Green Tourism, environmentally sound rural tourism in Japan: Recommendations for improvement of Japanese green tourism practices

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Thesis

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Abstract

Green tourism, which originated in Europe, has been actively promoted by the regional and national governments in Japan recent years. The paper concerns itself on the different implications of the green tourism practices in Japan and Europe. While green tourism in Europe is a form of rural tourism which places emphasis on the environment, the paper argues that the practices in Japan lack this aspect. Taking the acute adverse environmental impacts of tourism, this aspect needs to be improved. The paper suggests incorporating the sustainable development principles into the Japanese tourism policy, as done in Europe, therefore redefining the meaning of green tourism to an environmentally sound rural tourism is essential for the improvement of green tourism in Japan.

Key words: green tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism in Japan
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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the study and the context

In many developed countries, tourism is an important part of people’s lives. As the objectives for traveling vary according to the individuals, tourism provides people an opportunity to recover from the stresses from their daily lives as well as to provide them with a chance to learn about the place they visit. Tourism also plays a vital role in the economy, since it creates jobs and stimulates the regional economy to a great extent. In addition, tourism is an effective tool to introduce the area’s culture and hospitality to the visitors. However, at the same time, tourism can also be a source for many problems such as pollution, and its development may deteriorate the environment to a large extent.

Mass tourism, which is the popularization of tourism, has been a dominant form of tourism practice until recently largely in the developed countries (Tahara, 1999). Mass tourism had brought about economic prosperity; it has generated jobs and revitalized regional economy. However, mass tourism also often resulted in overdevelopment. Arroson (1994) outlines the impacts of tourism, that “[u]nrestricted and unplanned tourism development can result in the deterioration or destruction of the natural and cultural conditions, for instance, disruptions in an area’s ecosystem, damage to the built resources such as architecture, historical sites or archaeological remains, or the negative impact of tourism development on cultural resources in the sense of traditions, language/dialects, etc.” Moreover, it is revealed that tourism sector alone contributes significantly to the emission of greenhouse gases, due to its special relation with the transport. The United Nation Environmental Program points out that the greenhouse gas generation by air traffic accounts for 2.5 percent of entire greenhouse production (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2004). It is also easy to picture that the energy use of tourism sector is tremendous. These negative implications have led to the awareness that mass tourism needed a different direction which aims to preserve the environment.

This study aims to explore the practices of green tourism in Japan and Europe as well as their approaches towards green tourism in order to produce recommendations for the improvement of green tourism practices in Japan. Since the 1990s, a new form of rural tourism called green tourism, which is said to have originated in the Western Europe, began to be engaged extensively in Japan. As the importance of tourism becomes greater to the Japanese economy, green tourism is expected to generate various benefits such as economic revitalization and interactions between urban and rural communities. Although it is always mentioned that green tourism in Japan obtained its ideas from Europe, its implications seem to be largely different from the “original” green tourism in Europe. In this paper, “Europe” refers to the countries in the European region, such as the member states of the European Union and the European Economic Areas and Switzerland. There are two reasons why
Europe is appropriate for comparison with Japan. One reason is that modern development of tourism, including the recent development of “new” form of tourism, had first taken place in Europe thus its experiences are extremely extensive that could provide excellent examples to the Japanese experiences. The other reason is that Japan often places a high regard to the European experiences, and this has a significant impact on shaping its policy. Therefore, it is relevant to speak that Japan can learn from the European experiences.

1.2 Problem statement and the structure
Green tourism in Japan is currently practiced as a form of rural tourism in which tourists can experience rural life through engaging in “experience programs” or staying at “experience inns.” However, these aspects indicate the simply transient experience of tourists who visit rural areas from cities, and the current practices lack the emphasis on the care for the environment, which should be the central element of green tourism according to its original meaning. If the providers of green tourism, namely, various tourism operators, local, regional and municipal governments, wish to retain the name “green tourism,” it needs to integrate the environmental aspects. In order to realize the true “green” tourism in Japan, it is essential that the concept of sustainable development is incorporated in its tourism policy, and the cases in Europe should provide practical inspirations to develop more environmentally sound tourism practices. In this paper, the following question will be central: How can Japan improve its green tourism practices according to European examples? In order to address this question, five research goals will serve as a guide throughout this paper:

1. A review of theories of various new forms of tourism
2. A description of the current state of the Japanese green tourism
3. A description of the current state of the European green tourism
4. A critical comparison of Japanese and European green tourism practices
5. Recommendations for improvements of the Japanese green tourism practices

The structure of this paper is as follows: it first explores the context of various new forms of new tourism, namely, the notion of sustainable tourism, eco tourism, and green tourism. This will be followed by an explanation of the Japanese practices of green tourism. European experiences are discussed in chapter 4, and the chief differences are discussed in chapter 5 in order to examine what Japan can learn from such experiences. I will then present a set of recommendations for the providers of green tourism in Japan in Chapter 6.
2. Different concepts of “new tourism”

So what is green tourism? What does this form of tourism entail? We do not seem to find clear-cut definitions in most literatures. However, one common feature of green tourism in a number of different definitions is that it is a counter-form of mass tourism. Experiences with mass tourism revealed that such form of tourism practices need an alternative direction. Such “alternative” forms of tourism take several forms and names, which are extremely difficult to draw distinction. The aim of this chapter is to introduce and review three forms of “alternative” forms of tourism, rather than attempting to provide definitions of these forms of tourism. Nevertheless, it is important to examine the different concepts, because ultimately, these concepts are interlinked and share common features.

2.1 Sustainable tourism

In response to the various negative implications of mass tourism practices, the term ‘sustainable tourism’ is increasingly being used today. However, many scholars state that there is “no exact definition of sustainable tourism exists,” and sustainable tourism has a strong character as an ideology rather than a concrete practice of tourism (Saarinen, 2006). In terms of its aspect as an ideology, the idea of sustainable tourism derived from the concept of sustainable development, which is an integrated concept towards development involving three interlinked dimensions: economic growth, social equity, and protection of the environment (UNDESA, 2002). Sustainable development aims to achieve a positive symbiosis of these three dimensions by taking the future generations into account. As such, all three dimensions must be addressed in order to achieve sustainability. Generally speaking, the concept was said to be introduced to the public due to the publication of a report by the Brundtland Commission, Our Common Future, the so-called Brundtland report, in 1987. It was the first attempt to suggest that development and environment are an interlinked concept. The report provided a definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Moreover, during the Rio Declaration of Environment and Development in 1992, a comprehensive action plans for sustainable development called Agenda 21 was produced.

Since tourism is an activity which heavily involves all the aspects of sustainable development, the introduction of the concept of sustainability into tourism is extremely significant for the design of future plans for tourism practices. For instance, tourism obviously has immense implications for the economy at all levels as well as significant impacts on the environment, depending upon its form of practice such as causing pollution and loss of biodiversity due to physical developments. Next to this, the socio-cultural aspects of a community, region, and country are greatly influenced by tourism, such as its ability to influence on the loss or enrichment of the culture.
As the concept of sustainable development is inherently vague, the concept of sustainable tourism also has similar problems. Nevertheless, international organizations such as the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provide a general definition of the concept:

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

(UNWTO, www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/concepts.htm)

By looking into these definitions, it is evident that the concept of sustainable tourism is an overarching concept which addresses all the aspects of tourism. Sustainable tourism is therefore not equivalent to a specific form of tourism or a measure which aims to address only one of the three dimensions of the concept.

2.2 Eco tourism

As opposed to the sustainable tourism, which is an overarching concept that takes the environment into consideration, eco tourism is a specific form of tourism which focuses on the preservation of the natural environment through tourism activities. This form was sad to have shaped during the 1980s in developing countries where the financial resources for environmental preservation were lacking (Yokoyama, 2006). The idea was introduced in order to supplement or generate the financial resources to preserve valuable natural environment. Eco tourism was further introduced in developed countries in the 1990s. In the context of developed countries, eco tourism is understood as a form of tourism in the natural environment which attempts to minimize the adverse impacts on the social, cultural, and ecological changes. It attempts to do so by bringing about a strong sense of
responsibility and by contributing to the financial sources for preserved areas, thus making it possible to generate income for the local population (Yokoyama, 2006). Moreover, Weaver and Lawton (2007) explain the three core criteria of ecotourism which are largely agreed upon among scholars, “(1) attractions should be predominantly nature-based, (2) visitor interactions with those attractions should be focused on learning or education, and (3) experience and product management should follow principles and practices associated with ecological, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability” (Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Because of such characteristics, ecotourism is fundamentally distinct from a more general form of nature based tourism, which involves activities aimed at simply enjoying the natural environment. Eco tourism involves a prerequisite of learning elements which takes advantage of certain protected area of the nature (Weaver, 2001).

2.3 Green tourism
Another new form of tourism is “green tourism,” or more precisely, “environmentally sound rural tourism”, which is the main focus of this thesis. The central features of green tourism are similar to those of eco tourism, such as it is nature-based. However, while eco tourism seems to be targeted at the certain group of population who are keen on learning about natural environment through traveling experience, green tourism seems to be targeted specifically at urban dwellers by suggesting a style of spending one’s holiday in country sides, placing an emphasis on recovering from the daily stress by staying close to the nature. Moreover, it is important to note the difference between green tourism and rural tourism. Lane (1994) points out that in addition to the fact that rurality is the central feature of rural tourism; green tourism entails small-scaled, individually owned tourism facilities and interactions between visitors and the population of the host community. Such features are distinct from resort tourism, which is also a form of rural tourism. However, resort tourism entails large physical developments and modern tourism facilities such as ski resorts and golf courses.

Green tourism is said to have begun in the mountainous regions of Europe when vacant lodges were let to tourists at relatively low rates. Yamazaki (1994) suggests that there are three phases of the development of green tourism. According to Yamazaki, the first phase took place in the late 1940s when tourism facilities were developed for World War II veterans. He writes that during this time, Gîtes du France, a network of farm cottages in France, was established. During 1960s and 1970s the number of farmers in Europe started to decline rapidly, thus leaving behind a large number of vacant farm houses and other facilities intended for farming. It became popular during that time, to let these abandoned ‘farm abodes’ to tourists, in accordance with the decline of agriculture in Europe (Yamazaki, 2005, Yokoyama, 2006). In the 1980s, more established subsidy systems for farm cottages were introduced across the European countries, especially in Western Europe. The underlying reasons for such subsidies for farmers were intended to put a stop to the depopulation of
rural areas, thus helping to revitalize the regions through tourism. Yamazaki argues that these socio-economic changes coincided with the increasing awareness of more environmentally responsible attitudes and practices and a shift in societal values which appreciate environmentally responsible attitudes. One can state that the condition of such a social climate actually shaped the concept of green tourism in Europe.

Additionally, a conference concerning rural tourism in the UK was held in 1986, which was the first occasion during which the term ‘green tourism’ was largely used and discussed extensively (Jones, 1987). During this discussion, a green tourist was defined as “a well-informed, selective individual from a higher class socio-economic group, taking a second or third holiday in rural areas and often already well-informed, but nevertheless, potentially benefiting from better coordination of provision in the countryside” (Jones, 1987).

Green tourism shares the same features as rural tourism, however, it incorporates different behaviors of tourists, when taking into account Jones’s definition. While green tourism takes place in rural areas, the purposes of tourists who engage in green tourism go beyond merely enjoying the natural environment. Green tourists have critical attitudes towards environmentally unsound consumption practices and wish to incorporate this awareness into the way they travel. The term “green” implies “environmentally sound” behavior, as used in terms like “Green party” or “green consumer.” The term green tourism, therefore, could be understood as a form of tourism which places a strong emphasis on practicing tourism in environmentally sound manners (Yokoyama, 2006).

However, many authors suggest that there is no commonly agreed definition of green tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1994, Yokoyama, 2006). It appears that the very concept of green tourism was shaped when Jungk suggested the features of “hard tourism” and “soft tourism” in 1980. According to Junk, such concepts were to be used for designing strategies for tourism development. Furthermore, Becker summarizes the features and the development strategies of “hard tourism” and “soft tourism.” In this summary, he emphasizes that these features are only meant to provide the descriptions of “specific perspective on overall travel behavior,” therefore, they should not be taken as the absolute conceptualization of soft tourism (Becker, 1995). According to Becker, “hard tourism” includes the development required for mass tourism. It is interesting to note here that opposed to “hard tourism,” which includes an “indefinite need” for tourism development, “soft tourism” sets its limits to the development. Clearly, “hard tourism” places a strong emphasis on the economic effects of tourism by not necessarily assimilating with the local environment, whereas “soft tourism” seems to concern itself with harmonizing tourism with the local environment and other local factors. Moreover, it is vital to bear in mind that soft tourism is more local initiative driven, as opposed to it is the developers, who come from “outside” of the community who takes
initiative to develop “hard tourism.” Therefore, one of the vital features of soft tourism can be described as a tailor made form of tourism which roots deeply into the local culture and customs.

Table 1. Strategies of tourism development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard tourism</th>
<th>Soft tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development without planning</td>
<td>First planning, then development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each community plans for itself</td>
<td>Planning for larger areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widespread and scattered construction</td>
<td>Concentrated construction so as to save land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction for indefinite need</td>
<td>Determining limits of final extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism in the hand of non-local promoters</td>
<td>Local population participates and makes decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop all facilities to their maximum capacity</td>
<td>Develop all facilities for average capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Becker, 1995)

Furthermore, a significant shift in touristic preferences assisted the emergence and the development of green tourism in Europe. Krippendorf (1986) suggested in the 1980s the emergence of ‘new tourists.’ More precisely, he referred to such tourists as, ‘intelligent tourists,’ ‘critical consumer tourists,’ ‘modern and adaptable tourists,’ ‘considerate tourists,’ ‘tourists guided from within’ ‘tourists who set their own travel limits,’ ‘creative experimenting tourists,’ and ‘tourists that are open to learn’ (Krippendorf, 1986). In short, Krippendorf describes such ‘new tourists’ as an improved type of tourists. He writes that new tourists “feel, think, take part and share responsibilities” as opposed to the “old tourists,” whose main purpose of traveling was to be away from their daily lives and to enjoy themselves, thus having little or no interest in making contact with the people or the culture that they visited (Krippendorf, 1986). Such tourists would feel comfortable in the destinations developed under the concept of “hard tourism,” which places little concern for the local environment or culture. The “new tourists” have a strong awareness towards the social, cultural, and ecological consequences that tourism entails, and he or she attempts to minimize these impacts when they travel (Yamazaki, 2006). For example, the new tourist prefers to engage in tourism or consumption in which they can support the local population. Krippendorf points out that new tourists “consciously use their money to purchase those products and services of which they know both the origin and who will profit from the products” (Krippendorf, 1986).

Kripperndorf’s suggestions are certainly idealistic and are of personal ideas, therefore it is not fair to say that all tourists today have transformed into “new tourists” as he suggested in 1980s. However, it is noteworthy that the consumers nowadays are more and more critical about what they buy. It is therefore possible that there would be more “new tourists” because of the consumers’ increasingly critical attitudes towards the environmental impacts of their consumption. Hence, green tourism has
an immense potential that it could become a major form of tourism most favored by such critical consumers.

In German speaking countries, the term “soft tourism (Santfer Tourismus)” is often used to describe an environmentally responsible form of tourism, and in some regions of Europe such as Ireland and Luxemburg, it is called “agri-tourism” (Yamazaki, 1994). Cavaco (1995) uses “agro tourism” to describe tourism in rural and farmland areas, where the main purposes of visiting such destinations include interacting with the local people and culture, and having contact with nature. It is therefore clear that this form of tourism emphasizes the preservation of the environment, which is intended for the type of tourists who have a strong sense of responsibility of the environment where they visit. However, as already mentioned, the term “green tourism” is not necessarily consistently used throughout the world when referring to such form of tourism. In this paper, green tourism refers to a form of sustainable tourism which takes place in rural areas including farm communities and closely involves rural communities. Because of the emphasis on the environmental protection that this form of tourism entails, the term “green tourism” and “environmentally sound rural tourism” are used interchangeably in this paper.
3. Green tourism in Japan

3.1 Development of green tourism in Japan

Although largely inspired by the concepts developed in Europe, green tourism practices in Japan show several aspects which are particular to Japan. Similar to Europe, green tourism was first positioned as an important measure to realize positive changes in depopulated farm villages with the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Green tourism began to be dealt with as a vital tourism measure by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport. This chapter outlines the development of green tourism practices in Japan which are largely led by the ministerial initiatives.

3.1.1 Promotion of green tourism by agricultural initiatives

The introduction of green tourism in Japan took place fairly recently, and it is said that the idea of green tourism in Japan is largely inspired by the European rural tourism which the farmers plays the central role. The involvement in green tourism at a national level is said to have started when the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries implemented so-called “new policy, the new direction of food, agriculture and rural community policy” in 1992 (Hosoya and Sato, 2005). In this policy strategy, the promotion of green tourism was positioned as one of the most important policy goals, and was defined as “Tourism of extended-stay in beautiful farm and fishing villages to enjoy their nature, environment, scenery, lifestyles, culture, and interactions with the locals,” and it suggested a relaxing ways to spend holidays in rural areas (Yokoyama, 2005, Takata, 2003). This definition has become extremely vital for the interpretation of the green tourism concept in Japan, because various green tourism measures administered by public authorities are designed according to this definition.

In 1994, a law to promote leisure activities in farm and fishing villages (rural areas) was established. Since then, the promotion of tourism in rural areas, which involves various agricultural and fishery activities and activities in nature, were becoming more comprehensive and established. A number of public officials began to visit Europe in the 1990s in order to study the green tourism practices in Europe. This law to promote leisure activities in farm and fishing villages has established a new category of the so-called “Agricultural, forestry, and fishery experience farm inns.” At such inns, the owners either have to provide various agricultural, forestry, or fishery experience programs or introduce such programs provided elsewhere to the customers, if the inns do not provide programs themselves. Because of this requirement, these “experience inns” are different from the conventional farm inns, which are merely inexpensive accommodation by nature. The conventional farm inns can

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1 Farm inns are small-scale accommodation facility operated by farmers
be registered as so-called experience farm inns by introducing experience program. An important incentive for these inns to do so is that they will then be categorized as “experience farm inns,” thus, they become part of the experience inn network, and their offerings are promoted collectively through the network (Yokoyama, 2006). In 2001, the Organization for Urban-Rural Interchange Revitalization, an exclusive agency to deal with rural tourism which aims at promoting interactions between urban community and rural community, was established by merging other similar organizations. This organization is in charge of promoting and providing information of the various experience farm inns to tourists as well as providing support with the management of green tourism to the owners of farm inns. Its website provides a comprehensive database of experience programs. In other words, this organization acts as an agent between the tourists and inn owners. It is often said that this system emulated the practices of Gîtes du France and German Agricultural Society (DLG), which are non-profit organizations to promote holidays in farms. In order to register as an “experience inn,” the inns need to take into account for instance, the provision of experience programs, harmonization with the local agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry, taking advantage of the local food, and the care for wildlife. At the moment, 545 farm inns are registered with the Organization (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2007). The number of registered inns increases gradually, as 536 inns were registered in 2003 when its statistics began.

Yokoyama (1998) points out that in general, green tourism in Japan is understood as a form of tourism which is supposed to promote “interaction between urban and rural communities through agricultural experiences and farm inns that provide such services.” This definition is in line with the one proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. One can therefore state that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries was successful in disseminating the ideas of what green tourism is. “Rural” experience programmes and farm inn are now the core features of green tourism in Japan, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries provides a great deal of support in promoting these schemes by establishing an exclusive agency. In this way, one can observe that there are immense expectations towards green tourism by the Ministry.
3.1.2 Path to the “tourism-oriented nation”
The hosting of the FIFA World Cup tournament in 2002 was an important turning point for the Japanese tourism policy, since it served as an opportunity to learn that tourism can bring about immense economic effects (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2003). Ever since this event, tourism has become more and more important on the political agenda of the Japan. In 2003, the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport held a conference to discuss the future of Japanese tourism policy. The conference confirmed the importance of tourism in the globalizing world; the tourism is one of the most vital tools to bring about economic stimulation and enhancement of awareness amid the Japanese public thus helping them to have a sense of globalization (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, 2003). As one of the vital measures to boost tourism in Japan, the improvement of rural tourism attractiveness was suggested. (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, 2003). This measure included the intent of beautifying the landscape and promoting the interaction between urban and rural communities, which laid the basis for the practice of green tourism in Japan (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, 2003). Moreover, this conference had produced the report on basic strategy for tourism promotion, which led to the introduction of the Basic Law for Tourism Promotion in 2006. The law provided the establishment of a master plan for a five-year tourism promotion. This five-year master plan established certain targets to be achieved, such as increasing the number of foreign tourist arrivals and expanding domestic tourism market. It also positioned green tourism as an important new form of tourism to be explored and studied in detail in order to accommodate the diversified needs of tourists (The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2007). In this way, the Japanese government has established various instruments to promote green tourism for the coming years. One can observe that the Japanese government has great expectations for green tourism; that it could trigger the revitalization of the regional economy.

Hosoya and Sato (2005) point out that green tourism in Japan has been dealt with two different political objectives. One objective is that it is dealt with an agricultural policy, aiming at supporting the farmers thus eventually contributing to the decrease in self-sufficiency ratio for food, which is particularly low comparing to other industrialized countries. The other objective is that green tourism is dealt with by tourism policy, which regards “farm and fishing villages,” “interaction between rural and urban communities,” and “nature and local culture” as central elements of the tourism. Such keywords seem to be mentioned extremely frequently in the publications about green tourism. It seems that the starting point of green tourism policy being an agricultural policy to assist the farmers was similar to that of in Europe, however, it also seems that the practices of green tourism in Japan is somewhat, if not fundamentally different in terms of its purposes that in Europe.
3.2 Current state

The Japanese green tourism has one common slogan: “tourism that promotes the co-existence and interaction between the people, products, and information of urban and rural communities” (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, 2007). This slogan implies that green tourism is to help revitalize depopulated rural areas in some ways. There are several suggested ways for tourists in engaging green tourism. They are for instance staying at farm-inns, participating in experience programmes, staying in farms through the working holiday scheme, having a second home in country sides, and finally moving entirely to country side for good.

An Internet search conducted by the author revealed that currently, almost all prefectures in Japan engage in green tourism in one ways or another. In addition, many prefectural, regional, and local governments have exclusive divisions to deal with green tourism measures in their offices. The role of such “green tourism divisions” includes administering experience programs and providing information through various brochures and websites. This suggests that the local governments largely take initiatives in promoting green tourism in Japan.

3.2.1 Feature of Japanese green tourism- experience programs

Experience programs are the central element of green tourism in Japan today. Almost all programs are fee based, and some of them require appointments in order to participate. The contents of the diverse experience programs range from agricultural experience, such as planting and harvesting with local farmers, fishery experience, cooking and local specialty product making and handcraft making at “base facilities,” and to outdoor sports activities such as canoeing. Tourists can enter those programs at “base facilities,” “experience farm inns,” or directly, or via various enterprises. Most municipalities have their own green tourism website where the information on the different experience programs is provided. They usually also have a variety of brochures and guidebooks describing the selection of the different experience programs. In addition, tourists can also visit the “base facilities” for local tourism information.

For example, table 2 shows the experience programmes provided to visitors at an experience inn in an area called Iiyama city in Nagano prefecture of central Japan. Nagano prefecture is a mountainous region situated in Japan Alps, and it is approximately 200 km west of Tokyo. Iiyama city is known for its various efforts to promote green tourism. Kunitake Koyama, who served as a mayor of Iiyama in the 1990s, was keen on promoting green tourism in Iiyama city. Koyama was awarded by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport as a “ Tourism Charisma,” for successfully

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2 Unit of regional municipality used in Japan. There are 43 prefectures together with Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hokkaido

3 Author searched the portal websites of all prefectures and Japan.
implemented green tourism measures by introducing experience programmes led by instructors and for inspiring other tourism sector. Koyama was one of the early people who were keen on exploring the possibilities of green tourism in Japanese rural areas (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport website). City of Iiyama experienced a continual increase of tourists thanks to the green tourism measures that take advantage of the rich natural resources. An accommodation facility, “Nabekura Kogen Mori no Ie” (Forest house of Nabekura Highlands) was developed in 1999 with the investment by City of Iiyama, and currently plays the role as the green tourism hub of the city. Ten cabins with cooking facility which can accommodate maximum of 10 persons were developed. The facility provides no meals therefore the gusts are to bring food and make own meals at the facility. The facility offers typical experience programmes which can be seen in many other similar farm inns and the so-called tourism base facilities throughout Japan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Programme details</th>
<th>Fee4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colouring with natural materials</td>
<td>Colour bandanas using the colouring matters of grass and flowers</td>
<td>1500 yen (approx. 9 EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket making</td>
<td>Collect vines in forest and make basket</td>
<td>2500 yen (approx. 15.6 EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wreath making</td>
<td>Collect vines in forest and make wreath</td>
<td>2500 yen (approx. 15.6 EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannoning</td>
<td>Canoe down the river with instruction</td>
<td>4000 yen (Approx. 25 EUR)(excluding equipment rental fees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soba (Japanese noodles) making</td>
<td>Experience making soba with instruction</td>
<td>2000 yen (approx. 12.5 EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft making</td>
<td>Make craftwork using various materials in the forest, such as acorns and twigs</td>
<td>800-2500 yen (approx. 5- 15.6 EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross country skiing</td>
<td>Explore the nature by cross country skiing with an instructor</td>
<td>2000 yen (12.5 EUR) for 1/2 day 4000 (25 EUR) for 1 day (excluding equipment rental fees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting crops</td>
<td>Harvest various crops of the season</td>
<td>500 yen (approx. 3 EUR) plus expense of the crop harvested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal making</td>
<td>Make charcoal using the large oven owned by the inn. The process takes minimum of 3 days.</td>
<td>30000 yen (approx. 187.5 EUR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nabekura Kogen Mori no Ie website

In addition to the activities mentioned in the table, the inn offers other programmes which require accompanying of an instructor, such as trekking, bird watching, and mushroom picking in forests. The characteristics of the experience programmes are that they are usually fee-based which are added to the sales of the inns. In principle, the programmes should be in line with the local culture

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4 Calculated at EUR=160 yen
and natural environment. For example, one of the reasons for the success of Iiyama city case is said to be its nature-based tourism programmes (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport website). However, not all farm inns, in particular of the small ones, are necessarily capable of providing instructions on how to explore the nature. In addition, some criticize that the contents of the programmes are much the same wherever they are provided (Yamazaki, 2005).

3.2.2 Demand for green tourism

Despite the various efforts by the national, regional and local governments to promote green tourism, the term “green tourism” seems to be not yet common among the public in Japan. A survey conducted by the Organization for Urban-Rural Interchange Revitalization shows approximately 70 percent of the respondents have never heard the term “green tourism.” 22.8 percent of them said they have heard of the term, however, that they are not certain about what it actually means. A meager 6.3 percent of the respondents said that they know well what green tourism is (Organization for Urban-Rural Interchange Revitalization, 2006). This survey result shows that the supplier of green tourism have not been very successful in bringing the message of green tourism.

However, another survey indicates a clear shift in preferences of travelers. The survey revealed that travelers nowadays have more individualistic and selective attitudes towards their leisure time. Such travelers tend to seek holiday destinations on their own according to their interests, which can be an important opportunity for the green tourism to be more recognized. According to the survey, people prefer to spend their holidays in the ways that conventional mass tourism cannot offer, that is, they prefer communicating with the locals of the places they visit, staying for an extended period of time and collecting information on their own.
Furthermore, a survey conducted by a Japanese think tank asking non-farmers in the Tokyo metropolitan area of their interest towards agricultural activities revealed this tendency. In 1992, 45.5 percent of the respondents said they would be interested in experiencing agricultural activities. In 2001, however, 63 percent of them said they would be interested, an increase by 17.5 points. Moreover, the survey questioned whether the respondents would be interested in interacting with the rural communities, 54 percent of them answered they would be interested. The figure increased by 14.5 points in 2001 displaying growing interests of city dwellers in lives of rural regions. (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery, 2001). Together with the travelers’ desire to reflect their preferences on the way they spend holidays, the tendency of strong interests towards agriculture suggest a great deal of potential of “new tourism,” such as green tourism to become a more major form of tourism.

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5 Survey asked whether to prefer A, more “alternative” choices of tourism, or B, more “conventional” choices of tourism. The survey shows the closer to the A, more “alternative” one’s attitude towards tourism.
4. Green tourism in Europe

The previous chapter attempted to outline the current state surrounding green tourism practices in Japan. This chapter reviews the practices of environmentally sound tourism currently implemented in Europe. European tourism represents the largest scale in terms of tourist arrivals and the economic effects. Tourism is the world’s largest sector in the service industry in the European Union (Committee of the Regions, 2006). It is therefore fair to speak of Europe as the most popular international tourist destination in the world. Europe received half a billion tourist arrivals in 2007, which is a half of the world’s tourist traffic (European Commission, 2008). In terms of the economic perspective, the European Union represents the largest share (35.2 percent) in the global tourism market (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2007). Tourism in Europe especially has immense impacts on the global environment due to its large scale. During the 1980s, concerns for the environmental deterioration by tourism development were first expressed in Europe due to the overdevelopment of ski resorts in the mountainous regions and the concentration of tourists in shore resorts in the Mediterranean regions (Yokoyama, 2006). During the early 1990s, the term sustainable development began to be used increasingly in the policy arena, and the concept gradually began to be incorporated into the tourism sector in the context of developing societies. Various national efforts were made mostly in the 1990s. For instance, Becker (1995) reports that “one of the earliest exponents (of national environmental efforts on tourism) was Switzerland which in 1979 instigated a special commission to consider tourism-environment relationships. This chapter aims to outline the strategies and measures implemented by the European Union which shape environmentally sound tourism practices.

4.1 Strategies to support sustainable tourism

Sustainable development concept has been the overarching objective of the European Union in any policy areas from its very beginning (European Commission, 2007). Article 2 of the Treaty of Maastricht specified that achieving sustainable development as one of the European Union’s objectives. However, currently at the European Union level, there is no overarching policy for sustainable tourism. This is due to the fact that tourism has the subsidiary nature under the Maastricht Treaty, which mentions that, tourism itself does not establish its own policy area, but is complementary to other large policy area such as economy and transport (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2006). However, tourism has a special meaning to the European society and making European tourism sustainable is viewed as extremely vital in the European Union. For example, the European Commission is highly aware of the importance of balancing between growth and sustainability of tourism, as its working group for sustainable tourism clearly states that “[m]aking tourism more sustainable will contribute significantly to the sustainability of European society. Creating the right balance between the welfare of tourists, host communities and the
environment, reducing conflict and recognizing mutual dependency, requires a special approach to the management of destinations” (European Commission, 2007).

The European Union’s comprehensive policy for achieving sustainable development is called the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which is a European response to Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference. It incorporates the three pillars of sustainable development: economic prosperity, social equity and cohesion, and environmental and cultural protection, placing an equal emphasis on the each pillar. Particularly, the Strategy identified eight key challenges:

- Climate change and clean energy
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Conservation and management of natural resources
- Public health
- Social inclusion
- Demography and migration
- Global poverty and sustainable development challenges

European Commission Tourism Sustainability Group, 2007

Clearly, tourism has important implications to almost all key challenges mentioned above because of the wide-ranging nature of tourism activities and its ever fast pace of growth. In particular, the Strategy emphasizes the importance of the recognition of “natural areas’ carrying capacity with regard to tourism development” (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2006). In 1995, the Council of Europe provided its own definition of sustainable tourism as “any form of tourism development or activity which respects the environment, ensures long term conservation of natural and cultural resources, is socially and economically acceptable and equitable” (Council of Europe, 1995). Moreover, European Commission defines sustainable tourism as “Tourism that is economically and social viable without detracting from the environment and local culture” (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2006). In response to the Sustainable Development Strategy, the European Commission’s Tourism Sustainability Group developed a comprehensive report on the necessary actions to be taken in order to realize sustainable tourism and suggests two sub-aims for each objective;

**Economic prosperity**

a. To ensure the long term competitiveness, viability and prosperity of tourism enterprises and destinations.

b. To provide quality employment opportunities, offering fair pay and conditions for all employees and avoiding all forms of discrimination.

**Social equity and cohesion**
a. To enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in its planning and management
b. To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, religion, disability or in other ways.

Environmental and cultural protection
a. To minimise pollution and degradation of the global and local environment and the use of scarce resources by tourism activities.
b. To maintain and strengthen cultural richness and biodiversity and contribute to their appreciation and conservation.

European Commission, Tourism Sustainability Group, 2007

Since such strategies clearly reflect the sustainable development principle, it is evident that each aim has an equal emphasis. In other words, one can state that for the European tourism, the environmental and cultural protection is as important as ensuring economic prosperity.

4.2 Financial instruments for rural tourism-LEADER Initiative

In addition to the high priority placed on the environmental aspect of tourism, it is noteworthy that the European Union has a strong financial instrument to support the sustainable development of rural tourism. LEADER (Liason Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale) Initiative, which is a part of Common Agricultural Policy, aims to assist revitalization of the disadvantaged rural areas by providing financial assistances, using the part of Structural Fund.

The development of this initiative took several steps. The first phase of the initiative, LEADER I, started in 1992, and its second phase, LEADER II, began in 1994 and ended in 1999. The subsequent scheme called LEADER+ was effective from 2000 to 2006. Although the details have been changed through the different phases of the scheme, the scheme provides assistance to three “Action” categories. In terms of LEADER+, such categories are 1) Support for integrated territorial development strategies of a pilot nature based on a bottom-up approach, 2) Support for cooperation between rural territories, and 3) Networking of rural territories. Moreover, the European Commission has determined the four priority themes for the projects: 1) making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites, 2) improving the quality of life in rural areas, 3) adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions, and 4) the use of new know-how and new technologies to make products and services in rural areas more competitive (European Commission, 2007).

With regards to the relation to tourism, in particular, LADER II raised tourism as its main eligible measure (European Commission, 1998). Nearly 40% of its budget was allocated to tourism related
projects during LEADER II phase (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2006). Its subsequent phase, LEADER+, did not explicitly mention tourism as eligible project, however, instead the scheme encourages the projects of “development and exploitation of the economic potential of cultural heritage,” which includes “development of sustainable forms of tourism” (European Commission, 2002). Action 1 represents more than 85% of the funding allocated, and this category includes the projects that promote local tourism (European Commission, 2007, Nishikawa, 2003). A substantial number of its best practices show the examples of successful rural tourism which take the care for the environment into consideration.

It is also important to note that one of the main approaches of the LEADER initiative is bottom-up approach in how to proceed the project. This approach ensures the local participation into the project which allows more a responsible role of the local stakeholders. For example, in Müllerhal, Luxembourg, trekking trails which take advantage of the areas’ heritage of mills were developed by the LEADER+ initiative. The development of the trails was realized as a result of careful consultations amongst all stakeholders, i.e. the representatives of the municipalities, tourism sector, and other local stakeholders including the residents (European Committees, 2007). The stakeholders came to a consensus that the mills were the local identity and the important cultural heritage, and the environmental conservation was the central element during the course of consultation. The bottom-up approach assisted the stakeholders work together therefore strengthening partnership.

More importantly, the LEADER funding does not necessarily cover the entire cost of the project, but a considerable portion of the project costs are borne by the local stakeholders. In the case of Müllerhal trekking development in Luxembourg, only 20 percent of the project cost was covered by the EU funding (European Committees, 2007). The fact that the EU does not finance the entire cost of the project is extremely vital to rural tourism development, since this allows the local stakeholder to have ownership over the project as well as its maintenance, thus helping make optimal choices for the local communities.

4.3 Green tourists and rural tourism in Europe

In recent years, the demands for spending one’s holiday in rural areas seem to be growing rapidly in Europe. For instance in Austria, there is a significant increase in the number of tourists who stayed in farm cottages since the 1990s (Embacher, 1994). Cavaco (1995) points out that this is due to the fact that people tend to divide their holidays into shorter periods of time; within this trend, weekend and other short term trips are becoming much more popular. He speaks of a real phenomenon: more and more Europeans live in urban areas, as such they are increasingly losing their contact with the countryside, thus strengthening their desire to be in the countryside. These ‘urban tourists’ tend to have a high level of education and a higher socio-economic status. Their reasons for going on
holiday are also different from the conventional “sun and beach” motives to more personalized and relaxing motives which enable them to recover from the stress of urban life. Traditionally, Europeans value rural areas highly, such as its landscape, culture, and life style. A report by European Commission clearly illustrates this point; in addition to the fact that Europeans live longer and remain active longer, they are “increasingly concerned about the environment,” and this attitude influences their choices for holiday destinations (European Commission, 2002). Bramwell (1994) refers to the remarks which a British cultural commentator made, “in the British literary tradition the countryside has frequently symbolized a lost ‘golden age,’ --- an age which supported an idyllic and readily identifiable ‘good life’.” Bramwell (1994) also points out that this sentiment towards the idyllic countryside is also evident in other countries.

In addition to the particular feeling of Europeans towards rural space, the general preferences of consumption are largely changing among European consumers. One can therefore argue that what Krippendorf contended in the 1980’s that there were critical tourists emerging in the society indeed has become an additional features of today’s extremely diversified preferences of tourist. Particularly in Germany, the consumers are becoming more and more concerned about the environmentally friendly factor of the goods and services they purchase. Likewise, this tendency is then again reflected in the choice of how to spend one’s holidays. One survey about tourists in Rheinland-Pfalz region in Germany shows that German tourists prefer environmentally friendly services although such services cost more. When asked the criteria which make them willing to spend more money on tourism, “environmentally friendly accommodation” was raised as number one, followed by “sound treatment of swage and waste.” In addition, when asked what they would emphasize when choosing a holiday destination, “unharmed nature,” “quietness,” and “cleanness (no litter)” were raised respectively (Yokoyama, 2006). Another study was conducted in the UK, which showed similar results. Miller (2003) quotes a survey result which was conducted in 1988 and 1996, pointing out that during this eight year period, there was “a doubling, from 14% to 28%, (…) in the percentage of respondents meeting what the research described as ‘environmental activist’ status, while the amount of green consumers’ rose from 19% to 36%.” Although this result reflects the tendency of consumers in general, it does suggest that the emphasis and interest in the environmental impacts when making a purchase has become prominent in these years. Furthermore, Miller conducted a survey among the participants of a travel fair in the UK. The survey revealed that most respondents were extremely keen on collecting information about the environment of holiday destinations, thus reflecting the fact that for many consumers, the environmental factors do play a key role in determining holiday destinations. These survey results display that people are starting to incorporate the attitude of critical consumerism into tourism. It could therefore be argued that these preferences represent the attitudes of green tourists. They seek holidays in rural areas in order to
have contacts with the rural surroundings, and simultaneously, the practice of such holidays needs to be environmentally sound.

4.4 Eco label
An important measure which reflects upon the diversified preference of European tourists is the European Eco label. Eco-labelling is an effective scheme to inform consumers that the services and products satisfy certain environmental criteria (Lee, 2001). The European Eco-label is a certificate scheme implemented at the European Union level for the tourism accommodation services that meet certain criteria for ensuring the environmental friendliness of tourist facilities and services. This is a scheme realized under the sustainable consumption policy, and this initiative aims to help consumers distinguish environmentally friendly products and services from the general products and services. Tourism accommodation and campsites are included as its twenty four product groups. The operation of both tourism accommodation facility and campsites can become a significant source of pollution. Particularly, it is known that, in contrast with the purposes of camping, camp sites have a significant impact on the water system of the surrounding areas, thus impacting the vegetation, for instance, “a great stain is placed on soil and on ground water by oil leaks and insufficient purification of swage” (Becker, 1995). Among the product groups, tourist accommodations and campsites represent the largest number of certificates awarded. Tourism accommodation facilities can apply for this certificate by fulfilling the mandatory ecological criteria and other optional criteria. One of the claims that the European Union makes to encourage the application is that the environmentally friendly operation of the business is in fact also profitable. The mandatory criteria include measures for water and electricity saving, waste reduction, and education of employees (see Fig. 5).

![Fig. 3 “The flower,” European Eco-label](image-url)
By having this certificate, the accommodation facility can display their committed awareness towards the care for the environment, which can be seen very positively by the tourists who have strong consciousness on the environmental issues. At the moment, 91 accommodation facilities and 22 campsites have been awarded the European Eco-label throughout the European Union, and new facilities are awarded every month (European Commission, 2007). This scheme displays that at a policy level, the European Union has a strong commitment for fostering sustainable tourism as well as a strong awareness towards the environmentally friendly accommodation businesses in Europe. It is undeniable that this scheme is a marketing tool for accommodation businesses, and its...
fundamental objective is to make profit more efficiently by speaking to the certain group of consumers. Nevertheless, the scheme reflects the high demands among European travelers for environmentally friendliness of an accommodation facility, and as such, it displays that there is a significant number of “green tourists” in Europe.
5. Critical comparison between Japan and Europe and critique for Japanese tourism practices

The previous chapters explored the current states of environmentally sound tourism practices and the various systems to support this form of tourism. This chapter aims to identify the chief differences between the practices engaged in both regions.

5.1 Analysis of the Japanese master plan for tourism
Chapter 3 showed that the Japanese government views tourism as one of the most important economic activities and is aiming to expand its tourism market. In order to realize this goal, green tourism is positioned as a vital new form of tourism which is to be explored intensively. Moreover, the master plan for tourism states that green tourism should be promoted in order to stimulate the interaction between rural and urban communities. By examining the master plan, one can observe the high expectations towards green tourism, and simultaneously, one can also interpret that the key aim of engaging in green tourism is to revitalize the depopulated rural areas; the master plan clearly states that it will promote the construction of “base facilities” in order to provide “meeting points” for tourists and local people (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2007).

The first chapter of the master plan defines the four overarching objectives to be achieved through the realization of sustainable tourism; 1) promotion of domestic tourism as well as expansion of foreign tourist arrivals, 2) realization of sustainable growth of tourism, paying particular attention to preservation of tourism resources and the environmental protection, 3) realization of a society where local residents can become proud of their local culture through tourism, and 4) enhancement of attractiveness of Japanese culture through tourism. In relation to green tourism, the second objective seems to give an impression that there will be various measures to minimize the environmental impact of tourism. On the contrary, the measures mentioned to address environmental impacts do not seem very inclusive since many of them are targeted to accommodate the growing environmental impacts by tourism rather than minimizing the impacts. For instance, “dissemination of the philosophy of environmental protection,” “development of swage treatment and recycling facilities,” “enhanced regulation of illegal dumping” are raised as measures to address environmental impact of tourism (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2007). Warken et al point out that there are two major means to promote more environmentally sound tourism practices of tourism.

1) [T]he incorporation of principles of sustainable development into relevant planning, policy and regulatory frameworks at almost all levels of the industry, ranging from international tourism organizations to stakeholders concerned with the management of local tourist destinations, and 2) [T]he establishment of a range of tourist industry self administered accreditation and award schemes concerned with monitoring and rewarding sustainable tourism management achievements.
Achievements made in connection with such schemes are often acknowledged by conferring an industry-specific ecolabel award (Warnken, et al, 2005).

However, it seems that neither measure has been implemented in Japan. The measures raised in the master plan are insufficient to tackle the fundamental aspects of tourism that can be harmful to the environment. Moreover, the term “sustainable growth of tourism” suggests the idea of sustaining the tourism sector as a steady business. It can therefore be argued that the term “sustainable” used in the master plan entails sustaining tourism as a form of business as well as establishing its position within the tourism industry. This intension is somewhat different from the way “sustainability” is used in the European context.

This difference in the interpretation of “sustainability” between Japan and Europe could be due to the fact that whether the so-called sustainable development concept is well incorporated into policy making. At present in Japan, the sustainable development principles are not yet entirely incorporated into the national policy arena. The term “sustainable development” does not appear in any policy documents, except that it is mentioned as one of the purposes of foreign development aids such as environmental protection projects in development countries. In response to the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, the Japanese government established a new law and produced a ten-year basic plan to realize “recyclable society” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). The term “recyclable society” implies a society that fully mobilizes the recycling system of energy, water, and other resources, and the basic plan focuses upon a vision to realize such society, namely by establishing a social system to allow recycling more easily and developing recycling plants throughout Japan (Ministry of Environment, 2003). Although it is not formally called such a way, one can argue that this plan could be viewed as the Japanese version of Agenda 21, since it was produced in response to the Johannesburg summit. However, the Japanese basic plan only focuses upon the environmental aspect although the concept of sustainable development should involve three vital arenas: economic, environmental, and socio-cultural, the only area that the Japanese government is currently able to incorporate is the environmental arena by introducing a framework to promote recycling. Or one can say, for Japanese policies, the links among the three pillars of Sustainable Development and the various policy arenas have not yet been established. It is true that the Japanese government is putting much emphasis on the environmental issues, namely, setting up concrete actions for preventing global warming, the concept of the Sustainable Development does not seem to be incorporated as an overarching concept in addressing global issues.
5.2 Conditions and environment for holidays

The working conditions that allow workers to go on holidays without feeling constraint are important prerequisite for promoting green tourism. There seems to be significant differences in the conditions for the public to taking holidays and how they would spend holidays in Japan and Europe. Such differences can be important implications of tourism practices and the reasons for the public to engage in green tourism.

In general, the Japanese tend to have fewer holidays than Europeans. Some statistics show that the Japanese have significantly fewer paid holidays compared to the workers in European countries, namely, Germany, France, and the UK. In 2006, on average the Japanese workers had 8.3 paid holidays whereas the German workers had 29.1 days, 25 days for the French and 24.5 days for British workers\(^6\) (The Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training, 2008). The low standard of paid holidays in Japan is due to the fact that the Japanese workers only use the part of the holidays they are provided. In 2007, the ratio was only 47.1%. In other words, although the Japanese workers were given 17.9 days of holidays a year, they only used less than half of it: 8.4 days. Statistics show that this ratio is prone to decline in the past decade. More problematically, it is suggested that many Japanese workers use their paid holiday as sick leave, which contradicts its original meaning of holidays, namely, being away from work for recreation (Okamoto, 2001).

Moreover, it has been pointed out that it is difficult to compare the actual number of holidays that workers are given and are actually using in each country. In Japan, the ratio of number of holidays that workers actually used is recorded in statistics, however, such statistic do not exit in European countries, since it is a norm among European societies to use all holidays that the workers are entitled to. (Jiyuu jikan design kyoukai, 2002). In addition, the Japanese labor laws have not ratified the ILO C132 Holiday With Pay Convention, which provides that holiday with pay be minimum of 3 weeks and sickness and injury may not be counted towards the annual holiday (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2007). It is true that Japan has more national holidays than other developed countries, however, national holidays are the major causes for the excessive demands for tourism accommodations and congestion in transport systems. It could therefore be argued that the fact that there are more national holidays does not necessarily create favorable conditions for travelling.

\(^6\) 2004 figure
Furthermore, the difference in the number of holidays can also be the difference in the length of trips that one can make. On average in the 25 European Union member states, Europeans made 2.1 trips lasting 4 nights or more. Furthermore, 85.3% of European tourists made trips of 4 to 14 nights in 2004 (EuroStat, 2006). In Japan, the number of nights that one spends per one trip is significantly lower. In 2006, the Japanese spent an average of 2.77 nights per one trip. The average number of trips made was only 1.73 (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, 2007). Furthermore, this figure has not improved for nearly 3 decades (Okamoto, 2001). The conditions for taking holidays depend heavily upon the culture and customs, however, the current situation in Japan seems to leave much room for improvement. Green tourism in Japan advocates a relaxing way to spend one’s holiday in a rural village, emphasizing that it should be an “extended stay.” However, this vision does not match with the reality of holiday situation of the Japanese. Without improving this situation, it would not be possible to realize and disseminate green tourism in Japan.

5.3 Existence of quality control scheme
Chapter 4 discussed that in Europe, a comprehensive quality control scheme such as Eco labeling plays an important role in ensuring that the services provided are in line with the idea of sustainable tourism. However, at the moment, there is no similar scheme in Japan to ensure the quality level of tourism products. Currently in Japan, green tourism practices are centered on the provision of various “experience programs.” However, it seems that the aims of such programs vary. Some of them seem to be purely intended to provide an opportunity to learn or experience the “countryside” for those visitors coming from large cities, and some of them seem to be merely of business interests. For example, many municipalities introduce outdoor sports activities such as paragliding.
and canoeing as one of green tourism activities. Such activities are indeed meant to enjoy the nature, however, since these programs are usually provided by private companies and instructors taking advantage of the geographical features of the area, it is difficult to make a connection with the local cultures. Furthermore, very frequently fruits harvesting is introduced as a green tourism activity. Typically, these harvesting activities are provided by the “tourist farms,” which are certain type of farms meant for visitors and visitors are required to purchase the crops they harvest. In other words, such “tourist farms” are business establishments which seek profits, thus they are rather indifferent in whether the visitors can have “green tourism experience” or not. In addition, it is difficult to say whether such experience programs offered by private businesses provides an opportunity for the tourists to interact with the local population.

As these examples suggest, there are no clear criteria for what constitutes a green tourism experience program, and this leads to the suspicion that green tourism is used as an umbrella term for promoting various tourism activities in rural areas. Green tourism, therefore, seems to be believed as an equivalent to those experience programs that have unclear purposes. This dubious division could interfere with the “original” meaning of green tourism, namely the emphasis should be placed on the care for the environment.

5.4 Pro-development approach in green tourism: Issue of “base facilities”
Another problem with the Japanese green tourism practices concerns the various “base facilities” constructed throughout Japan. There is no clear definition of what a “base facility” actually is or any statistics that shows how many “base facilities” currently exist in Japan. However, usually, “base facilities” are modern, multi-purpose complexes in rural areas which are developed under the collaboration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery and the Ministry of Land, infrastructure, and Transport. In general, its purposes are to assist the revitalization of rural districts, where population is ageing rapidly and depopulation is progressing, by providing a platform (a physical establishment) for the rural and urban communities to interact each other. Such facilities play a role in becoming a venue for various events for interactions between city and rural populations, selling local products, and providing tourist information. They can also have more extensive functionalities such as accommodation, public baths, and restaurants. These facilities are developed mainly in depopulated regions as a “remedy” to revitalize the depressed economy. Moreover, the local and regional authorities are keen on having such facilities in their community because they also serve an important function in green tourism as an “information center” of green tourism of the region. Tourist can search for information on what kinds of activities are offered in the region at the base facilities. From the tourist point of view, such facilities could be quite convenient and helpful.
However, it is reported that numerous such base facilities experience severe deficit. Usually, these facilities are operated by a management body which is invested by a local, regional, or national government (public sector) and a private entity. In Japan, this form of management is called “the third sector,” implying that it is a combination of the public (the first sector) and private sector (the second sector). This management style is often inefficient, because it is unclear who bears responsibility when a financial problem occurs. Moreover, this form of management often lacks transparency, that monitoring mechanism of its financial management is weak or non-existent (Akai, 2003). In 2001, the tourism sector in Japan had the second largest number of “third sector” entities with deficit balance, which includes the entities that manage “base facilities” (Akai, 2003). The reasons for the deficit could be that there is a lack of users of such facilities, although its maintenance costs are high. It could also be possible that there are too many of such facilities with similar services in the depopulated communities, where a small scale of tourist arrival is experienced.

Yet, the basic plan for tourism promotion, a recent comprehensive plan by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport for the promotion of tourism in Japan, clearly states that it will further promote the development of base facilities as a means to encourage green tourism (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, 2007). However, the management of base facilities is problematic and more importantly, the development of such facilities causes the environmental distraction to certain degrees. It is therefore extremely questionable whether we truly need such facilities in order to engage in green tourism.

5.5 Operation and management of green tourism by supplier
In addition to the issue of the belief that further physical development is needed for green tourism, there is also an issue of the lack of care for the environment with the actual practice of green tourism. This is an extremely crucial aspect of the green tourism practice in Japan today. The idea of care for the environment does not seem to be incorporated in the three elements of green tourism in Japan: various experience programs, farm inns, and interactions between rural and urban communities. For example, most farm inns and other accommodation facilities attached to the “base facilities,” in which tourist are encouraged to stay in order to experience green tourism, are merely inexpensive accommodations, because their operation do not particularly take the environmental impacts into consideration. Although some facilities do try to take the impacts of their business on the environment into consideration by using local products and recycling on an individual basis, an institutional system for organizing and appealing such practices to consumers is non existent in Japan. We therefore do not know if the accommodation facilities introduced in various green tourism information sources are operated in the way that they care for the environment, for instance utilizing the water saving faucets and reducing the detergent use.
It could be argued that this deficit is due to the fact that the crucial aspect of green tourism: the care for the environment, is not understood well amongst those of supply side of green tourism. In Japan, one can notice that green tourism is simply expected to trigger the revitalization of regional economy, bringing lively atmosphere in the depopulated regions. The Japanese municipal governments have traditionally inclined to implement public projects, that is, construction of new buildings, in order to stimulate the local economy by providing projects to the local construction companies. It seems that since the supply side of green tourism does not understand the concept well, the municipal governments are still following the development driven approach for implementing green tourism.

In short, the current practices of green tourism in Japan do not place enough emphasis on the care for the environment. The current practices even show an aspect that suggests green tourism is used as a justification for additional construction projects. It could be argued that the current state of green tourism in Japan contradicts the philosophy of green tourism. Because of the ageing population rapidly taking place in everywhere in Japan, it is difficult to expect green tourism to be a remedy for regional revitalization. The suppliers of green tourism need to wean themselves from the conventional development driven approach. Green tourism in Japan first needs be redefined meanwhile the related measures need to be improved.
6. Lessons for Japan

The previous chapter showed that in Europe, there is a certain group of travelers who are keen on spending one’s holidays in an environmentally sound manner and that there are various measures to support these trends. The trend of environmentally sound tourism affects the policy system and vice versa. In other words, the system to support environmentally sound tourism is rather progressive in Europe, at least more than in Japan. Although there are a range of social, political, and cultural differences exist in the two regions, the previous chapters have also showed that there is much to be gained from the European experiences for Japan. In order to establish a framework to improve the problems surrounding green tourism practices in Japan, this chapter provides a set of recommendations for the supplier as well as the travelers of green tourism in order to improve the practices in Japan.

6.1 Incorporation of sustainable tourism concept into tourism policy – a balanced combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches

As Chapter 3 discussed, the current practices of green tourism in Japan are largely government driven. Such practices are common in Japan, in which the national government draws up certain goals and the municipal governments set up actions accordingly. Green tourism in Japan have evolved in this manner, dating back in 1992 when the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries came up with the definition of green tourism and launched its promotion. The national government driven approach showed certain advantages, namely, the certainty and the rapid speed in spreading the name of green tourism in almost all municipalities; currently almost all municipalities engage in green tourism in some ways according to the definition created by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries\(^7\). In order to improve the green tourism practices in Japan, we should first address the top management body of green tourism making taking advantage in the strong top-down approach that the Japanese governance is used to taking. However, it is not sufficient to bring about vital changes only by changing the way national initiatives due to the nature of green tourism where local municipalities play vital roles in its practices; local players must have voices in the decision making of green tourism. European Union’s LEADER initiatives are successful largely because of its local participation. Lafferty argues that the need for both top-down and bottom up approaches in realizing sustainable development programmes, “[d]istinctions between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ and ‘old’/’new’ fade into this view (ideally) into a repertoire of pragmatically adjusted strategies and instruments. The ‘mix’ of mechanisms and instruments to be employed in any one programme will be directly dependent on the nature and goals of the programme, depending on the nature of the change that is trying to be achieved” (Lafferty, 2004). In

\(^7\) Information obtained by Internet search by the author.
this way, both top-down and bottom-up approaches should be taken simultaneously and the balance between these approaches are vital.

6.1.1 Top-down approach
Unlike the European Union, the principle of sustainable development does not play the central role for the Japanese government at the moment. Although Japan has produced Agenda 21 action plan in response to the Rio Conference in 1992, the plan did not emphasize the actions to be taken within Japan, except for the actions concerning environmental issues, namely, promotion of renewable energy and recycling. Instead, the plan stressed that as actions for economic and social arena of sustainable development, that is, for humanitarian assistance for developing countries, Japan would collaborate with the international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme to help ensure sustainable development of developing countries by providing financial and technical assistances (Ministry of Environment, 2000). In other words, the Japanese government is not keen on realizing sustainable development within Japan. Therefore, one can argue that the understanding thus the standpoint of the Japanese government towards its sustainable development programme is somewhat different than that of European Union’s.

Since it has been more than 15 years since the plan was produced, it should be updated incorporating the three pillars of sustainable development, which should then draw up the actions to be taken in the national policy. Within the three-pillar framework of sustainable development, actions for tourism sector should also be established, which should lead to the change in objectives of promoting tourism from tourism as a vital instrument for ensuring economic growth to tourism as an instrument to ensure sustainable development of the Japanese society. This should then result in the revision in the Basic Law for tourism promotion in order to enhance the importance of green tourism, thus improving the subsequent master plan. The current five-year-master plan, addresses green tourism as a new niche which should be further developed, by creating a platform between urban and rural residents (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2007). In the next master plan, the positioning and the meaning of green tourism need to be upgraded to the principle form of rural tourism. Accordingly, there should be a separate set of strategies which takes into account the sustainability issues. The strategies should involve all the stakeholders without prepossessing their political roles, thus encouraging synergy and cooperation among them.

Incorporation of sustainable development into tourism policy then should challenge the current definition of green tourism in Japan as “a form of tourism of extended-stay in beautiful farm and fishing villages to enjoy their nature, environment, scenery, lifestyles, culture, and interactions with the locals” to the one which puts emphasis on the care for the environment. Improved definition should therefore look like: “a form of environmentally sound rural tourism in which tourists enjoy
the contact with nature and local culture.” The new definition should then lead to changes in the purposes and practices of various green tourism measures.

6.1.2 Bottom-up approach
Simultaneously, a more bottom-up approach in sustainable tourism should be realized in addition to the “traditional” top-down, national government driven approach. This can be one of the causes that the green tourism programmes offered by the municipal governments lack of individuality thus making them less attractive to tourists. Therefore, local authorities should be encouraged to produce their own Local Action 21 for tourism. Local Action 21 is the concept proposed by International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) as a result of Rio Earth Summit, in which local governments should establish action plans in accordance with sustainable development principle. The feature of Local Action 21 is that it calls for the multi-sector and participatory approach in preparing this action plans (www.icrei.org). In other words, it is truly a bottom-up process that allows consultations amongst all stakeholders. Since Local Action 21 can be established for a specific industry for the purpose of realizing its sustainability, Local Action 21 can be an important process and tool for realizing improvement in green tourism practices in Japan (http://www.gef.or.jp/LA21/). The preparation of Local Action 21 for tourism should be a valuable opportunities to initiate dialogues amongst the stakeholders, since such opportunities are usually rare in policy-making process in Japan. Local Action 21 process should allow the tailor-made green tourism strategies that reflect upon the local cultures and preferences. Once the action plans are drawn up, the monitoring should be implemented to ensure the progress.

Speaking of top-down approach that is very particular to the Japanese policy practice, Yamazaki argues that the problems surrounding sustainable rural tourism in Japan are due to the fact that although concepts of green tourism is “imported” from Europe, its practices are modified “without understanding properly their purposes and totalities. This shows the limitations of the Japanese ways of promoting new initiative which are heavily top-down mechanism which is truly the ‘Japanese’ way ” (Yamazaki, 2005). In this way, the strong top-down approach currently taken in Japan should to be improved by introducing Local Agenda 21. Local Agenda 21 for tourism can play the role in guiding the local authorities into sustainable manner of tourism in their communities.

6.2 Developing better conditions for taking holidays
Chapter 5 illustrated that in Japan, many workers do not use up all the holidays that they are entitled, thus making the number of holidays very low compared to the European countries. The fact that the Japanese workers have very few holidays can be a significant obstacle to the dissemination of green tourism, which advocates relaxing extended holidays in country sides. It is therefore crucial to
develop a system to encourage using up all paid holidays of the Japanese workers in order to establish favorable conditions for green tourism.

It has been suggested that there are two dominant factors that prevent the workers from taking holidays; the lack of substituting staff during holidays, and too much work load that does not allow the workers to leave from work (Jiyuu Jikan Design Kyokai, 2002). These reasons suggest the lack of understanding and tolerance amongst Japanese workplaces towards taking holidays. To stretch this point, one can say that there is atmosphere that can make the workers feel guilty about leaving their work for holiday, and the management sides of the businesses do not necessarily problematize this aspect.

In addition to the difficult situations in the workplaces, the schools in Japan also pose problems in terms of timing of holidays. Although Japan is a narrow shaped country with distinct climate variations according to regions, the calendar of Japanese schools is more or less uniform. For instance, the summer vacations of public schools begin on 21st of July and end on 31st of August with few exceptions in certain cold regions (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2002). In addition to the fixed scheduling of school children, most school children in Japan are involved in activities such as clam schools and sport teams during the summer vacation. Because of this, when families go on traveling, parents need to accommodate the schedule of their children, which may limit the duration and planning of the holiday.

In order to help the Japanese workers engage in more holidays, a comprehensive system to make them use up all the entitled paid holidays. In other words, a 100 percent “acquisition rate” of entitled holidays should be made as a requirement to all workplaces in Japan thus making it a norm to use all holidays. Moreover, at least one of the holidays needs to be successive in order to help the public engage in longer holidays. The use of substitute workers, namely, temp workers, to fill the absence of an employee should be promoted for non-management type works. For management works, effective planning and such plans should be shared amongst all employees in order to avoid overlapping of holidays. Furthermore, companies that have introduced effective holiday schemes and the entire employees have successfully achieved a 100 percent “acquisition rate” should be promoted as a good practice by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare in order to provide inspirations to similar workplaces. Simultaneously, bad practices of holiday system should also be disseminated in order to prompt awareness and changes in unfavorable practice of paid holidays.

Moreover, the uniform scheduling of school holidays should be addressed. In particular, longer holidays such as summer holidays should reflect the regional circumstances by more flexible holiday schedules. For instance, in northern and mountainous regions, summer holidays need not be as long
as 40 days. Instead, winter holiday could be longer than “standard” winter holidays, and the possibility of introducing fall holiday could be considered. In Germany, school holidays are scheduled differently according to the region and the schedule changes every year. Parents plan their holidays in the beginning of the year accommodating the school holiday. This system plays an important role in decentralizing the holiday demands (Jiyuu jikan design kyokai, 2002). In this way, a more flexible school holiday system should be introduced not only to help parents take more and longer holidays but also to decentralize the holiday demands. In the meantime, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare should work towards the ratification of the ILO C132 Holiday With Pay Convention, which was discussed in the previous chapter, in order to promote the longer holidays. Since the Convention states, “one of the parts shall consist of at least two uninterrupted working weeks,” the ratification of the Convention would realize the aim of extended holidays (International Labour Organization http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm, The Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, 2004) .

Improvement of working conditions of Japanese workplaces would significantly change the circumstances for green tourism and should help disseminate this form of tourism among the Japanese public.

6.3 Rethinking the purposes and contents of experience programs
Experience programs are the core feature of green tourism in Japan, and they generate significant revenues are necessary to the regional economy. Once the concept of sustainable tourism has been incorporated as a workable framework, the main purpose of green tourism experience programs should put an emphasis on the care for the environment. In addition, currently there is a lack of connection with the local culture and industry in the purposes and contents of experience programs. This aspect also needs to be improved by a thorough reconsideration of the purposes and contents of experience programs. Since most regional governments have exclusive divisions for green tourism, such divisions can take the initiative in implementing changes.

The green tourism divisions in the regional governments should first establish guidelines for what constitutes a green tourism experience program. Such guidelines may have a wide range of variety depending upon the regional culture. However, the core feature of such guidelines should be centered on whether the program incorporates any measures to help protect the environment, and whether such program provides authentic experiences of local culture and industry to the visitors. This prevents the programs which are unrelated to the local culture and the protection of the environment to be included as a green tourism program. Secondly, the guidelines should state clearly that the operation of programs needs to implement measures to protect the environment, namely,
prevention of unnecessary energy use, encouragement of recycling, use of environmentally friendly products, and protection of biodiversity of the local natural environment. Therefore, any program that does not meet this requirement should not be considered as a green tourism program, and as such, should not be promoted by the public bodies such as regional tourism agency.

When the experience programs are selected upon the guidelines, the regional green tourism offices can advertise the selected programs as green tourism programs through its website and brochures. It should be made clear to the viewer of the advertisement that the advertised programs have fulfilled certain requirements to incorporate environmentally friendliness. This should help the tourists to understand that by participating in such programs, they can contribute to the preservation of the environment and thus can be considered as true “green tourists.”

Furthermore, the various green tourism accommodation facilities should have standardized operation schemes which lay emphasis on the care for the environment. In order to ensure this, there should be additional criteria for registering as an “experience inn” with the Organization for Urban-Rural Interchange Revitalization. The new criteria should determine whether the facility has implemented measure to reduce the amount of waste, energy and water consumption, and staff education and communication to the guests of their efforts. The facilities’ considerations towards reducing the CO2 emission are certainly important factors. The scheme to quantify the amount of CO2 generated from accommodation facilities could also be established in order to set out concrete benchmarks. Accommodation facilities can set up own goals of CO2 reduction according to the benchmark. Simultaneously, the Organization for Urban-Rural Interchange Revitalization should communicate to the users of its services that it only introduces those inns which fulfills a variety of environmental requirements. Regular inspection by the Organization to check if a facility implements the measures is also vital. A well-working example of this is the European Eco-labeling scheme discussed in chapter 4 which provides a quality-safety standard with the setting of practical environmental requirements.

6.4 Introduction of awareness programs
In Europe, it appears that the existence of critical consumers and their critical attitudes towards tourism led to an advanced development of environmentally sound tourism. In other words, when considering the strong presence of critical travelers, one can state that the development of environmentally sound tourism took a bottom-up approach. However, since the link between critical consumption and tourism is not yet well established in Japan compared to Europe, there should be a somewhat top down approach to bring about changes in the attitudes of tourists as well as the providers of green tourism.
It is now revealed that the Japanese public is not well aware of the purposes of green tourism under the “old” definition. This should be viewed as a positive opportunity to raise awareness of the true meaning of green tourism when it is redefined with the incorporation of the sustainable tourism concept. In order to establish this, various awareness programs to help develop green tourists should be introduced. One way to do this is to enhance environmental education in the different school curricula, thereby emphasizing the environmental impacts of tourism sector. Since Japanese schools are active in engaging in school trips, a green tourism experience should be used as an advantage for providing the young people an opportunity to have hands-on experiences of environmentally sound tourism and to learn its importance. In doing so, green tourism school trips should not limit to merely experiencing farm life but include an opportunity to learn the various efforts being done to help minimize the adverse effects on the environment.

For the older population, the use of media and the Internet is effective to disseminate the purposes of green tourism. Nowadays, in general, there is a growing awareness towards environmental issues in Japan. A survey conducted for consumers in 1998 and 2001 showed a consistent and high level of interests towards environmental issues\(^8\) (Denstu Inc., 2002). In addition to this fact, a number of tourism expressed aversive attitudes towards conventional mass tourism as discussed in chapter 3. The provider of green tourism should make efforts in appealing to this specific group of tourists who are seeking different experiences than mass-tourism about the advantages of green tourism, that is, a form of tourism in which tourists can experience a close connection with the local culture and as such, can contribute to the environmental protection simultaneously.

Equally important is the dissemination of green tourism purposes to the supplier of green tourism, namely, the regional and local governments, various tourism facility owners, and owners of experience farm inns and other accommodation facilities. There should be seminars for these stakeholders to learn about the background of green tourism and how they can fully incorporate the environmentally friendliness into their businesses. Green tourism divisions of regional and local government can take initiative to host such seminars.

6.5 Reexamination of the needs for additional development of tourism facility

Under the new definition of green tourism, the physical development of tourism facility including base facilities discussed in chapter 3 should be kept at a minimum. The central elements to support green tourism should be the various “soft” measures to realize environmentally soundness, such as ensuring the protection of biodiversity in surrounding areas, encouragement recycling and waste reduction, and various education programs for stakeholders. Should a facility is needed in order to provide venues for interactions between local population and visitors, the existing facilities such as 8 Survey showed 87% of respondents said they are interested in environmental issues in 1998 and 84% in 2001.
community centers and closed school buildings should be taken advantage. Since the construction oriented approach is very particular to the Japanese tourism development practices, it is difficult to make comparison with the practices in Europe. Nevertheless, once it is made clear that green tourism is a form of environmentally sound tourism, as believed in Europe, development oriented approach needs to change consequently. Intrinsically, green tourism should not require further physical development, since it should allow travelers to enjoy their holiday in the intact nature of rural areas. Green tourism, therefore, should not cause alterations of the rural landscape. If there is budget available to construct additional buildings, it should be spent on enhancing “soft” measures.
7. Conclusion

This study attempted to provide an overall survey of the various mechanisms and policies for environmentally sound tourism (green tourism) within Europe and Japan. The implications of green tourism are quite different in these regions. It is argued that the most significant difference exists in the motivations for engaging in green tourism. While in Europe, green tourism is engaged and promoted due to the changing preferences of tourists who tend to seek environmentally friendliness in tourism and therefore its policies largely incorporate the concept of sustainable development, in Japan, its motivation for engaging green tourism seems more of purely economic nature in order to revitalize the regional economy. Nevertheless, even in Europe it is certainly true that one of the major motives for engaging in green tourism was initially to assist the farmers, who were losing the revenues due to the changing industrial structures, thereby helping them to revitalize the regional economy. However, this aspect has somewhat changed due to the new preferences of tourists of favoring spending one’s holiday in unharmed nature, thus having contact with the local culture and people. Embacher (1994) argues that the image of staying in farms as the least expensive way to spend one’s holiday is no longer valid, because the tourists would pay more money to have irreplaceable experience of having contact with the nature in country sides.

Economic growth could be one of the expectations behind engaging in green tourism, however, it should not be the main objective for doing so. Ultimately, green tourism should not require new developments and even if it does, such development should be as modest as possible. Green tourism being practiced in large parts of Japan is merely a type of rural tourism which is aimed at revitalizing the regional economy and does not incorporate the original intentions of green tourism. The ultimate counterargument for this criticism could be that since green tourism is defined and practiced in its own way in Japan, its definition does not necessarily have to be in line with that of in Europe. However, nowadays, the environmental impacts of tourism sector should not be neglected. The inclusion of sustainable development principles into tourism policy as done in most European countries is essential in addressing this issue, and green tourism can play a vital role as an environmentally sound practice of rural tourism. In line with this argument, Yamazaki claims that “[w]hat Japan now needs to do is to learn European good practices, under the name of ‘Japanese style green tourism,’ in their totalities with the promotional philosophies and means as integral parts of the whole practice.”

Although researched extensively, this study poses a number of limitations. Perhaps the most significant limitation concerns with the reasons for the difference in political approaches that are favored in Japan and Europe; while bottom-up approach is favored and widely practiced in Europe, it is not so in Japan. In addition, the identification of the optimal balance of top-down and bottom-
up approaches would further enrich this study. Another aspect that was not addressed in this study is that whether it is appropriate to expect green tourism to prompt revitalization of depopulated farm villages in Japan. It seems that while the political priority of green tourism is quite high in Japan, it does not seem to be the case in Europe. In other words, European green tourism is still a niche tourism whose political significance is not as great as that of in Japan. Or it might be possible that form of tourism such as green tourism is already extremely pervasive in Europe that it is no longer perceived as a special practice. Detailed research on this aspect would also be vital.

Taking above limitations into consideration, further study is necessary. The shortcomings of European experiences should also be examined. For example, there are a number of similar schemes to European Eco-labeling which are implemented at national and regional levels. This can cause confusion amongst consumers, therefore the integration of such schemes should be considered. Even so, it is of the utmost importance for the current state of Japanese green tourism to take the first step to approach the European practices by incorporating the sustainable development concept into its tourism industry. In doing so, the providers of green tourism should acknowledge the purpose of green tourism: an environmentally sound rural tourism.
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