finland in the integrated manner.

Lastly, this study clarifies how the global warming negatively affects the traditional reindeer herding practices under the snow & ice thaw situation in the Arctic. Then we also discuss on the relationship between the above authenticity and snow & ice along with Sámi reindeer herding.

The current purpose of this study is based on our previous three-years-research under J-ARC Net (Japan Arctic Research Network Center). Besides, this study is positioned at the very middle point in two years project since we started in April 2022, adopted by ArCS II. Therefore, we clearly state both survey results with the present consideration and future challenges here.

2. Outline of our ArCS II project

2.1 Project summary

The main purpose of this study project is to elucidate how the authentic Sámi tourism can contribute to community resilience through the framework of Adventure tourism (AT) in sustainable way. AT has recently become a global trend within the huge international tourism market emphasizing visitors’ desire for genuine experiences. According to Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), AT is defined as the combination of “physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion” (Huddart & Scott, 2020).

Despite general image of “adventure,” AT is now focusing on the authentic experiences that could possibly create “WOW experience” and impact on tourists’ ever existing world views even though the effects come from indigenous tourism experiences, not only from “adventure.” Furthermore, the other features of AT are small group size, respect both regional culture and nature, and tendency of long stay and high consumption in community, which are regarded accordingly as sustainability.

Regarding community resilience, this study is to examine the potential domestic marketing of Sámi authentic tourism in Finland since Covid-19 has brought huge damage to international tourism market, so has in Inari region. Besides, it was said by many related stakeholders in our survey that there were almost no

existence of domestic marketing for Sámi tourism due to no existence of its promotion activities for long time. Hence, this study carefully examine this hidden domestic market for the sake of community resilience.

Here, we use the term of sustainability for, especially international AT market in macro-perspective, while using resilience for domestic market in meso-/micro-perspective under the circumstances of environmental change. In other words, destination community is able to choose either AT foreign tourists who are eco-friendly, or potential AT domestic tourists when emergent for the sake of resilience in future.

And the term of authentic experience should be somewhere in the middle that can be connected with both global sustainability and regional resilience. It is positioned as a same common aspect/factor between them (provisional definition will be described later in section 3).

In addition, this study carries out the comparative research between the above Sámi situation and Ainu tourism practices in Akan region in Hokkaido. Akan hosted AT World Summit (ATWS) in 2021, organized the first time in Asia, and thus Akan has a certain sense of authentic experience which AT customers seek for.

2.2 Survey overview

To achieve the purpose of this study, we've conducted field survey including quite a few interviews to keypersons and stakeholders in both Inari and Akan region, and participated in ATWS in Switzerland in 2022 as well as we've discussed on the theme with several scholars at Lapland University including Arctic Center there in Rovaniemi (Table1).

Table 1 Outline of our survey in 2022 (fiscal year)

	Date	Contents	Place
1	6/22-24	Field survey, interviews, participating Ainu tours, etc.	Akan, Japan
2	8/21-9/2	Field survey, interviews, forum, participating Sámi tours, etc.	Inari, Finland
3	9/3-9/5	Meetings, discussions at Lapland University, interviews, etc.	Rovaniemi, Finland
4	10/1-10/8	Participating ATWS, meetings, promotion of FAM trip, etc.	Lugano, Switzerland
5	2/2-2/9	Collaborating with SEI, meetings, interviews, field survey, etc.	Inari, Finland

Hence, the project has already been able to get significant collaborators such as Sámi indigenous reindeer herders, Sámi Parliament, Sámi Education Institute (SEI), ARCTISEN (Culturally Sensitive Tourism in the Arctic), Siida Museum, ATTA official ambassador, Visit Finland, Visit Inari, House of Lapland, etc.

3. Sami Indigenous tourism authenticity

3.1 Reindeer tourism practices in Inari region

One of our collaborators, Petri Mattus is a Sámi traditional reindeer herder and he started his tourism

business utilizing reindeers since about fifteen years ago in Inari. During around December to April, he takes maximum eight participants into deep forest, like 10km away with the sleds, where surrounded by hundreds of reindeers in snow. Then he starts an open fire and serve cups of hot tea or coffee to them while they're seeing, hearing and feeling real reindeers right before very eyes in coldness. At the same time, he narrates stories about Sámi culture, his livelihood and daily life so that customers can directly ask questions freely (Fig.1).



Fig.1 Photo of reindeer herding by Petri Mattus

One remarkable point here is that he doesn't wear Sámi costume in front of tourists. He wears warmly thick jacket and uses snowmobile for reindeer herding in the forest, which are simply his everyday life as it is. But he is sincerely proud of Sámi culture and he talks stories to tourists in this way.

Indeed, we've evaluated that his tour style just matched what AT customers would desire such as genuine or uniqueness, which should be the authentic experience. He has already both repeating and new customers from abroad, however, in the past two years of pandemic period, he had lost his tour opportunities completely.

But anyway, total Inari region has certain foreign tourism market who desire to see real Sámi culture in winter time while domestic tourism market traditionally exists in summer time, that desire to experience real nature activities in Inari.

The above Sámi case is just one example, however, we appropriately confirmed that the Sámi indigenous tourism practices in Inari region, especially utilizing real reindeer herding, had genuine value.

3.2 Community resilience and authentic experience

As mentioned above, this study hypothesizes that there should be a certain potential domestic market of Sámi indigenous tourism in Finland, which can contribute to the community resilience enhancement. According to our understanding so far, the tourism experience of Sámi culture could possibly appeal to not only foreign tourists but potential Finnish tourists if only it is authentic, which can be applied from AT framework.

In order to consider the relationship between domestic market and authentic tourism experiences, we must face the authenticity more deeply. Then we can discuss more effectively on this theme. In fact, our field survey in Inari has already found out that the interactive matching both desires of supply side (real indigenous hosts) and

demand side (genuine oriented guests) could create the authentic experience together. When tourists/guests desire to know more about Sámi as well as Sámi/hosts desire to show more about Sámi self, the moment and space of their interaction are full of genuineness atmosphere, which could positively make the level of authenticity here higher.

Thus, this study has been trying to define the authentic experience in the context of indigenous tourism. But firstly, please note that we use authenticity, genuineness, and authentic experience as the same meaning in this study report. So now below is our provisional definition of authentic experience at this phase (Table 2).

Table 2 Provisional definition

Authentic experience should be:
“Experience Value” created by the interaction between both approaches (Value co-creation) from host side and guest side
*Complement A
Host side should be the community that symbolizes Sami culture. And its approach should be the attitude or behavior that would desire to show guest side, let them know or experience based on Sami peoples’ history, culture, identity, and pride. And these approaches regard the provision of “As It Is” service as value, which does not adhere only to cultural tradition, while conscious of “outsider’s perspective.”
*Complement B
Guest side should be the genuine-oriented tourist symbolized by AT*. And its approach should be the attitude or behavior that would desire to see, know or experience based on the motivation of “unknown WOW experience.” And these approaches regard the service consumption that possibly leads to self-transformation or world view conversion as value on guest side, beginning from host side’s “inside person’s perspective.”

3.3 Effect of authentic experience

According to the research conducted by ATTA in 2017, AT customers are to be primarily motivated by “transformation.” Indeed, it can be considered that genuine oriented tourists symbolized by AT desire to change innovatively their ever existing world views. In this way, our study leans this research result and considers that the authentic experience could possibly bring great impact on tourists well enough to be transformed themselves in their lives.

On this point, Gilmore & Pine (2017) refers that transformation is “effectual outcome that guide customers to change some dimension of self.” Furthermore, they regard transformation as “influential authenticity” and state that “People tend to perceive as authentic that which exerts influence on other entities, calling human beings to a higher goal and providing a foretaste of a better way” (Gilmore & Pine, 2017, p.50).

Thus, it can be seen that authentic experience could influence tourists to be transformed just like into another dimension, and vice versa, genuine oriented tourists would desire to be transformed through the authentic experience. Hence, at this moment, this study proposes that there is a certain domestic market in Finland that desires the authentic experience through real Sámi indigenous tourism with reindeer herding as it is their

daily lives in winter time. Having great impact from this authentic experience, Finnish people self could possibly be transformed by this gap.

Later in Feb. in 2024, this project will anyway validate this hypothesis by hosting FAM trip and its analysis.

4. Global warming and reindeer herding

4.1 Indications from previous research

Now this study confirms how global warming affects regional reindeer herding by snow & ice thaw in order to consider the relationship between reindeer herding tourism and snow & ice through the authenticity.

The most notable impact of global warming on reindeer herding is about reindeer’s grazing. It is reported that winter rain fall and melting snow & ice, followed by formation of ice layers in the snow due to the coldness coming again, prevents reindeer from grazing (Nakata, 2013; Takakura (Eds), 2015). In winter, reindeers usually eat so-called reindeer moss (lichen) under the snow by digging it themselves, however, the influence of global warming makes this daily style accordingly difficult.

While it has been confirmed that there are even more negative effects from environmental change on reindeer herding in the Arctic, Tatsuzawa (2009) concludes that global warming and the resulting pressure on indigenous peoples’ daily lives should be at least as a fact.

4.2 Findings from our survey

There is a project called CLIMINI (Adaptation of reindeer management to climate change) coordinated by mainly Arctic Center of Lapland University. One of the project goals is to produce a synthesis based on available knowledge about the impacts of climate change on reindeer husbandry of Finland as well as its adaptation.

CLIMINI reported that the various influence of seasonal weather change upon reindeer condition, its behavior, and herding practices. They conclude that comprehensive understanding of the effects of global warming and its adaptation, including many-sided data analysis, more academic research with local practitioners and governance solutions (Rasmus et al., 2019).

Additionally, our field survey in Inari also found out some concrete influences of global warming on Sámi reindeer tourism practices. Firstly, as above mentioned, it’s gradually becoming harder for reindeer to dig and graze due to ice layer refrozen by melted snow, in Inari, too. Also, according to the interview at SEI, one reindeer herder now plans to develop reindeer tourism due to extra cost of reindeer food since reindeer need additional food in such snow & ice situation.

Furthermore, according to Petri Mattus, it is often difficult to accept customer’s tour booking due to delay of snow falling in December. As mentioned above, he has to take tourists far in the deep forest by sleds pulled

by snowmobile in enough snow condition.

Thus, there are seen actual impacts, possibly caused by global warming also in Inari region, especially through the change of snow & ice situation upon Sámi reindeer herding and its tourism practices.

4.3 Discussions on the authenticity and snow & ice

From all above, it can be surely considered that indigenous reindeer herding and snow & ice are deeply connected and inseparable each other as the major premise for the discussion. To support this idea, here is a remarkable example which is called “The Sámi snow and ice knowledge system (SSIKS)” in the Arctic.

According to Eira (2022), SSIKS is described boundaries regarding reindeer herd, ecosystem, and snow & ice, structure and aim expressed in its function and practice. And she examines how reindeer herders use snow concepts in their practice of reindeer herding. The system contains at least four aspects below (Table 3).

Table 3 Contents of SSIKS based on Eira (2022)

1	A physical process like weather/snow transformation causing different types of snow and ice
2	Product or result of transformations: Snow quality, density, hardness, snowpack (snow layers)
3	How these influence herding
4	Reindeer behavior in snow, survival, sustainability and well-being

Thus, Sámi reindeer herding is a livelihood based on traditional practices and knowledge developed through long-term experiences living in snow & ice in winter, under severe, challenging, and changing climatic conditions (Mathiesen et al., 2018).

In this way, the relationship with snow & ice is a significant element of Sámi reindeer herding, which certainly forms very part of Sámi culture. In other words, this relationship between reindeer herding and snow & ice is Sámi’s livelihood as their daily lives, which can be “as it is” tourism resources.

In the perspective of genuine oriented tourists, this relationship certainly becomes the one component of authentic experience, mentioned in our provisional definition earlier. Then, if Sámi people want to show or explain this interaction with snow & ice in their daily reindeer herding as Sámi ‘s real culture, it also becomes the other component of the same authentic experience above. This interaction should be called Value co-creation in this study.

Therefore, the impact of global warming is considered to affect not only the relationship between Sámi reindeer herding and snow & ice, but also the interaction between Sámi reindeer herder as tourism host and genuine oriented tourists as guest connectedly.

5. Conclusion

Thus, this study first showed the contents of our ArCS II project as well as the survey result in Inari region with the case analysis of Sámi indigenous tourism by utilizing

their reindeer herding. Based on our evaluation that their reindeer tourism practices must have authentic value, we considered about this authenticity more deeply. As a result, we’ve come to define this authentic experience in this project as the interaction between both approaches from host showing their livelihood as it is, and genuine oriented guest desiring transformation. Furthermore, traditional Sámi reindeer herding is tightly connected to snow & ice in their daily lives in winter seen in SSIKS.

On other side, the authenticity seen in sustainable tourism field represented AT is also linked to community resilience in the perspective of potential domestic market in this study. Therefore, we should be aware that the global warming could negatively affect not only the relationship between reindeer herding and snow & ice, but also the interaction between Sámi reindeer herder as host and genuine oriented tourists as guest connectedly in the context of indigenous tourism in the Arctic.

This study project will continue to examine more deeply the authentic experience of Sámi reindeer tourism in the Arctic through Inari regional case, related to snow & ice as the future challenge.

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