Economic Analysis of the Ecotourism Industries in Yakushima Island

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This research is to analyze economic impacts of the ecotourism industries in Yakushima Island, focusing on around year 2000. It was found that there were 200 thousand visitors to Yakushima in a year approximately, 19–21% of which (34,000–38,000 people) took part in ecotourism activities. The percentage of visitors who were ecotourists almost increased threefold from 12% in the summer of 1997 to 30% in that of 2002. 57–60% of ecotourists used package tours, and this result implied the ecotourism industries had tight relationships with the travel agencies, that is, the ecotourism industries in Yakushima Island has developed based not on an alternative tourism but on an optional tourism in mass-tourism industries. The business analysis made it clear that ecotourism enterprises spent half of their running cost on personnel costs. Compared to other tourism industries such as the hotel service, the ecotourism industries of Yakushima had a small depreciable rate. Also the break-even point analysis found it clear that the ecotourism industries were considerably in good business environment; consequently, the total amount of sales in the Yakushima ecotourism industries were estimated to be 510–570 million yen in a year. The dramatic rise in the number of ecotourists may result in excessively intensive uses of mountain regions. Though the public authorities have conducted a variety of projects such as regulations of ordinary-car entries, fundamental issues concerning overuse issues still remain.

Key words: ecotourism, world natural heritage, overuse, tourism resourcization