

**Mechanisms for Sustaining the Local Labor Market  
in International Mountain Resorts:  
A Case Study of Whistler, Canada**

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**Jo KOMURO**

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**Jo KOMURO**

## Abstract

This study aimed to clarify the mechanisms for sustaining the local labor market in Whistler, an international mountain resort, focusing on the external labor force that is moving abroad. The results are summarized as follows. International mountain resorts are a form of seasonal tourist destinations where the labor demand rhythm fluctuates significantly. It remains unclear how international mountain resorts, which have recently struggled to secure labor to accommodate the growing number of visiting tourists, have successfully attracted external labor to sustain the local labor market. In this study, Whistler has been increased in visitor numbers and a year-round resort industry and a concomitant expanding in labor demand under strong municipal governance. On the other hand, the rise in land prices due to land development has led to a sharp rise in rents and living costs, creating a local labor market with excessive demand for labor.

In addition to citizenship workers, the Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) are an essential labor force for Whistler, a non-urban area. There are three types of stay patterns of SIEs identified, that is, settlement, settlement-oriented, and seasonal. As each worker responds to various job classes and employment patterns in the labor market, the supply-demand relationship in the labor force is established.

Focusing on SIEs' attributes (e.g., their visa status and home country) and their motives for moving abroad, three categories of SIEs were identified. Those who had moved to develop their career, those who had moved primarily for recreation, and those who had moved for a better salary and more job opportunities as economic immigrants. Type DC emphasizes future career development rather than recreation and held management and professional positions with high motivation. Type PREC works only at other times than their recreational activities to establish a recreation-oriented life in Whistler. Simultaneously, Type EI engages in CS (customer service) and non-CS jobs with the primary objective of obtaining economic opportunities such as wages and PR and leading a work-centered life.

The SIEs played a vital role in the local labor market in that they provided a solution for the demand for a variety of skills and the seasonal and intra-day variation in business in Whistler. It was found that the structure of the local labor market involves two processes. (1) the process of acquiring PR to settle through promotions, job changes, and start-up businesses by improving language and job skills. (2) The process of cycling between the country of origin or and the next destination as a seasonal worker with a WH and a realization orientation for recreational purposes.

Social regulations act on sustaining the local labor markets, including the two processes mentioned above. Social regulations have the function of overcoming the mismatch between three potential factors (for spatial, temporal, and skills) in the local labor market. The local labor market in Whistler has been able to sustain because the SIEs are established by eliminating spatial mismatches, and the process of settlement and seasonal stays also occurs by responding to mismatches in temporal and skills.

The mechanisms for sustaining the local labor market include the institutional aspects of the state's visa regime, living conditions, level of salary, and ski area. These regional differences lead to local labor market differences in international mountain resorts. In this study, I clarified how the imbalance between labor supply-demand is adjusted in a tourism destination with excessive labor demand, which is a new achievement in tourism geography. In the future, I will need to compare the sustaining mechanisms of local labor markets in mountain resorts with different regional conditions to examine how the regional labor markets differ in terms of social regulations.

**Keywords:** local labor market, international mountain resort, self-initiated expatriates, social regulations, Whistler