

Japanese consumption practices of tourism

An exploratory study of the “hows” and “whys” of Japanese tourists’ consumption of tourism and nature-based tourism

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Preface

This thesis is written as a part of the Master of Science (MSc) in Economics and Business Administration. It marks the end of my five-year study at the Faculty of Biosciences, Fisheries and Economics by the University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Nina Katrine Prebensen at the Tromsø University Business School, not only for her academic expertise, support and advice, but also for establishing an informal and comfortable atmosphere around this project. Her enthusiasm combined with our common interest in the subject of study has undoubtedly given me the spirit and motivation needed in order to accomplish this task.

I would also like to thank my family for astonishing support throughout my entire period as a student. No matter the pathway I choose, they always give their approval. Thank you. Also deserving gratitude are my fellow students throughout the years, it has been a pleasure to work together and learn from each other. A special thanks to my closest study companions throughout these years, David, Louise, Silje and Sjur.

I wish to thank all the respondents participating in this study. By giving me insights in your lives, you have not only provided the foundation for this study, but also granted me valuable knowledge that I can put into use in the future as well. A special thanks to Aiko for the most cherished support, and for guiding me through the maze that the Japanese society can appear through the eyes of an outsider.

The writing of this thesis, although tough at times, has proven to become a great experience. I have gathered a better understanding of how to conduct research, but also priceless knowledge about the industry in which I hope to be a part of in the future, namely international tourism. The journey has just begun!

Tromsø, November 2014

Christoffer Wanga Krag

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore Japanese consumption practices of tourism asking *how* and *why* Japanese tourists consume tourism. Additionally, the study attempts to explore the relation that the Japanese have towards nature, at the same time as it explores the possibility that there are some exclusive reasons as to why they wish to visit nature in a tourism context. In relation to this, there is a special focus on Norway as a provider of nature-based tourism, which include spectacular phenomena such as the northern lights and the midnight sun. The theoretical framework will be Holt's (1995) 'Four Metaphors for Consuming' as well as theories relating to the characteristic nature of the Japanese.

Using this framework as a backdrop, a qualitative research method and an exploratory design was chosen. Seven semi-structured individual depth interviews and one focus group were set up, resulting in a total sample of ten participants. The focus group and the interviews were conducted in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan.

Results from the study revealed both similarities and dissimilarities with the theory. As anticipated, the research indicated that the Japanese are highly concerned about safety, learning and comfort when travelling. Their spiritual relation to nature and the occurrence of serene emotions when being surrounded by nature was also expected. On the other hand, there were little to no indications of the Japanese being particularly concerned with their self-image. As opposed to the theory, the meanings behind purchasing Omiyage (souvenirs) and vigorously taking and sharing photos when travelling, seemingly had nothing to do with the desire to portray or differentiate themselves in relations to others. Furthermore, although the Japanese have a distinctive image of preferring group travelling, the participants of this particular study instead exclusively favoured independent travelling.

As such, the present study perhaps unveils the profile of the modern Japanese traveller. A traveller who pursues interpersonal communication, who is highly competent in foreign languages, and who values the freedom of choice.

Keywords: Tourism, Japanese, travelling, four metaphors for consuming, depth-interviews, nature-based tourism

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1. Introduction

“American husbands kiss their wives in public and beat them in private; Japanese husbands beat theirs in public and kiss them in private.” This is a quote supposedly from a “witty youth” found in Mr. Inazō Nitobe’s book published in year 1900 titled *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Targeting Westerners by being written in English, the book served as one of the first major works concerning samurai ethics and Japanese culture. In contrast to the time period during which Mr. Nitobe wrote his book, in today’s global society one can easily enlighten oneself about foreign cultures by browsing the internet, watching TV, reading an array of articles and books, or even stepping outside and talk face to face to a person coming from the target culture. These are privileges one could only dream about previously. One might think that in today’s world of borderless knowledge, understanding others would be an uncomplicated task. However, researchers are constantly attempting to solve the mysteries of foreign countries.

Within marketing, studying culture as well as other macro-environmental influences such as politics, economics or religious beliefs are essential if one wishes to understand how to conduct effective marketing in the given market (Soares et al. 2007). Furthermore, it is wise to look into traditions, customs and values of the foreign market when creating a strategy. In certain cases, managers assume that people in the host country view things in the same matter as those in the home market, resulting in marketing decisions turning out wrong (Dalgic 1996). In worst case scenarios, failing to understand can possibly result in business disasters, and years might pass before the blunder is noticed (see Dalgic 1996 for numerous amusing examples).

Tourism is an industry dealing with a great deal of foreign nationals, making it even more important to pay attention to dissimilarities. Compared to other branches of economic activity, the holiday/vacation normally consists of a large number of different services (Weiermair 2000). This means that there is a whole range of fields an arranger of tourism has to scrutinize in order to provide the best experience to the tourists. “How would for instance a visitor from Germany, Saudi-Arabia, China or Japan perceive our services?”; “What is important for them when

travelling?”; “What do they expect?” these are questions of great relevance when attempting to provide tourism services.

This thesis will address such question in the context of Japanese and their opinions about travelling. In addition, their thoughts and opinions about nature and travelling to nature will be explored, using the context of Norway as a (nature) tourism destination as a mini-case. By the use of depth interviews and one focus group, the thesis aims to gain a greater understanding of how the Japanese consume travelling in general as well as their evaluation of visiting nature. Using Holt’s (1995) extended typology “Metaphors for Consuming” [figure 2], this study attempts to position statements derived from the focus group and the interviews under the different metaphors. By doing so, hopefully one can recognize how and why the (Japanese) tourist interacts with *each* element of travelling, instead of an evaluation of the whole trip as one single unit.

1.1 Background and theme

1.1.1 The tourism industry

Globalization has integrated the world economy (Gilpin 2001). Advances in information distribution, communication, transport and technology have reduced social, cultural, economic and geographical barriers to travel. Nowadays, relatively little time, money and effort is required to be involved in tourism. Today, distance steadily dies out (“death of distance”) (Cairncross 2002), meaning that the possibility to cross national borders has become more accessible to each and every one of us. Following year 1945, the globalization process has transformed tourism into a widespread activity no longer limited to the upper class. Furthermore, tourism has become internationalized by fostering cross-border movements of tourists (Shaw and Williams 2004). In 60 years, a relatively short time period, the amount of international tourists has exploded. From 25 million international tourists in 1950 to 1035 million in 2012 (UNWTO 2013). This has made the tourist industry one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. It is also a resilient sector in regards to being able to endure economic or political crisis, or even natural disasters or extreme weather (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). World Tourism Organization “Tourism Highlights” report from 2013 gives a perspective of the importance of the tourism

industry. Key figures demonstrate that tourism account for 9 % of the global GDP and 1 out of 11 jobs are related to tourism. Further, 6 % of the world's exports (US \$ 1.3 trillion) are linked with tourism (UNWTO 2013). UNWTO (2013) expects that worldwide international tourist arrivals will increase an additional 3.3 % each year from 2010 to 2030 reaching US\$ 1.8 billion by 2030. Within this time period, the growth in emerging destinations is forecasted to increase at twice the rate compared to that in advanced economies. By the year of 2030 the market share in these emerging economies is expected to surpass that of advanced economies with a share of 57 %, or over one billion international tourist arrivals (UNWTO 2013).

1.1.2 The Norwegian tourism industry

Tourism is also a major contributor to the Norwegian economy (World Travel & Tourism Council 2014). Norway is designated as a nature destination with its majestic mountains, deep valleys and unique natural phenomena, and 80 % of all tourists visiting Norway state that precisely nature is the main reason for picking Norway as a travel destination (Innovation Norway 2012). Despite an increasing interest and awareness of nature-based tourism, there is a lack of understanding of what people actually mean when they declare that they are interested in nature-based products and experiences (for instance northern lights tourism) (Prebensen and Lee 2013). Because Norway offers a great deal of nature-based tourism, understanding tourists perception of nature and their reason for visiting it is essential. Understanding this, as well as being aware of how tourists consume their trips in general, will make firms and tourism operators capable of designing and adapting more accurate services towards the different tourism segments. This will undoubtedly make it easier to segment the market, help promoting Norway in a more efficient way, and meet the needs and expectations of tourists. With more knowledge comes competitive advantages.

Innovation Norway's key figures report (2012) indicates that average inbound tourists to Norway decreased with 1.5 % during 2012. This demonstrates that Norway lost a part of its marked share compared to Northern Europe and other countries across the world which are natural to compare Norway to. However, the amount of foreign visitors increased with 1 % (73 000 overnight stays) in 2012, which is explained with a 4 % winter season increase. Although arrivals from large

volume markets such as Germany and the Netherlands as well southern Europe decreased, arrivals from smaller volume markets such as Asian countries had a fairly good increase (Innovation Norway 2012).

In regard to the economical contribution of inbound tourism to Norway, it accounted for 6.2 % (NOK 181.5 billion) of total GDP in 2012. Its contribution to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 8.4 % (217 000 jobs) of total employment (World Travel and Tourism Council 2013). Norway has a strong potential as a travel destination. Astonishing scenery includes world famous fjords, a wild and diverse coastline, glaciers, highlands and unique phenomena such as the northern lights and the midnight sun. These attributes attract visitors from across the world. This fantastic natural basis must be put together in holistic experiences making the investment it is visiting Norway worth it (Innovation Norway 2012). Thus, in order to encounter an increasingly tough international market it is important to develop the cooperation and competence within the Norwegian travel and tourism industry (Innovation Norway 2012). Further, Innovation Norway's (2012) report credits the cooperation of travel operators for the increasing popularity of “northern lights tourism” and winter tourism as a whole. Together they have established exotic and integrated experiences attracting tourists to a previously partially overlooked market, namely winter tourism.

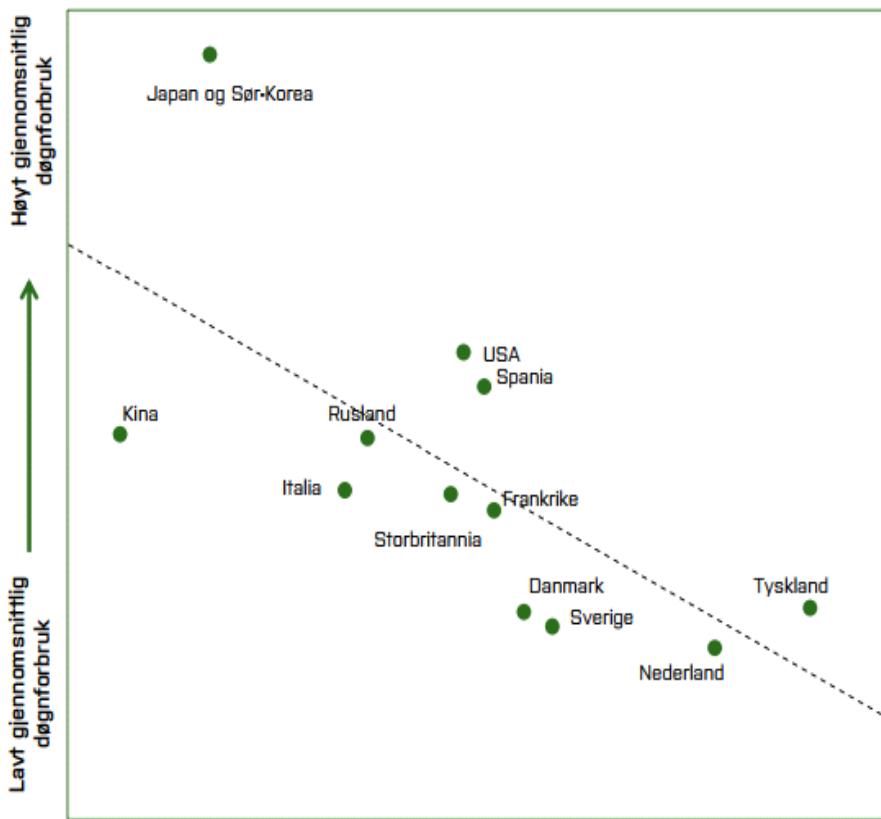
Increasing inbound tourists visiting Norway from emerging markets such as Asia is one of the new challenges facing marketers. To be able to capture tourists from these markets it is necessary to execute effective targeting and acknowledge the needs, travel practices, and indeed expectations tourists have when visiting Norway. The continuing work to maintain an easy recognizable marketing profile, conveying a clear message, developing products which are uncomplicated to find, as well as further developing of the existing offers are important measures to recognize in the future Norwegian tourism industry.

1.1.3 The significance of Japanese tourists

During the second half of 2013 the growth of Japanese outbound travel improved, especially to Europe. Out of the 4.7 million tourists who traveled from Japan to Europe in 2013, 544,000 (11.5 %) went to Northern Europe. Arrivals to Northern Europe are expected to increase to 650,000 through 2018 increasing the share to 3.5 % (European Travel Commission 2013). The “Japanese Outbound Travel Market” survey conducted by the European Travel Commission (2009), indicated that 32.5 % of the respondents had a wish to visit Norway as a European destination. Further, it is particularly interesting that when asked about the general interest in Europe, *Natural scenery* (41.8 %) came at 5th place bypassed only by *World heritage sites* (67.1 %), *Museum and art galleries* (49 %), *Urban scenery* (43.5 %), and *Architecture* (43.5 %). Another interesting remark is that of places to visit for their next trip. Here, natural scenery such as *fjords, islands/seaside, mountains, highlands and valleys*, all of which are inherent to Norway, were chosen by just over 1/3 of the respondents (European Travel Commission 2009). It would indeed be interesting to see the outcome if special phenomena unique to Norway (northern lights and the midnight sun) had been included in the survey. Nevertheless, the information obtained from these researches demonstrate that Norway, with its vast and unique nature, has a great potential as a tourism destination capable of attracting Japanese tourists.

Even though travellers from Japan represent a relatively small proportion of overall overnight stays in Norway, they are still the far most spending nation with regard to average consumption per day (Innovation Norway 2012). As indicated in [Figure 1], tourists from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark (which constitute the four most important markets in Norway) have a much lower consumption per day in comparison to tourists coming from Japan.

Figure 1: Market share and average consumption per day.



Source: Innovasjon Norway (2012)

1.2 Research question

In order to be able to attract more Japanese tourists it is decisive to examine the characteristics of this particular group. In the context of Norway it is especially important to figure out how and why Japanese tourists choose to set out on a trip to a country so far away from their own, as well as the meaning they put in viewing the northern lights, the midnight sun, or the nature in general. Based on aspects such as culture, religion, way of living, norms, history or influences from birth to adolescence, there is reason to believe that there are considerable discrepancies in the consumption practices for instance a person from the Eastern world versus a person from the Western world possess. This also applies to differences in the way humans view nature and the concept of (nature-based) tourism. A better understanding of these variations will help marketing designers, on-location designers, and others to design and adapt tourism products and experiences to fit the visitor in a better manner. This can result in Norway being chosen over other travel

destinations in the race to capture the growing Japanese market. Based on this, the main research question chosen therefor reads as follows:

- *How and why do Japanese tourists travel?*

Additionally there will be a somewhat smaller focus on nature-based tourism using Norway as a mini-case. The purpose of this side step is to figure out if there might be some unique and unknown reason as to why Japanese wish to visit nature in a tourism context. Special phenomena from Norway (Aurora Borealis and the midnight sun) will serve as parts of the mini-case. Seven depth interviews and one focus group (ten Japanese as a whole) will be conducted.

[1.3 Outline of the thesis](#)

The paper is build up accordingly: The *first* chapter is the introduction. In the *second* chapter relevant terms and theory will be presented, leading towards the final model used in this study. The purpose of this review is to go through the related terms contained in the final model as well as terms related to the Japanese and their relation to nature. Chapter *three* is the method chapter where qualitative research and its use in this study will be described. The operationalization of the main model and a brief presentation of the respondents will also be introduced in this chapter. Chapter *four* includes the results and analysis, and the collected data will be discussed systematically in context of the theory and research model. Followed by this is chapter *five* containing discussion, implications, limitations and suggestion for future research. At the very end, references to the literature used throughout the paper will be presented.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, terms and theories related to the subject will be presented and elaborated on. The purpose is to account for the theoretical framework chosen for this thesis. Firstly, tourism and nature-based tourism will be explained, followed by the introduction of relevant terms. Thereafter the main theoretical framework will be introduced.

2.1 The definition and essence of tourism

Even though tourism is a commonly understood concept, it is possible to observe different definitions across a variety of studies. The World Tourism Organisation (1995) describes tourism as "*The activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.*" Murphy (2013) calls it "*the travel of non-residents (tourists, including excursionists) to destination areas, as long as their sojourn does not become a permanent residence.*" He further mentions Mieczkowski's (1981) remark that "*while most tourism is recreational in nature, some tourism, such as business, professional and personal travel is not associated with recreation.*" This is closely associated with the World Tourism Organisation's definition in that tourism also includes non-leisure activities.

Manrai and Manrai (2011) acknowledge that travel and tourism is an extremely complex product. Not only does it encompass intangible services such as sightseeing tours or cultural performances, but it also includes tangible products like food, gifts, souvenirs or the environment itself. In addition, the complete "tourism product", or package, has a myriad of possible combinations of tangible and intangible products. At last, the decision making and general behaviour of tourists will be influenced by several factors (Manrai and Manrai 2011). Manrai and Manrai (1996, 2011) conceptualize consumer behaviour into four influences: cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Each of the four factors reportedly has a direct, as well as an indirect influence on consumer behaviour, and culture is seen upon as the factor having the broadest influence. With this in mind it is easy to recognize that tourism indeed is an extremely complex product.

2.2 Nature (based) tourism

Defining nature-based tourism is difficult as it is an including and broad concept. This makes it very hard to settle for a specific definition, making it a source of ongoing debate among researchers (Tangeland and Aas 2011). When tourism literature refer to the term “nature (based) tourism”, it might confuse the reader in that some literature use it as an overall term, whereas others try to separate it into subterms with similar and partly overlapping meanings (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). Kuenzi and McNeely (2008) presents a table based on various tourism literature portraying definitions of nature-based tourism and related terms:

Table 1: Definitions of ‘Nature-Based Tourism’ and Related Terms

Term	Definition
Tourism	“The sum of government and private sector activities that shape and serve the needs and manage the consequences of holiday, business and other travel” (Pierce et al, 1998, cited in Higginbottom, 2004, p.2).
Nature-based tourism	“the segment in the tourism market in which people travel with the primary purpose of visiting a natural destination” (March 2003 Symposium “Tiger in the Forest: Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism in Southeast Asia”).
Nature tourism	“travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature” (Honey, 2002, cited in Christ et al, 2003).
Ecotourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas” (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, cited in Blamey, 2003). – “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people” (Honey, 2002, cited in Christ et al, 2003).
Wildlife tourism	‘based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals ... in either the animals’ natural environment or in captivity. It includes activities historically classified as ‘non-consumptive’ ... as well as those that involve killing or capturing animals ...’ (Higginbottom 2004, p.2).
Adventure tourism	“nature tourism with a kick – nature tourism with a degree of risk taking and physical endurance”. (Honey, 2002, cited in Christ et al, 2003).
Sustainable tourism	“seeks to minimize the negative footprint of tourism developments and at the same time contribute to conservation and community development in the areas being developed” (Christ et al, 2003).
Tourists	people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited” (UNWTO, 1995).

Source: Kuenzi and McNeely (2008).

As seen in the table, *ecotourism* and *sustainable tourism* especially stand out as underlying terms of the more broad definition of “nature (based) tourism”. These are concerned with the conservation and protection of the nature and its associated local community, and not all forms of nature tourism meet their criteria. As in Kuenzi and McNeely’s (2008) case study, this study too chooses to adapt a wide definition of nature (based) tourism. Considering that all these terms have a common feature, namely that they are natural resource based forms of tourisms, this study will treat them under the more broad term *nature-based tourism*.

Honey (2002, p. 1) describes nature-based tourism as “*The travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature.*” It involves the passive enjoyment of nature as well as the more active role of doing activities (e.g. skiing, swimming, hiking) in a nature-based environment, and this form of tourism is the fastest growing element of tourism (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). When considering the fact that the world has become more urbanized, and people in a greater degree live in cities “disconnected from nature”, it is perhaps no wonder nature-based tourism is flourishing. Getting back in touch with nature is thus regarded as the perfect holiday experience by many people (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). Some nature-based tourists also choose to set out on an adventure, which may carry physical risks to the personal health and safety of the tourist (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). This suggests that nature-based tourism gives a range of opportunities in regard to surrounding oneself with nature.

The foundations of nature-based tourism are natural resources such as mountains, lakes, rivers, forests or beaches, which (if attractive enough) are essential in order to release tourists desire to travel (Fredman and Tyrväinen 2010). In addition to this foundation, the local community is often greatly integrated in the tourism experience with its local traditions and culture. Services and infrastructure (e.g. stores, parking, transport) defines the tourism supply and influence the local economy (Fredman and Tyrväinen 2010). This inevitably impacts the local society, which in the most extreme cases, can enter a state of total reliance on incoming tourists, abandoning other possible sources of income such as farming (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). Consequently, the community might lose the original natural essence it once had.

Besides taking place in nature, what separates nature-based tourism from other forms of tourism? As nature-based tourism has grown to include commercial outdoor recreational based activities such as hiking or climbing (Tangeland and Aas 2011), coming up with a concrete answer would be hard. Tourism including such activities often fall into the category “adventure tourism” or those alike, but since these products often are directly or indirectly dependent on nature, they might accordingly be categorised as nature-based tourism (Tangeland and Aas 2011). Further, putting a distinction between mass tourism and nature-based tourism was previously reasonable (see for instance Lindberg 1991). Nowadays however, nature-based tourism has also become mass tourism, especially in such countries as Norway where the greater part of inbound tourism is related to nature (Innovation Norway 2013).

This study adopts a broad definition of nature-based tourism, defining it the same way as Tangeland and Aas (2011): *“tourism activities in which the focus is upon activities that take place in a nature area and where the tourism activities are directly or indirectly dependent on - or enhanced by - the natural environment, and in which the tourist pays a third party to participate in a given activity.”* (p. 824).

2.3 Theory

Theoretical approaches and models trying to explain the “hows” and “whys” of Japanese tourism are rather scarce. There are however some contributions such as those of Dr. Yvette Reisinger and Dr. Lindsay Turner mainly investigating inbound Japanese tourism to Australia as well as the effects of culture in a tourism context (e.g. Reisinger and Turner 1999; Reisinger and Turner 2002; Reisinger and Turner 2003). Their methods typically involves different types of interviews and surveys. Another interesting work is the book “Japanese Tourism and Travel Culture” (Guichard-Anguis and Moon 2008) which is an edited volume focusing on Japanese tourism seen from an anthropological perspective. The book deals with (among other topics) Japanese travel history in the past, cultural meanings and terms, the understanding of various types of Japanese overseas tourism, the present-day Japanese society and so forth. Ziff-Levine (1990) writes about the “cultural logic gap” between Americans and Japanese and its influence on marketing travel

and tourism products to the Japanese. The gap is two-sided, one side being language and the other being culture. He further terms business as a form of cultural behaviour which cannot be separated from social customs, cultural prejudices and ideological assumptions. In his research he uses a combination of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative oriented focus groups.

Most of the literature attempting to gain knowledge about foreign cultures do so in a qualitative oriented manner, be it about Japanese or other nationalities. As mentioned earlier, this thesis will also perform qualitative research using depth interviews and a focus group. The framework which this is based on is the “four metaphors for consuming” found in Holt's (1995) work. The framework will serve as a backdrop and will be complemented with terms related to it (mainly *self*). For instance, the metaphors *consuming-as-integration* and *consuming-as-classification* involve behaviour that can be linked to our sense of self (we behave in a certain way to build our self-image). Furthermore, terms relevant to general tourism consumption practices (*travel motivations*, *culture*) will be discussed. Additionally, terms that previous literature find particularly relevant to the Japanese (tourists) have been chosen to complement further (*novelty/learning*, perception of *safety*, perception of *nature*, *culture*). Safety perceptions and perceptions of nature has been put under the “culture” heading as these (based in culture) are believed to be significantly different in a Japanese context compared to a Western context. Altogether this forms the theoretical approach chosen for this thesis.

2.4 Tourist motivations

When talking about tourist behaviour, motivation is considered as a highly relevant variable as it works as a force behind all behaviour (Berkman and Gilson 1978). It explores the “whys” of travelling, a part of tourism which is much more difficult to determine as compared to figuring out *who* travels, *when* they travel, *where* they travel, and *how* they travel (Crompton 1979). This has to do with the not easily observed intricate mechanisms of human nature (Chen et al. 2013). The idea of tourist motivations is often seen together with the concepts of “pull” and “push”. Push factors are linked to socio-psychological motives, the underlying forces of our desires such as our need to relax, to learn something, or to escape the dull every-day life. These desires “push” the tourist and makes him/her make decisions about travelling. Pull factors are on the other hand

attributes of the destination influencing how attractive the tourist perceive it (Dann 1977; Chen et al. 2013), thus “pulling” the tourist toward the destination. In order to explain the desire to go on a vacation the push term has proven useful, whereas the pull term is traditionally being used to explain the choice of destination (Crompton 1979). Tourism service providers often focus solely on the factors they themselves have control over, ignoring the push factors. This is unfortunate as Dunn (1977) explains that it all starts with push factors, and that it is not until the need for travel is recognized that the tourist starts looking for a destination. There can indeed be many underlying reasons behind the need to travel. This is demonstrated by Pearce and Lee (2005) who revealed several motivational factors such as novelty, escape, relaxation, relationships, autonomy, nature, self-development, stimulation, self-actualization, isolation, nostalgia, romance, and recognition. Out of these, self-development and nature-seeking motivations were recognized as critical motivations for tourists with more experience (Chen et al. 2013). In this thesis the focus will be on these two factors as well as culture and novelty seeking/learning as these motivations seem particularly relevant in regard to Japanese tourists and Norway as a nature-tourism location.

2.5 Culture

With regard to culture, behaviour and the Asian market, Western researchers might struggle with a pattern of thought that might influence their research methodology, leaving them unable to understand the heterogeneous Asian tourism market (Iverson 1997). This may also be the case with tourism operators, providing more or less the same services to Westerners as Asians.

Markets experiencing growth from new segments can especially suffer from lack of knowledge. This was the case when the unprepared Australian tourism industry got caught off guard as Asian inbound tourism rapidly increased during the 90's (March 1997). The Australians were unable to distinguish between the different Asian markets as they had little to no knowledge of their cultural attributes (Prideaux 1997). Recently, also Norway is experiencing, and will continue to experience, more inbound travelling from growing markets in Asia (World Travel & Tourism Council 2014). It is thus vital for the Norwegian tourism industry to acquire knowledge about these markets in order to prevent potential visitors falling into the hands of competitors.

In general, culture is considered to be a central factor with regard to the motivation and behaviour of tourists (Kim and Lee 2000; Yuan and McDonald 1990; Iverson 1997). According to Barnlund and Araki (1985), culture in itself has no existence except in the behaviour of the people who constitute them. They further explain that members of a culture share a tendency towards acting in a similar way in similarly perceived situations. Harris and Moran (1979) also explains that culture is the way of life for a specific group of people. One of the pioneers in understanding and defining culture is Edward B. Tylor who defines culture as a “*complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*” (Tylor 1924, p. 1). Another well-known researcher of culture is Geert Hofstede whose preferred definition is that “*culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or society from those of another.*” (Hofstede 1984, p. 82).

Although there are many different definitions of culture, the aim of cross-cultural psychology is to (1) “understand the differences between human beings who come from different cultural backgrounds”, and to (2) “understand the similarities between all human beings.” (Hills 2002, p. 3). These similarities can be **physiological** (how our bodies work), **cognitive** (for instance, the way we perceive distance), **personal** (happiness, gentleness etc.), **social** (we all relate to our parents) or **cultural** (cultural norms) (Hills 2002). The last part, cultural norms, is especially important within marketing as they can differ tremendously between cultures. The cultural norms are the norms we share with other members of the same cultural background. They can be as simple as stating which clothes are acceptable, to religious beliefs (Hills 2002). Wolfson (1981) illustrates this by examining differences in the practice of giving compliments across cultures. She states that “*Examination of these data makes it clear that a single speech act may vary greatly across speech communities. In particular, what counts as a compliment may differ very much from one society to another.*” (Wolfson 1981, p. 117). This demonstrates just how sensitive culture is and thereby the central role it plays when designing cross-cultural intended services.

The participants of this study, namely the Japanese, undeniably have a culture very dissimilar to what we see in the “Western world”. Literature focusing on this particular nationality and their culture have, among other aspects, discovered that through their lifestyle and belief, most Japanese might have a view on nature which deviates greatly from what is seen in the West (e.g. Moeran 1983; Guichard and Moon 2008; Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006; Watkins 2008). Because of this and the fact that parts of this study addresses Norway as a nature-based tourism destination, the aspect of *nature* and its perception in a cultural context will be reviewed. The aspect of *safety*, also strongly related to culture and the present-day society, will also be discussed under this heading. It is another element that greatly concerns the Japanese and especially the Japanese tourist (see for instance: Guichard and Moon 2008; Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006; Nozawa 1992). Research about the Japanese and their preferred travel destination “*consistently indicate natural scenery, safety, and history and culture to be the important characteristics of preferred destinations.*” (Watkins and Gnoth 2010, p. 2). These factors are included in this paper, *history* being presented mainly under the upcoming heading as well as the *Novelty and Learning* heading.

2.5.1 Japanese and the perception of nature

One of the characteristics of the Japanese is their gratitude and appreciation for nature. This feature is something they have long been famed for and is generally characterized by not being purely interested in the physical aspect of nature, but also taking interest in the spirituality that dwells in nature (Moeran 1983). In order to understand their view on nature one must examine their background and determine how nature is regarded according to the Japanese culture/religion as well as trying to understand how this view affect the daily life of the average Japanese. A very characteristic aspect in this matter is the Japanese connection to the biggest “religion” in Japan, *Shinto*.

Dating back to the 3rd century, the “Ise Grand Shrine” is the most sacred Shinto shrine in Japan with close ties to the Imperial Household. In 2013 it gave out a small booklet (sengu.info) fundamentally introducing Shinto and the Ise Grand Shrine. As this shrine in many ways is the “main” Shinto shrine of Japan, possessing vast knowledge about Shinto, this paper builds

considerably on the knowledge of it when attempting to describe Shinto.

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan and the people of Japan. An inherent belief, or way of life, for the vast majority of Japanese. It is a way of living and thinking that has been integrated as a part of Japanese culture since ancient history (sengu.info). Thus, one cannot directly classify Shinto with the word “religion” as we know it in the Western world. A quote written by Ama Michihiro from Ama Toshimaro’s book entitled “*Why are the Japanese non-religious?: Japanese spirituality: being non-religious in a religious culture.*” (2005) explains the relation the Japanese have towards religion:

“The Japanese on the whole avoid or lack an understanding of organized religions, yet at the same time, when asked about their own religious beliefs, many Japanese are unable to respond, as they are unsure of these in themselves. For Japanese, Shinto, Christianity, and Buddhism are all mixed together; as a child, one is taken to Shinto shrines and as an adult, one attends both chapel weddings and Buddhist funerals. Therefore, Japanese think that they do not need to be committed to any particular religion.”

However, Shinto makes the foundation of the Japanese society and pureness and honesty are considered as important virtues. Shinto has no set of teachings, doctrine or message written down. Neither has the Shinto faith any founder, and there are no sacred books equivalent to, for instance, the Bible or the Quran. The origin can rather be viewed in conjunction with the Japanese of the ancient times and the power they found in nature (sengu.info). Until today, one can see very much alive Shinto roots that still continue to define great parts of Japans culture. Still there is great awe towards the might of nature and still one demonstrates gratitude for its generosity.

“Only by both receiving the blessings of nature and accepting its rage can we maintain a harmonious connection to the world around us” (sengu.info, p. 12). Considering the fact that also the modern Japanese society is greatly influenced by Shinto, it would be natural to account for this in a marketing context. The problem is however, that Shinto is limited to Japan and its people, is very hard to comprehend for outsiders, and has no strict rules or readings one can read in order

to enlighten oneself. Thus, there is little to no research on the subject in relation to business and marketing.

Within Shinto, the nature is viewed in connection with 神 (*Kami*), a concept which often is compared to Gods in the same way as they are portrayed within religions such as Christianity. However, Kami should perhaps rather be seen as an expression for the divine life force of the natural world (sengu.info). It originates from nature itself and there exists Kami for wind, rain, lightning, rivers and so forth. Human beings who have passed away can also be regarded as Kami and all Kami have a deep impact on the life of humans (sengu.info). From this we can see a different perspective in the way nature is viewed than what is practiced in the Western world. This provides a basis and reasons to believe that factors such as spiritual connection to nature, respect for other living creatures, and feelings towards nature will be considered dissimilar in dissimilar cultures.

In the Shinto belief, the nature itself is its own lord and does not necessarily adapt to the needs and desires of humans. For example, the Sun gives us heat, but can on the contrary cause drought and hunger. A fresh breeze may in turn become a furious storm causing destruction and sorrow (sengu.info). Natural landmarks such as the ocean, mountains, or forests are seen as locations where Kami are present, and during the ancient times such areas were sacred places where no buildings of worship were needed, the “Gods” (*Kami*) were present everywhere. Subsequently, residences for Kami were built in the forests, becoming the precursor to the so-called “神社” (*Jinja*) (Translated to “shrine” in English), which there are over 80 000 scattered around today's Japan (sengu.info). These divine places are associated to and express the appreciation the Japanese have for nature. The *Jinja* and its immediate surroundings are sacred locations and are always kept clean and flawless. Given that the vast majority of *Jinja* are surrounded by trees or other natural landscape, the power of nature surrounds it. In cities they remind of oases in the middle of Japan's busy streets. They are not only used for rituals and prayers but also function as a place where one can find serenity and achieve both mental and physical rejuvenation (sengu.info).

Although these Shinto roots are greatly embedded in the Japanese culture, it does not necessarily mean that it has an effect on tourism. However, a number of researchers have noticed the unique fascination the Japanese have for nature. Moeran (1983) analysed the language used in Japanese travel brochures and discovered that nature was a very central topic. It was described as beautiful (美しい – *utsukushii*), grandeur (雄大 - *yūdai*), opulent (豊か – *yutaka*), and unpolluted (よごれの無い - *yogore no nai*). These words portray a focus on nature and the sceneries themselves more than focusing on activities that can be enjoyed in natural surroundings. Visiting nature is also regarded as a means of “escaping” the busy city life and participate in recreation which cannot be done at home (Watkins and Gnoth 2010), but a trip to nature can also be considered as pilgrimage or be an appropriate atmosphere for prayer (Watkins 2008). Indeed, nature is viewed as a sacred space of purity and brightness within Shinto (Nadeau 1997). A place where it is possible to cleanse the soul and mind. Nadeau (1997) writes that the Shinto separation between the inner/sacred/pure and the outer/profane/polluted defines Japanese cosmology just as it defines the Japanese character. This is not limited to the boundaries of Shinto shrines. Rather, “*the inner is the world of nature, in opposition to the cosmos and heavens.*” Nadeau (1997, p. 110).

Evidently, nature is very central in the Shinto belief, but truly understanding the way the Japanese view nature requires extensive research and is located beyond the exploratory boundaries of this study. However, acquiring a glimpse of understanding will undoubtedly make it easier to market travel services and destinations well.

2.5.2 Japanese and the perception of safety

Japanese tourists are often characterized as people who prefer to travel in groups alongside with other Japanese while having a relatively limited interaction with the host community (Prideux and Shiga 2007). They often participate in package tours which is the typical choice for first time visitors. These tours are considered a safe choice, sparing the traveller from worries about hotel bookings, transportation, food et cetera (Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006). Language problems is another factor often used to explain the preference of group tours. Gilbert and Terrata (2001)

reports that the majority of Japanese travellers, even those being amongst the younger generation, are anxious about communicating in English. There are feelings of shame and embarrassment when attempting to communicate in a foreign language (Gilbert and Terrata 2001), which can be an explanation to the preference of group travelling. The means of which Japanese travel have however developed. From about year 2000 and onwards the preference of travelling has been in change, especially in regard to the younger generation, and there is an emergent trend where independent travel has become more popular (Prideux and Shiga 2007). This might be explained by the ‘Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology’s’ stronger emphasis on foreign languages since the 90’s with a heavier focus on the English language. Within Japan, it has become more important to aim attention to intercultural interaction face-to-face, thereby ceasing the practice of having English as a mere knowledge-based subject (Yashima 2002). Eventually, the Japanese will gain more confidence as an independent traveller as they are getting increasingly skilled in foreign language communication.

Direct safety, whether a destination is physically safe or not, is another concern for the Japanese. According to the Scandinavian Tourist Board (2006), the safety level of the Nordic countries appeal greatly to the Japanese. Sangpikul (2008) applied push and pull motivations to investigate travel motivations of Japanese senior travellers to Thailand. Although being the weakest of four pull factors identified, ‘safety and cleanliness’ still made the list as important motivations for this particular sample (Sangpikul 2008). Reisinger and Turner (1999) suggest that the main reason Japanese tourists choose Australia as a travel destination is their perception that the country is clean and safe. For the Japanese, the lack of safety while going on so-called “backpacking” has created a dirty and dangerous image around this form of travelling (Prideux and Shiga 2007). Prideux and Shiga’s (2007) study also revealed that a secure destination was the second most important determinant (75 %) when Japanese women were about to set out on a backpacking trip, barely surpassed by the desire to meet other people (76 %). 1/3 of the men also considered safety as an important factor. A study performed by Gilbert and Terrata (2001) confirms that “*personal security is, to a large extent, a constraint for the Japanese*” (p. 75). They explain that Japan, being as safe as it is, might be a reason for such high demands of security and points out that

terrorism problems in the UK has led to a drop in the amount of Japanese visiting the UK (Gilbert and Terrata 2001). Reisinger and Turner (1999) also look at the safety found in Japanese culture as they say that to maintain social harmony, Japanese people avoid conflicts, competition and risk-taking as they (relative to the Western world) belongs to a culture where one attempts to avoid insecurity.

As seen above, the aspect of safety is two-folded. It concerns physical safety as well as whether one feels comfortable or not in a foreign country. Nevertheless both of them seem to be very important to the Japanese tourist, and thus important for providers of tourism services to take into account.

2.6 Novelty and learning

Novelty is about the need we all have to have variety in our lives (Faison 1977). Within tourism it belongs to travel motivations and concerns with tourists and why they seek what they cannot obtain at home. Novelty is often used as an explanation for this, building on the desire people have to experience new and different things (Lee and Crompton 1992). A very widespread definition of novelty is to say that it is the degree of contrast between our past experience and what we currently perceive (Lee and Crompton 1992; Pearson 1970). In other words, the degree of novelty is determined by the individual by comparing a stimulus with other stimuli encountered in the past as well as stimuli present at that time (Greenberger et al. 1967). Many studies have revealed how important novelty is for tourists, and perhaps especially important for tourists travelling to nature-based locations. Chen et al. (2013) presents a summary of motivation studies on nature-based tourism and in nine out of the eleven studies presented in the table, motivations such as *novelty*, *learning*, or *knowledge* appear (table 1, p. 654).

As exposure to new destinations and experiences likely are educational (one learns something new), *education* or *learning* is a motive closely related to novelty (Crompton 1979). Learning in a tourism context is about using tourism and leisure settings as a means to obtain knowledge, ideas and visions for oneself and the society (Falk et al. 2012). Research on learning and tourism is however not among the most explored areas. This might have to do with the fact that promoting

learning as a feature of travelling often has the ability to work counterproductive. It is considered a labour and not something directly desired from a holiday, at least from a Euro-America point of view (Werry 2008). From a Japanese point of view however, promoting learning as a part of the experience might prove to be beneficial (Innovation Norway 2012; Ziff-Levine 1990; Guichard and Moon 2008). The problem is that even though being acknowledged as a very important aspect of tourism, descriptions of how learning is supposed to be designed into tourism services are scarce (Falk et al. 2012). Discovering why and how tourists learn when on a vacation, especially of those who deem learning as an essential part of travelling such as the Japanese, will inevitably create competitive advantages for service providers sitting on such information.

2.6.1 Japanese and learning

Japanese travelling on vacation are often not participating in travelling as a means of leisure, rather they tend to have an intense “regime”, day by day, with activities and things that must be done (Ziff-Levine 1990). The goal is to experience as much as possible in the shortest time possible. This is supported by Innovation Norway’s tourist survey (2012) which conclude that Scandinavian tourists prefer to relax and be in nature, whereas tourists in the category “other non-European” (in this case a combination of the US, China, Japan and South Korea) wish to participate in popular activities, sightseeing and experience nature (Innovation Norway 2012). “To relax” is not even among the top 5 list of activities this group of tourists plan to carry out during their holiday. On the contrary, Norwegian, Danish and Swedish tourists all value relaxation as the most important holiday activity.

Since Japan is a society where hard work is highly valued, taking a holiday with the aim of pure relaxation can be a hard decision to take and a sense of guilt for pursuing pleasure can occur (Kajiwara 1997). Based on this, Kajiwara states that education, or learning, and other meaningful aspects that can be incorporated into the trip still plays a crucial role in Japanese tourism (Kajiwara 1997). Graburn (1977) argues that travel goals may vary according to which culture one comes from and which values that culture holds, but that a tourist journey have to be morally justified by the home community. This means that one does not choose to travel in order to obtain leisure, but that there is an underlying and deeper intention for travel. Turner and Turner (1978)

explains that in the many societies throughout history, travelling has been justified by pilgrimage. One travels thus not in order to travel, but in order to carry out their duty as a pilgrim. In Japan the line between travelling as pilgrimage and regular travelling has been unclear, but previously pilgrimage was often the only way of justifying travelling (Watkins 2008). By doing so, one was able to achieve approval for travelling and such travelling was not considered as leisure, but instead important work for the greater group (Tuner and Turner 1978). In fact there was stated in a treatise on civil administration that “*no one of any class (should) travel without reason*” (Kanzaki 1992, p. 67). However, when going on pilgrimage an important component of the trip was the joy obtained by being able to see new things, people, and places (Watkins 2008). Even today traces of pilgrimage remains, and in the context of Japanese culture, journeying to a place of nature or history may be regarded as sacred as a journey to a temple or shrine (Watkins 2008). Further, according to Watkins, a pilgrimage may be enjoyed for the mere sake of novelty while having no moral restrictions on behaviour and intent, without losing its status as “pilgrimage” (Watkins 2008). This supports the idea that rather than just looking at the scenery, there might be other aspects that come to mind (for example novelty or learning) when a Japanese person thinks of nature travelling. The pilgrimage tradition carried out hundreds of years ago can possibly be the precursor to the modern Japanese travel industry, having repercussions that still continue to affect the Japanese and their travel habits. If so, there is reason to believe that having a deeper objective of travelling, learning something, will be an important aspect when the Japanese plan their trips.

Research into Japanese travel motivation indicates that knowledge, learning and adventure are important motivations, and the Japanese seem to enjoy exploring the world and learn new things (Nishiyama 1996; Moeran 1983; Cha et al. 1995; Andersen et al. 2000). Watkins’ (2006) thesis also confirms that learning something was an objective of many of the Japanese participants in her study. This tendency can also be observed when looking at the Japanese government. The “Two-Way 21 Tourism Program” launched by the Japanese government in 1991 indicated a change in direction from focusing on quantitative overseas travelling to qualitative travelling. As explained by Andersen et al. (2000) the message of this program was interesting: “*Taking a holiday was not a frivolous or irresponsible activity, but on the contrary, a conscious act of*

self-development to benefit Japan as a nation, by contributing to world harmony" (Andersen et al. 2000, p. 132). The statement builds on the self-development that can be achieved by travelling and dismiss the thinking that leisure travelling is a mere selfish and useless act. As such, the crave for learning something might be related to self-development, which further leads us to the next section concerning the term *self*.

2.7 Self

Consumers possess various lasting images of themselves. These self-images, or perceptions, of oneself is closely related with personality and consumers choice of products or services (Schiffman et al. 2008). Some of these products or services seem to match one or several of the self-images of the individual, whereas others have no match at all. Due to this it is natural that people identify themselves through the use of specific products/services that have a symbolic value for them, or those that are consistent with the personal self-image of the particular individual. Belk (1988) terms the act of integrating consumption objects into one's identity as *self-extension processes*. In short, consumers attempt to describe themselves through their choice of products, services, or experiences that can strengthen their self-concept at the same time as avoiding those that don't (Schiffman et al. 2008). For example if someone is very environmentally conscious, that person will choose and surround with environmentally friendly products, services, or experiences. Another direction to take is doing the opposite. Instead of drawing external objects into one's self-concept, one instead reorient one's own self-concept to align with an institutionally defined identity (Holt 1995). For example, in order to learn a culture (an institutionally defined identity), individuals should be able to predict behaviours of others in that culture and structure their own behaviour to align with this (Solomon 1983).

The very concept of *self* refers to what a person thinks of his or hers own attributes and the way they are evaluated (Solomon et al. 2013). While the combined self might be positive overall, parts of it can still be evaluated as more positive than others. A person feeling better about his identity as an employee rather than his identity as a middle aging man is an example of this (Solomon et al. 2013).

Every individual has an image of themselves as a certain type of person with certain abilities, habits, possessions, relations, and ways of behaving. In contrast to other types of images and personalities, the self-image is unique and a product of the background and experiences of a person. The self-image is developed through interaction with other human beings, firstly with our parents and further with other individuals or groups one interacts with over several years (Schiffman et al. 2008). This makes it possible to separate groups, perhaps whole nations, in different “self-categories”, albeit on a superficial level. To which degree German people versus Japanese people view themselves as a part of nature is an example of this. Our social self-image is defined as how we want others to perceive us as a person (Schiffman et al. 2008). In different contexts (e.g. in different situations or in relation to products/services) individuals can choose a fitting self-image in order to guide their attitudes and behaviour. By purchasing household products one is guided by the actual self-image (buying what is needed), whereas investing in “socially conspicuous” products or experiences (bought mainly to achieve a high social status or to impress others) one is guided by the desire of a better self-image, as viewed by others (Schiffman et al. 2008). Considering “self” and the social self-image of individuals is important in a marketing context. This can be done by for example communicating the northern lights of Norway as an experience that can only be obtained at a very few locations on earth, thereby building on the social status that can be achieved by having seen it.

2.7.1 Japanese and self

One of the most distinctive behavioural characteristics of Japanese tourists is their eager dedication to buying souvenirs, or so-called おみやげ (*omiyage*) (Park 2000; Reisinger and Turner 2000; Watkins 2008; Guichard-Anguis and Moon 2008). Souvenirs are in general accepted by the anthropological community as an obligatory part of culturally defined exchange (Gordon 1986). Japan has a strong gift-giving culture and gifts are given at certain annual events, as well as throughout the daily life (Park 2000). Befu (1968) goes as far as calling gift-giving a minor institution of Japan, containing “*complex rules defining who should give to whom, on what occasions he should give, what sort of gift is appropriate on a given occasion, and how the gift should be presented*” (p. 445). Gift-giving is in other words very strict and the attention is not

solely directed to the recipient, rather one must also pay attention to the accepted standard set by the gift-giving norms (Park 2000). This is a clear indication that when the Japanese are giving gifts, it is also an act of representing themselves. This form of gift-giving as an interaction between humans can thus, in accordance to Schiffman et al. (2008), be linked to the concept of self-image. The importance of it can be explained by the concept of 義理 (*giri*), which is a moral, social obligation that requires people to perform one's duty towards other members of the group (Befu 1968). Easily said: if customs demands it, you are obliged to give a gift. Ziff-Levine's (1990) focus groups participants stated that "*there is a strong sense of obligation among the Japanese to purchase gifts for family, friends, match-makers, and fellow employees*" (p. 108). *Giri* and the importance of gift-giving might be an explanation as to why Japanese spend large amounts of money and time for buying souvenirs. E.g. Keown's (1989) interview of Japanese visitors to Hawaii indicated high frequency of shopping behaviour, particularly for gifts. Ziff-Levine (1990) also reports that 25 % of the time spent on a standard four-day trip went to shopping. According to Iverson (1997) such findings have been replicated elsewhere as well.

2.8 Holt's four metaphors for consuming

The main model applied for this study is Holt's (1995) four metaphors for consuming. This framework was chosen as it is very diverse and is able to capture dissimilarities in the various purposes tourists have when travelling.

Figure 2: Metaphors for Consuming

		PURPOSE OF ACTION	
		Autotelic actions	Instrumental Actions
STRUCTURE OF ACTION	Object Actions	CONSUMING AS EXPERIENCE	CONSUMING AS INTEGRATION
	Interdependent	CONSUMING AS PLAY	CONSUMING AS CLASSIFICATION

Source: Holt (1995), p. 3

Previously one believed that the way individuals consume is determined by the properties of the consumption object and that products have been viewed as carriers of meaning which all consumers perceive similarly (Holt 1995). However field studies conducted in the 80's and 90's indicate a different perspective (e.g. Bourdieu 1984; Morley 1986). These studies demonstrate that consuming must rather be viewed as a diverse and effortful action where the attributes of the object does not solely determine how it is consumed. Instead we now acknowledge that consumption objects are typically consumed differently depending on the consumer (Holt 1995). Knowing this, it is important to determine and describe the ways in which people consume to understand differences in consumer groups (for instance Scandinavian tourists versus Chinese tourists), and to explain the unidentified conditions which build different groups consuming pattern (Giddens 1979).

During the 80's and 90's consumer research used ethnographic and phenomenological methods in order to unravel the different ways consumers consume. This originally resulted in three dimensions of consumer consumptions. In addition, Holt (1995) chose to present a new dimension resulting in a four dimension framework consisting of: *consuming as experience*, *consuming as integration*, *consuming as classification*, and Holt's new dimension: *consuming as play*.

This framework is divided by two basic conceptual distinctions: the *structure* of consumption and the *purpose* of consumption. With these distinctions one is able to portray the different aspects of consumption (Holt 1995). Within the term **purpose** we find the *autotelic actions*, which are actions occurring "here and now", in other words consumption being an end in itself, as well as *instrumental actions* where consumption works as a means to an end (Walker et al. 2005). The other term, **structure**, is based on the focus of individuals. *Object actions* focuses on actions where the individual involve directly with the consumption object, and *interpersonal actions* where interactions with other people is the most important part and where the consumption objects serve as a junction point (Holt 1995).

2.7.1 Consuming as Experience

Within the consuming-as-experience dimension there is research which examines consumers' subjective, emotional responses to consumption objects (Holt 1995). Further, by adding a sociological view to the consuming-as-experience metaphor, Holt (1995) recognizes three consumption practices where these emotional responses can be found: **accounting**, **evaluating** and **appreciating** practices. To understand these, he applies his case study of baseball spectatorship. By using *accounting*, spectators make sense of baseball; with the use of *evaluating*, spectators judge the value of the particular baseball game; and through *appreciating*, the emotional responses to baseball are highlighted (Holt 1995).

Accounting practices allow consumers to apply an interpretative framework (e.g. of the baseball world or in a tourism context) which helps in making sense of the consumption experience

(Cheetham and McEachern 2013). This means that a consumer recognize representative actions and objects and assign them specific meaning and value (Holt 1995). The more complex the sense-making task, the more important accounting becomes as a component of consumers' actions (Holt 1995). Being able to make sense of something requires information. This means that accounting can be a very difficult procedure in those situations that require a lot of pre-knowledge and information, but on the other hand it can be very rewarding for those individuals who already acquired enough knowledge (Holt 1995). Additionally, the process of accounting becomes more natural and easy the more knowledge one possesses. In Holt's baseball case study, these people are the experts of baseball with a great deal of experience under their belts.

Accounting in a tourism context is however more difficult. Because there are countless travel destinations around the world and also a huge variety in the ways of which one can promote and present these destination, it is not easy for the tourist to apply frameworks and give observed actions and objects meanings. This especially applies to unique and complex travel destinations such as going to northern Norway and experience the Aurora Borealis found there. It is therefore important that providers of tourism services are aware of how tourists perceive the country and its offers, for instance the image they have of it pre-arrival.

Tourism is indeed very complex, and one does not expect the same every time. However, individuals naturally create frameworks based on previous experiences. Information acquired from reading about the destination they are about to visit also further strengthen their framework. As mentioned, to make sense of something calls for information, thus every piece of information one possesses helps in building the framework.

Evaluating

To make sense of a given situation consumers use an institutional framework. Within the practice of evaluating the consumers apply this framework in order to build value judgements on situations, people, and actions they encounter (Holt 1995). In other words they compare their

framework, or reference point, with the situation they are in and thus create expectations based on that. Holt (1995) use his baseball case study to explain that these expectations are normally those of the baseball world, but the spectators also “*make judgements by comparing experiences to everyday frameworks as well*” (Holt 1995, p. 5). An example of this is when a spectator of a baseball game compare the athletes performances towards “normal” people or themselves even.

The comparisons conducted may be made by reference to three types of baselines: *norms, history, and conventions*. For instance, participants of an event will constantly evaluate the event according to the normative expectations previously developed in their interaction with such events (Holt 1995). Since performances and happenings of an event can be hard to translate into statistics, which can be used in order to make comparisons to previous events, the norms are often implicit. This means that although comparison experiences are seen as “objective” baselines, they are not always statistically correct (Prebensen 2007).

Comparisons to history are unlike comparisons to norms, more narrow and focus on specific performances. When a spectator of a soccer game compare his or hers favourite team’s current performance to previous performances, the spectator has conducted a historical comparison. This however requires a more specialized knowledge than do normative comparisons. This way of evaluating often leads to more diverse judgements of actions which within the normative baseline would appear as unremarkable (Holt 1995).

Also comparing in regard to conventions is a way consumers evaluate their current experience. Conventionalized actions (for example how a certain field trip is to be carried out or the conventionalized actions of participants in a sports game) are actions which are familiar to the consumers and which are used to evaluate what is observed in the specific event they find themselves in.

To evaluate the value of a certain vacational trip, the tourist applies the aforementioned framework. Creating expectations based on the world of tourism is indeed difficult due to the

lack of consistency between different trips. Thus, comparing a trip to the baselines of evaluation (norms, convention and history) means that one has to compare it to previous experienced trips, which may or may not be similar to the current trip. One might compare what one has experienced in one country towards experiences in a second country. To exemplify this: A visiting tourist to Brazil might express that “it was easier to take the train in Germany”, comparing two fundamentally different countries. The complexity and flexibility of tourism makes it very hard to judge. On the other hand, judging and comparing what one experiences at a destination towards an everyday framework is an easier task. For example a person who has never seen the northern lights, seeing them is certainly not an everyday event, possibly leading to a high evaluation of value.

Appreciating

The third and last aspect of consuming-as-experience is *appreciating*. This is when the consumer applies aesthetic and emotional frameworks to actions or objects (McKechnie and Tynan 2006). The word “appreciating” involves positive emotions like feelings of excitement, awe, joy, or relief. Additionally it may include negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, or frustration (Holt 1995). Within aesthetic responses emotional reactions and appreciation for the creation of beauty, artistry and taste can be found. For example the appreciation of the beauty of nature, the artistry and beauty of buildings, or even the fluid athletic movements of a baseball player (Holt 1995).

Especially strong are emotions followed by an unconventional shift in the situation or actions perceived. From this, emotions such as surprise, irony, humor, disappointment and awe can arise (Holt 1995). For instance when a sports athlete does exceptionally good, the sudden and unexpected appearance of animals during a nature field trip, or conversely the failed appearance of expected animals during such a field trip (leading to disappointment). In any case however, the characteristics of the situation, event or action are appreciated using the related framework (e.g. a baseball ballpark is appreciated using the baseball world framework) (Holt 1995).

The *appreciating* aspect is interesting in a tourism context and especially interesting when faced with rare and subtle experiences such as nature tourism in northern Norway. Because appreciating involves emotions it is highly interesting for the providers of tourism services to see how the visiting tourist actually responds to what she or he is experiencing. Knowing which kinds of feelings are triggered by tourists is important to know if one wishes to understand the meaning they put into the trip. Does for instance a feeling of awe or joy when seeing the northern lights occur due to the fascination of the aesthetics of the lights, or could there perhaps be deeper reasons based on factors such as culture, religion or history behind these emotions? The latter may of course also apply to negative emotions. These elements are especially important in this thesis as the reactions and emotional feelings the Japanese have towards nature will be explored. As mentioned earlier, cultural reasons might lead the Japanese into different patterns of emotions towards nature, particularly when compared to Westerners.

Generally, *shift-in-situation* emotions are also an important part of the appreciating term. It is particularly applicable in unique events such as participating in a sledge dog safari. The tourist has likely rarely or never participated in such events before, providing greater chances for him or her to experience shift-in-situation emotions. To have a better understanding of when such emotions occur is naturally important for the provider of the service. This way one can focus on features of the service which provoke positive emotions, and at the same time avoid negative provoking features.

2.7.2 Consuming as Integration

According to Belk (1988) we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves, intentionally or not. If we but recognize this, it will be possible to understand what possessions actually mean. The *consuming-as-integration* metaphor refers to this. In other words what consumers do in order to integrate and connect a valued consumption object to their identity. This has to do with the *self* concept (see own heading above). To summarize quickly from above: Integrating practices operate in two directions. Objects are integrated into our identity, or we attempt to reorient our self-concept to align with an institutionally defined identity (Solomon 1983; Belk 1988). The

goal of integrating practices is to break down the distance between the consumer and the object (Prebensen 2012).

Integration in consumption activities in which the consumers greatly participate in the creation of the consumption object (travels, parties, photography etc.) is relatively simple when compared to the task of integrating oneself with mass-produced consumption objects such as phones, banking or cars (Holt 1995). The fact that mass-produced consumption objects already have a concrete meaning makes them harder for the consumers to adapt to or alter in the desired way, it creates a distance between the consumer and the consumption object. They are however needed in order to construct institutional structures (social worlds, family, marriage, religion, law etc.) and helps individuals to discriminate visually among culturally specified categories (McCracken 1986). The institutional distancing between consumer and consumption object can however be broken down by the consumer by applying integrating practice methods (Holt 1995). This includes three steps: **assimilating, producing and personalizing.**

Assimilating

By *assimilating*, the individual mentally absorbs the social world of which they wish to belong to. By doing so, the individual can either directly assimilate (for instance by participating in travelling) or indirectly assimilate (e.g. by reading about a particular destination or talking to other people about it) with the social world (Holt 1995). Although assimilating indirectly has a certain effect, Holt (1995) argues that a direct participation in the social world will enhance the possibilities for assimilating in that the individual can interact directly with the event and other people also participating in that event. This can be done on a level that is unavailable through other modes of consumption. This also allows the individual to learn about and play the role of the participant as defined by the given social world (Holt 1995). In order to play this role in an effortless and taken-for-granted way, assimilating requires the individual to think, feel, act and look like a participant of the social world (Holt 1995).

Assimilating in the tourism world must be regarded as direct assimilation due to the fact that one

directly participate in the trip. As mentioned previously, this enhances the possibility for a successful assimilation. Because of this, it is important to recognize how the tourists consume the trip and what they do in order to assimilate. Of course the first question to ask is whether or not the tourist intent in fact is to assimilate in the first place.

As assimilating concerns about becoming a competent participant, the more time spent interacting with the valued element of the tourism world, the more competent the individual will become (Prebensen 2007). A tourist might attempt to assimilate towards the world of tourism as perhaps a “frequent traveler/well travelled person”, an “explorer” or “adventurer”, or just as a person having been at a certain destination. However, it is not given that the tourist is trying to assimilate with this world at all. The tourist might in fact attempt to assimilate towards a world not immediately related to tourism and travelling. For example, journeying to a nature-based destination with the intent of assimilating as a person being connected to nature, as a learner of nature, or in a spiritual way. These alternative reasons can root in culture, society or history in the same way as the aforementioned emotional reactions to e.g. nature. Indeed a Japanese person purchasing *Omiyage* (souvenir) might perhaps give it to someone to demonstrate the acquired knowledge gained from a trip (building on self-image). On the other hand, the souvenir might have nothing to do with any self-image or assimilating practices at all. Hence, it is important to identify which social world the tourist is trying to become a competent participant of, providing that the purpose of tourism related activities such as gift-buying or knowledge-seeking is in fact assimilating.

Producing

A second central factor under the integration metaphor is *producing*. This includes the way for instance a participant of an event can actively and significantly involve in the production of that event. In this process, the individual's degree of control and type and level of knowledge plays an important role (Prebensen et al. 2013). This aligns well with Belk's (1988) argument that a way of incorporating an object into your *self* is by actually creating it. The created object can either be a physical object or an abstract thought. The identity of the creator then remains in this object as

long as he or she is still being associated with it (Belk 1988). When the given institutional world allows significant participation and degree of control from the consumer, the consumer indeed participates greatly in the production of the consumption experience (Holt 1995). This is especially evident in experience value perceptions in businesses such as tourism where the event could not exist without the presence of the customer (Prebensen et al. 2013). Also this is clearly evident in co-creation activities where consumers take over, or are made to take over, certain elements of the value chain which traditionally would be done by a commercial producer (Hartmann 2013). However when the consumption object is beyond control of the consumers, the practice of producing becomes precarious. In these situations the consumers often involve themselves in imaginary interactions which are thought to effect (and thus produce) the event in which they are participating in (Holt 1995).

Personalizing

The last factor of consuming-as-integration deals with the process of *personalizing* and grants the consumers the possibility to add their own personal touch to the social world they participate in (Prebensen 2007). Because the consumers themselves have limited access to the productive core of the social world, they often concentrate on personalizing themselves instead (Holt 1995).

Personalizing practices, as opposed to producing practices, involve altering the social world to some degree (Holt 1995). But these practices and *assimilating* practices are often difficult to separate. However, Holt (1995) states that personalizing “*only occurs when consumers' manipulations alter institutional elements of the consumption world*” (Holt 1995, p. 8). This means that even if certain actions are firstly considered as personalizing actions, they can eventually become institutional parts of the given consumption world (Gistri et al. 2009). For instance the use of cowbells during ski races which originally started in Switzerland, but nowadays has become a sure item during ski races all over the world, especially during the Winter Olympics.

Another way of personalizing is when the consumers merge their own personal experiences with

those that are established in the social world (Holt 1995). For example tourists comparing what they experience in a different country to their own experiences back in their home country, or consumers participating directly in an event as a volunteer (Prebensen 2007).

Personalization in the social world of tourism is however very difficult. Some ways allowing tourists to personalize their trips still exists. For example by booking the means of which one wish to stay (e.g. in a hotel, a cabin or a tent) or transportation method. Fundamentally one can also select the location itself. As seen above, there are various types of tourism, from nature-based tourism, eco-tourism, city/urban tourism, adventure tourism, extreme tourism and so on, and the choice of tourism design is indeed a way of personalizing the trip. A person may have a particular reason for choosing to go to Norway to see the northern lights. Some choose to bring their spouse to a location under these lights to purpose, and there are even reports of couples wishing to indulge in “carnal activities” under the northern lights. True or not, it is nevertheless an authentic act of personalizing. Moreover, establishing a line between personalizing actions and producing actions in the world of tourism is somewhat difficult as the freedom in choosing how to perform (read: produce) the trip also can be considered as personalizing. Thus, the analyzing chapter of this thesis will treat them together.

2.7.3. Consuming as Play

The *consuming-as-play* metaphor is not as widely mentioned in research as the other three metaphors. Holt (1995) explains however how this addresses the use of consumption objects as resources to interact with other consumers. This metaphor fits under the autotelic dimension in that it is performed without any underlying thoughts of it being a mean to a final end. The consumption object works as material through which playful interaction can be linked to. This does not mean that it is not a fundamental element within the consuming-as-play metaphor, it instead means that it functions as a common point for people to gather around. With experience from this point, people can use it in order to entertain each other by **communing** and **socializing** (Prebensen 2007).

Communing and socializing

Communing occurs when consumers interact with each other sharing their experience of the given consumption object. A very clear example of this is found in Arnould and Price's (1993) article showing the temporary bonds created between the participants of river rafting. The consumption object were the act of river rafting working as a common gathering point. This sharing of experiences can often be a critical element of the consumption as seen in Holt's (1995) article describing the great popularity of so-called "bleachers" seats in baseball games. Despite less desirable view and the occasionally presence of obnoxious fellow spectators, they are better in regard to the communal aspects of consuming (Holt 1995).

Another element of the consuming-as-play metaphor is the aspect of socializing. This goes beyond communicating as individuals become some sort of performers using their gathered experience to entertain others (Prebensen 2007). For instance in the case of Harley Davidson owners who participate intimately in a subculture, develop relationships with others who possess similar values and perspectives, and exchange experiences and comments (Schembri 2009). Holt (1995) characterizes it by consumers often attempting to replicate, or outdo, the comments of other participants, reflecting the performative nature of socializing.

The fundamental consumption object in tourism is the actual trip itself and all of which it includes, these actions and products provide the focus point which playful interactions involves around (Gistri et al. 2009). One of the consuming-as-play metaphors, communing, is very present within the boundaries of tourism. Travelling with family, close friends and even strangers can result in a great deal of shared experience. Given enough time together the group eventually develop shared rituals and habits (Gistri et al. 2009). Especially being in small groups surrounded by nature typically create bonds among the participants. This can be seen in Gyimóthy and Mykletun's (2004) article where a group of eight Norwegian tourists went on a 7-8 days self-arranged trekking trip in the harsh, Arctic tourist destination of Svalbard. Their shared experience created a strong bonding friendship and several unique habits, rituals and even internal competition. Special events or unique places can also evoke a feeling of being on an

adventure in the mind of the tourist and be perceived as illusory, strange and game-like (Kristeva 1984). This state of almost altered consciousness can often be achieved in remote, risky, or breath-taking places (Gyimóthy and Mykletun 2004), for instance when seeing the beauty of the northern lights dancing in the sky.

Also directly socializing through tourism is a way of consuming-as-play. Tourists frequently engage in socializing activities to mingle and share their thoughts with fellow tourists. Often they share their insight with each other regarding what they experience and/or previously have experienced. This communication can be pure entertaining and humorous as well, creating a linkage with like-minded fellow tourists (Gistri et al. 2009). Even modest communication like smiles, nods and small talk (Prebensen 2012). Interpersonal interactions are indeed autotelic, meaning that they act as an end in themselves rather than a means to an end (Gistri et al. 2009).

2.7.4. Consuming as Classification

The consumption-as-classification metaphor involves the methods consumers use in order to classify themselves in relation to relevant others (Holt 1995). To achieve this the consumer might use the shared meanings associated with a consumption object and in this way classify themselves (Prebensen 2007). Veblen (1973) stated that the goods people obtain are not only obtained to fulfill a functional need, but that they were also obtained as a symbolical mean to communicate one's position in the society. This view shows a conscious way of classifying through consumption. Others have reported that these actions does not necessarily have to be a planned strategy, but rather occur in a less intentional and more indirect style (Bourdieu 1984).

Classification has two effects: one is to build associations or connections, the other serves as an enhancer with regard to distinction (Holt 1995). This means that these kind of consuming practices allow for clarifying and constructing connections with other individuals as well as refining one's own identity (Bonsu and DeBerry-Spence 2008). Classification is closely related to *integration*. Whereas integrational actions are used to enhance identity and break the distance between consumer and object, classificational actions are conducted in order to classify oneself

(Prebensen 2012). When building associations with, for instance a brand of clothes, one also automatically distinguish oneself from other brands (perhaps especially riviling brands), or those who do not concern themselves with wearing specific brands. Thus, the two effects from classification are interwoven. According to Holt (1995) there are two distinct methods of classifying: classifying through **objects** and classifying through **actions**.

Classifying through objects

When using the shared meanings associated with a consumption object in order to classify themselves or others, the consumers engage in so-called classifying through *objects* (Holt 1995). As Holt explains, one can not consider classification as a mere display of ones possessions to others as this would not be applicable to intangible goods such as services or public objects such as art. These fall under a category which can not be owned and thus cannot be displayed to others. Since this paper features tourism, which indeed contains various services, Holt's (1995) view of classifying through objects will be adopted, making it possible to apply it to both tangible and intangible goods.

The methods used to demonstrate an association to an object depends, of course, on the given object. However, the more intangible the object, the more difficult it becomes to demonstrate the association one has towards it. This is especially evident outside the boundaries of the object itself. For instance, when the individual tries to convey its connection after having been on a journey, or when demonstrating ones allegiance to a sports team. In order to counter this, consumers often use objects as symbols to prove their connection to an intangible object or event (Holt 1995). People having visited a famous festival or concert might show, or prove, this by purchasing and wearing festival-themed clothing like t-shirts to display and associate themselves with that particular event. Tourists might buy souvenirs and take photos of the place they visited to document their visit. These tangible objects can serve as conversation pieces and add context to stories told by the possessor (Holt 1995). Such stories (storytelling) is according to Holt a more effective way of conveying the degree of quality or intensity the consumer has towards an object. By storytelling the consumer is able to provide details which further strengthens their credibility,

and it gives the consumer a vehicle through which they are able to pinpoint the quality or intensity of their relationship towards the object (Holt 1995).

Classifying through actions

In contrast to classifying through objects, when classifying through actions, the meanings of an object is irrelevant. The significant part is rather *how* the consumer interacts with the object (Holt 1995). By *experiencing* the consumption object in order to classify oneself, one can convey the meanings of these actions to others without the use of a tangible object. By performing the expected conventionalized actions in public, this will serve as a clear symbol and indicator of the consumers understanding of for example an event. Take for instance a group of tourists travelling to a foreign country, some of the group members may be familiar with the culture and customs of that country and thus demonstrate this to their fellow travel companions through their actions.

According to Holt (1995) another way consumers can classify through actions is by the use of mentoring. This is a matter of experience and competence where a more competent participant often will serve as a mentor for those with less competence. If we look back at the aforementioned group of tourists, one of the members might be very familiar with the bus system of the city they visit. A lesser experienced member might look at the timetable and state that “the bus is scheduled to leave in 10 minutes” upon where the experienced member explain that “the buses are always late at this time of the day”. This will signal the experienced members (the mentors) ability to predict alternative scenarios which the less competent members are unable to. Such predictions act much like storytelling in the way that it helps build distinction or affiliation (Holt 1995).

A different path to classification through action and distinguish oneself from others is the idea of *tastes* (Holt 1995). This is an effective way to convey the depth of one's understanding of something. Instead of following the widely accepted main stream way of doing something, one instead choose an unorthodox way which, if supported by relevant facts, will serve as a method to distinguish. For example when seeing the positive parts of a baseball player despite his poor

overall statistics (see Holt 1995).

Within tourism, classifying through actions is a problematic undertaking. As Allen and McGoun (2002) call attention to: a person may engage in active investing with the main objective being to gather “war stories” that can be shared with others on a later occasion. As tourism is not a tangible object it is difficult for the consumer to demonstrate his or hers relation to it. After the tourist has returned home, one cannot determine where the person has been simply by looking at her or him. Because of this, people having visited a certain place and wish others to know so will often take in use tangible objects linked to that place to prove it (classifying through objects). As previously mentioned, tourists repeatedly take photos and buy souvenirs as proof. Thus, in a tourism context, classifying through actions and classifying through objects merge into one another. Although both are described in this chapter, they will be treated together when analysing the interviews and focus group.

Gistri's et al. (2009) article concerns consumption of counterfeit products in an Italian context and indicates that consumers desire to be associated with an affluent lifestyle and/or be distinguished from non-affluent lifestyles, influence their degree of counterfeit consumption. This can also be done within tourism in that a tourist can be well aware of which items create the best appearance of wealth. It is however important to acknowledge that there can be other reasons, other than creating an image of wealth, for using objects as classification. Taking pictures or buying souvenirs is sometimes a matter of culture instead of mere “showing off”. This point is especially important in this paper as Japanese tourists are notorious for taking a lot of pictures and buying souvenirs while vacating. The question is *why* this is being done so frequently.

3. Method

In the following chapter the methodology behind the research will be presented. It describes the nature of the research, its setting, the measurement instrument, how the data is collected, description of the sample and data analysis procedures. Saunders et al. (2012) describes research method as “*The techniques and procedures used to obtain and analyse research data, including for example questionnaires, observation, interviews, and statistical and non-statistical techniques*” (p. 674). Although there are many ways to perform research, one has to ask oneself which method suits the research question best (Saunders et al. 2012).

3.1 Semi-structured interviews and focus groups as research design

Research design can be illustrated as a framework, or strategy, used for collection and analysis of data, which are used to answer the research question. It also functions as a means to justify one’s choice of data sources, collection methods, and analysis techniques (Saunders et al. 2012). To achieve a satisfactory goal, a proper strategy is indispensable.

As there are little existing knowledge and research on the relationship between the Japanese, (nature-based) tourism, and their motivation for travelling, this thesis will be utilizing a qualitative research approach with an exploratory design. By doing so, one might be able to discover variables that may be overlooked when designing quantitative studies such as questionnaire. According to Morgan and Smircich (1980), qualitative research is not based on a set of techniques, but instead on an approach whose appropriateness is determined from the nature of the social phenomena in question. A basic way of categorizing the type of research is by using the “who”, “what”, “where”, “how”, and “why” series (Yin 2014). By applying this to the research question, it is possible to determine whether the study calls for an exploratory, descriptive or explanatory approach. The goal of this study is indeed to explore the practices behind *how* Japanese consume travelling, and further if there are any particular reasons as to *why* these practices exist. Additionally, the study aims to investigate *how* the Japanese perceive nature (especially the northern lights and the midnight sun) and *why* they perceive it the way they do. Thus, the study deals with “*why*” and “*how*” questions. In accordance with Yin (2014), how and

why questions are justifiable rationale for performing exploratory studies as well as explanatory studies involving methods such as case studies and histories. Accordingly, this study has chosen to apply an exploratory design using *qualitative* semi-structured interviews and one focus group as research method. The advantages of a qualitative approach are first and foremost the richness and fullness in the data, as opposed to the more “thin”, abstractive and descriptive data usually obtained from quantitative data collections. Qualitative data together with an exploratory research design is also characterized by its depth and ability to give new insights (Saunders et al. 2012). The perhaps greatest disadvantage of this design is first of all the fact that it renders the results non-generalizable. Further, the interpretation of the findings may be judgemental, sometimes resulting in peculiar hypotheses (Saunders et al. 2012). Nevertheless, the research method and design is well-fitting to the present study as its intention is to explore an area where there is yet little research. With basis in the profile of the Japanese as written in the theory chapter, there are reasons to believe that one might be able to, through the usage of interviews and focus groups, discover unique facts about Japanese tourists and their travel related consumption practices.

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Dunn (2005, p. 79) explains that interviews are verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, is attempting to extract information from another person. There are fundamentally three types of interviews: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Longhurst 2003). A structured interview will follow a premade and standardised list of questions to go through. They are asked in almost the same way and order. The opposite of this is unstructured interviews that prompt the interviewee to lead the conversation, telling oral histories and similar (Dunn 2005). In the middle of these two extremes lies semi-structured interviews, a form of interviewing with a certain degree of predetermined order while at the same time preserving flexibility. These kind of interviews are performed in a conversational and informal tone. Additionally they let the participants answer in their own way using their own words instead of a 'yes or no' type of answer (Longhurst 2003).

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews is that the interviewer is able to be flexible. This means that it is possible to omit or modify questions in particular interviews should

it fit the context better. Additionally, one can change the order of questions depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al. 2012). Semi-structured interviews also opens for building on questions, or letting the interviewee explain in further detail if required. This is important in interpretative research where the aim is to “*understand the meanings that participants ascribe to various phenomena*” (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 378), which certainly is the case in this study. Further, these kind of interviews give the researcher the opportunity to deviate from the initial structure if unexpected situations should occur (Muslukhov et al. 2012), for instance if the discussion leads into areas previously not considered by the researcher (Saunders et al. 2012). Interviews are social interactions where the researcher is able to create an atmosphere that supports active participation and trust. Careful listening, body language and observation plays a key role in interpreting the responses (Borbasi et al. 2002), which can generate more detailed and correct answers than that of a questionnaire.

The disadvantages of semi-structured interviews lay mainly within data quality issues. The lack of standardisation in such interviews may cause reliability problems, meaning that other researchers may find it hard to do the same or similar observations (Saunders et al. 2012). A second weakness is that of bias. Interviewers might attempt to impose their own beliefs using comments, tone or body language. In addition, the interviewee might cause bias through their perception of the interviewer, or by being reluctant to reveal sensitive information in front of an unfamiliar person, leading to false or ‘socially desirable’ responses (Saunders et al. 2012). As the interviews are fairly long, respondents can also suffer from fatigue, rushing through their answers in order to finish quickly. Finally, there is an issue regarding the applicability of the data produced to other settings (generalisability), as it is based on a small sample (Saunders et al. 2012).

3.1.2 Focus groups

A focus group is a form of interview aiming to produce data by communication between the study participants (Kitzinger 1995). Although acknowledging that focus groups are unique, Saunders et al. (2012) lay focus groups under the more broad definition *group interview*, which is a term they use to describe all semi-structured and in-depth interviews with two or more

participants. Kitzinger (1995) considers group interviews as a convenient way of collecting data from several people at the same time, while describing focus groups as a method used to foster group interaction. Focus groups is thus not a setting where the interviewer asks each participant individually, but instead encourage talk between one another. She further explains that “*asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other’s experiences and point of view*”, is important when conducting focus groups (Kitzinger 1995).

One advantage of focus groups is that it is an excellent method for exploring the knowledge and experiences of people, and captures not only what people think of a topic, but *how* and *why* they think in that particular way (Kitzinger 1995), making it an excellent choice for this particular research. As in interviews, body language and observation are also in focus groups important when interpreting answers (Krueger 2009). Furthermore, focus groups provide information more quickly than if people were interviewed separately.

On the negative side, focus groups contain the same weaknesses as other forms of qualitative research. The quality of the data might be poor due to the small sample size, which can also influence the generalisability of the study (Krueger 2009). Bias might also take place in the same manner as with interviews, and the complexity and richness of the data achieved through focus groups might be hard to interpret and put into a system (Krueger 2009). Another weakness, or precaution, to consider when putting together a focus group of particularly Japanese participants is the importance they place on trust and relationship building, as well as their hierarchical orientation. This calls for a more homogeneous group, preventing that some members might become overthrown by larger authorities (Ziff-Levine 1990).

3.2 Operationalization - Forming of the interview guide

The interviews were performed in accordance to a premade interview guide. The first part of the guide contained information regarding the ethical responsibility one holds as an interviewer. The interviewees were assured that their name was to be held confidential. Further, it was important to define the terms that were to be used in the interview, for example, what was being meant by “nature-based tourism”. To ensure the credibility and prevent going off topic during the process,

it was also necessary to establish the parameters of the interview. As part of the introduction, the interviewees were additionally given a short introduction of the purpose of the thesis.

To get the conversation going, the respondents were asked open-ended questions about their association with Norway, the northern lights and the midnight sun. This was done in order to map their knowledge about these topics, but also in order to uncover their relation to nature. The rest of the interview further built on the aspect of nature and the respondent's feelings towards being in nature followed by Holt's (1995) model presented in chapter 3. As it would likely cause confusion and bias, the respondents were not told about the model itself. Rather the idea was to trigger the interviewees to talk freely around the four dimensions, as well as their sub dimensions, in an attempt to build a picture of how the typical Japanese tourist consume their (nature-based) vacation. It was thus important for me as the interviewer to recognize which dimension was being talked about. For instance, should the participant describe a trip to see the northern lights by using words such as "enlightening" or the Japanese word "kami" (see chapter 3), it might be an indication of their view on nature as something divine.

3.2.1 Consuming as Experience

The first subject from the model brought up was the *consuming of experience* dimension, which involve accounting, evaluating and appreciating. To approach this, the respondents were simply asked to tell about their previous travel experiences in an aim to reveal how they make sense them (accounting), however different they might be. Also pre-travel sense making were investigating by asking about their information seeking process and how they decide where to travel. Additionally, their specific style of travelling was investigated by asking practical questions such as travel duration and travel companions (how they travel). Their answers to these topics were then probed in order to unveil the "whys" of these opinions. For example, should a respondent answer that she hates travelling alone, she would have simply been asked "why?". Within and after their travel experience story, they were asked about their opinion and judgement about the different trips, unless they reported it themselves. This was done to capture their evaluation of their trips, while also being an attempt to capture their emotional responses them. The emotional responses were particularly stressed by asking about their reaction/feelings

towards their encounters while travelling. Especially important was it to inquire the respondents about their feelings when going to nature.

3.2.2 Consuming as Integration

The *consuming as integration* metaphor refers to the use of (here) tourism as a tool to enhance one's own identity. This is a tricky dimension as it is very abstract and holds similar characteristics as consuming as classification. In order to obtain some background information, the respondents were firstly asked whether their family, friends or colleagues travel a lot. They were then asked if they could remember any event in particular from their trips. This often developed into stories of interactions with local people and further questions if integration with the local community was important for the interviewees. When suited, they were directly asked if they attempted to become integrated as a part of the host culture. Also the external perception of integration were investigated by asking if it was important that they were regarded as, for instance, a "frequent traveller" or "an adventurer" by their friends, family or colleagues. Further probing of the respondents answers were performed to reveal *why* they answered in the way they did. The information regarding the *producing* and *personalizing* actions was extracted from what they told about their travelling habits as they greatly depends on how people choose to travel (e.g in groups or individually).

3.2.3 Consuming as Play

In order to capture the *consuming as play* metaphor, questions as well as information from already told stories were used. This metaphor involves the sub factors *communing* and *socializing*. Typically, the first question would be whether the interviewee preferred travelling in groups or by themselves. By doing so, it was possible to ask follow-up questions about the importance of communing (sharing of how they experience the consumption object with each other). If they share those experiences with fellow travellers, they were asked in what manner they did and, as mentioned, the importance of it. The importance of socializing revealed itself mainly through the stories told by the respondents and were further probed if necessary. Additionally, a general question asking for what was being held as the most important thing to gain from travelling, were asked.

3.2.4 Consuming as Classification

Consuming as classification concerns with the use of consumption objects to classify oneself in relation to others, and involves classifying through *objects* and classifying through *actions*. Measuring the respondent's use of objects as a tool of classification was done by inquiring about the Omiyage culture of Japan. They were asked directly about their thoughts about this culture, often leading to lengthy conversations. If the conversation were to stop, they were further probed in order to gain the most information as possible. It was important to ask whether it was necessary to participate in the culture or not, to who and what they purchase, as well as essential details about how such a gift is supposed to be (for instance, if it matters if the gift is produced outside of the host country). These questions reflect the “hows” of the Omiyage culture. However, revealing the “whys” of it required more open questions and storytelling, thus, they were plainly asked *why* they in fact buy souvenirs. The same procedure was done in regard to picture taking. Particularly important with picture taking was to ask what the respondent actually did with the taken pictures. In the end, if no confirmative answers were provided, more narrowed and direct questions were asked. There were no specific questions targeting classifying through actions. Rather, the intent was to extract such behaviour through the answers given about the Omiyage culture, picture taking and generally throughout the interview.

3.3 The interview

The interviews/focus group were conducted in Kyoto and Osaka (Japan), and were done there primarily because of convenience. This means that the respondents were not necessarily familiar with Norway. There are however arguments suggesting that conducting interviews/surveys within the host country is disadvantageous when dealing with Japanese tourists. Ahmed and Krohn (1993) explains that the Japanese “*(...) save all complaints until they return home. They believe that expression of true personal feelings would be disruptive*” (p. 81). Reisinger and Waryszak (1994) also found indications of Japanese tourists being reluctant to giving negative responses when rating their perceptions of Australian shop assistants. The reason being that they felt that they would embarrass the shop assistants if they did (Reisinger and Waryszak 1994). Leaving out emotions (especially displeasure) to avoid embarrassing the (Norwegian) tourism industry, and to save face, will undeniably cause validity issues (Iverson 1997). Another argument for *not*

performing the interview in Norway is the nature of segments. Japanese tourists are not homogenous, meaning that interviewing only the individuals visiting Norway would likely be insufficient, and fail to measure the general Japanese (Iverson 1997). Obviously those who have already decided to travel to Norway will find no difficulties coming up with their personal reasons for going there (to visit nature), and they will certainly have a strong image of the country.

Regarding the interviews and the focus group themselves, 7 people participated in the interviews. Out of these there were five women and two men. A focus group consisting of two men and one woman supplemented these interviews. The questions were the same, but discussion was encouraged within the focus group. Before conducting the real interviews, a test interview was performed in order to practice conversational flow. By doing so, it was possible to check the time needed as well as whether the questions were understandable or not. Eliminating confusing questions also helps when asking follow-up questions and strengthens the internal validity (Saunders et al. 2012). Furthermore, performing a test interview develops the ability of the interviewer, making it possible to expose situations where one unintentionally impose personal beliefs (bias) (Saunders et al. 2012).

Due to convenience, nine out of ten interviews were conducted at various locations throughout Kyoto whereas one was done in the neighbouring city Osaka. To create a comfortable setting, the interviewees were (if desired) given the freedom to choose themselves exactly where to hold the interview. If the respondents feel comfortable, there is an increasing chance that they will be more willing to open themselves, increasing the probability of avoiding response bias (Saunders et al. 2012). Some were most comfortable in a quiet and private area, while others preferred public areas such as cafes or restaurants. To keep it tidy and to avoid bothering others, the focus group was held in a private and quiet environment. Before the interview, the respondents were informed that it would take approximately 50-60 minutes, the focus group somewhat longer. The respondents were assured that the interviews were confidential and the only information appearing on paper would be general non-traceable information. Further, free talk and elaboration

were encouraged. Some talked nonstop by themselves, while others needed frequent follow-up questions.

3.3.1 The post interview process

With permission from the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded. As soon as possible after performing the interviews these recordings were transcribed, which means that they were “reproduced as a written (word-processed) account using the actual words” (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 550). When analysing this data, it is important to also take into consideration which tone of speech is being used as well as pauses, coughs, sighs and similar data. As the interviews occasionally differ in regard of question order, it was necessary to “tidy up” the interviews and recognize what was actually being talked about. During the analysing process, it was also important to keep in mind the theory and goal of the study, and constantly discuss the findings in connection with this.

3.3.2 The respondents – a short presentation

As the author’s Japanese ability was not sufficient to the degree that interviews conducted in Japanese would be an option, English speaking Japanese were chosen as participants. The sampling method reflects this in that a mix between *convenience sampling* (selecting participants who are easily available) and *snowball sampling* (already recruited participants help identifying new ones) was chosen (see Saunders et al. 2012).

The ten respondents are presented in the table below. There are 6 informational points: gender, age, occupation, travel experience, associations with Norway, and associations with the northern lights or the midnight sun. *Travel experience* will be weighted by diversity more than frequency (e.g. going to one place several times) and will be graded as low, medium or high. This grading also applies for *associations with the northern lights/midnight sun*. *Associations with Norway* will also be rated in the same way in addition to keywords picked out from the interviews.

Table 2: Introduction of the depth-interview participants

Gender	Fictive Name	Age	Occupation	Travel experience	Associations with Norway	Associations with Northern Lights/Midnight Sun
Woman	Aoki	25	Company office worker	Low	High (Educational system, health care, cold, Vikings, high taxes, rich life, TV programs of Japanese living in Norway)	High
Woman	Suzuki	20	Student	High	Low	Low
Man	Ono	20	Student	High	Medium (Blueberries, “Norwegian Wood”, consumption of whale, mountains, lakes)	Medium
Man	Tanaka	37	Japanese teacher	Medium	Medium (Salmon, Vikings, many can speak English well)	Low
Woman	Watanabe	60-69	Japanese teacher	High	Medium (Northern lights, nature, The Vigeland park)	High
Woman	Itou	74	Retired	High	High (Aurora, equality of men and women, first female prime minister “Brundtland”, good educational system)	High
Woman	Nakamura	61	Part-time jobs at 3 universities	High	Low (Northern country similar to Finland, the word “fjord”)	Medium

The participants of the focus group are listed below. The individual associations with Norway, the northern lights and the midnight sun might be somewhat inaccurate as the participants came up with these jointly.

Table 3: Introduction of the focus group participants

Gender	Fictive name	Age	Travel experience	Associations with Norway	Associations with Northern Lights/Midnight Sun
Man	Yamamoto	29	High	medium (snow, “Frozen” movie, fjord, Oslo National Museum, “Norwegian Wood” novel)	Medium/high
Man	Kobayashi	24	Medium/ high	low (skiing, Oslo, black distasteful candy)	Medium/high
Woman	Matsumoto	26	Medium	low (mountain, snow, tall people)	medium

4. Analysis and results

The focal point of this study was to explore the behaviour of Japanese tourists going abroad as well as examining their relations with nature, Norway and the phenomena (the northern lights and the midnight sun) which can be observed there. The following chapter presents the research findings derived from the depth interviews and the focus group.

The interviewees describe their own way of enjoying a tourist experience, the motives for travelling, the way they travel, who they prefer travelling with, their associations with Norway and so forth. Additionally the interviewer tries to dig into their feelings towards nature and being on a nature trip. Holt's (1995) four metaphors for consuming will be presented systematically alongside statements from the study participants. Although briefly appearing under these metaphors, the findings associated to Norway, nature, and nature-based travelling will mainly be presented subsequent to the model review.

4.1 Consuming as Experience

4.1.1 Accounting

During accounting one uses an interpretative framework to make sense of what is being encountered (Holt 1995). Information and pre-knowledge is required in order to build this framework. The interviews revealed that the interpretative framework used to make sense of travelling in general mainly was based on their own previous travel experiences as well as those of others. However, when specifically inquired about nature-based travelling it seems as if a different framework is being put into use, namely an every-day framework.

First off when looking into travelling in general the respondents were asked about their previous travel experience. Travel experience was overall high with some having experiences stretching all over the world. Many also had experience from studying abroad. These kind of experiences certainly help constructing an interpretative framework of how tourism and travelling can be understood, and by using them, typifying practices can be applied. However, other resources used for this were also prominent. First of all travel books, and especially a very famous Japanese

travel book named 地球の歩き方 (chikyū no arukikata) (lit. “how to walk the earth”), were frequently mentioned as a source of information for understanding the target destination.

“Usually Japanese people have a guidebook, then obey that guide book completely.”

- Ono

Other than the use of guidebooks and previous experiences, there were different preferences concerning information seeking. Internet was mentioned as a source of information especially amongst the youngest of the participants. Nevertheless, the by far most important and trusted resource for gaining pre-travel information about a new destination was the information gained from other people. Mostly this was done by talking to friends, family members or colleagues having experience from the particular place. When Aoki was asked why she thought that people are the best source of information she replied:

“Because I don’t really believe TV and media. They are advertising right? They have to advertise. So of course there are many dirty places. Maybe it could be more beautiful place than they say, but I don’t really trust them. I trust the person who has gone there, and if it’s my friend then I will trust.” (Aoki)

The distrust in media seemed evident in many of the interviews. Tanaka agrees with TV being a bad source of information and also place his trust in people he can talk to:

“I think I’m not influenced by TV, because TV captures the best part right? So I think that makes me idealize a place and I don’t want it. I think rather I talk to people and friends who have been there. I love to hear about peoples travel experiences, especially bad things. Not to be careful or something, but rather to expected, brace myself for it. ‘It might happen to me if I go’. I love talking to people about travelling and I always love to hear peoples travel experiences.” (Tanaka)

Itou also regarded advertisement as insecure information sources:

“You need to get information as to how people really experience, because advertisement is advertisement.” (Itou)

A large portion of the interviewees mentioned their friends in relation to travelling and information seeking. It is clear that information from trusted persons such as family members or friends is valued high, but the interviews show that also information gathered from unknown people were popular sources of information used in the accounting process. These come in the form of reviews (of hotels, trips etc.) written on the internet. For some of the interviewees, reviews written by other Japanese were especially valuable. Suzuki expressed that when picking hotels in India she always read all the reviews she can find about them online. Furthermore, she adds that:

“I also see how many Japanese people stayed at the hotel cause I think Japanese people, they care about the hotels. So if many Japanese people stay at the hotel it means that the hotel is good.” (Suzuki)

Aoki also agrees in that the thoughts and opinions of other Japanese are more safe and trustworthy as they are likely to have the same thinking as herself. Both Aoki and Suzuki as well as some other respondents explain this preference in relation to safety.

The above indicates that the respondents put their trust in people actually having been at the destination; at the same time as being very well aware of the deceptions that advertisement can create (e.g. Carson et al. 1985). It is safe to say that the experiences of other people as well as their own create the framework used to make sense of (accounting) travelling for many of the participants in this study. Furthermore, it is also reasonable to say that humans in general trust people close to them rather than someone who is not (such as advertisers) (e.g. Massey and Dawes 2007). What is hazier is the “why” of this trust in others and especially if the trust is

enhanced by the other part also being Japanese, despite being a complete stranger. Looking at former research, this might have to do with *ethnocentrism* which deals with individuals who think that their group (country) is “superior” to others, thus judging the opinions of fellow countrymen higher than those of others (for more information about ethnocentrism see Netemeyer et al. 1991). Also mentioned previously, the Japanese have a unique culture emphasizing security. Keeping in mind what was written earlier in the method chapter; *members of a culture share a tendency towards acting in a similar way in similarly perceived situations*, this might be a cultural matter. Based in culture theory it’s perhaps not surprising that individuals put greater trust in e.g. reviews (consumer-generated content) written by people coming from the same country as themselves. In general, such reviews are becoming more and more important in the information-gathering process (Gretzel and Yoo 2008). The conducted interviews indicate a great reliance on consumer-generated content as well as the use of interpersonal communication, or so-called *word of mouth* (WOM) communication, to gain trustworthy information before travelling somewhere. This is not unexpected as studies have demonstrated the importance of WOM for lowering perceived risk and uncertainty, especially when dealing with intangible products (Bansal and Voyer 2000; Bone 1995; Brown and Reingen 1987; Gretzel and Yoo 2008; Murray 1991).

4.1.2 Evaluating

Evaluating activities has to do with using norms, history and conventions to construct value judgements. In order to figure out how the participants of this study evaluated their tourist experiences they were asked about their travel history. By doing so, they simply did not sum up the different countries they have visited, but also added small stories relating to these trips. From this, it was possible for the interviewer to tell how the different countries and what they contain are evaluated against one another. The evaluations are fairly different. Whereas one of the interviewees, having visited London, express that:

“It was okay, but big cities are always the same right?” (Nakamura)

Another one says that:

“(...) I've been to Taiwan 12 times, but I never get tired of it because that's the way I travel. Every time I go I find different things and I try different food, but I meet the same people.” (Tanaka)

Tanaka later adds that he has been visiting Hong Kong three times as well. Clearly these two evaluate their travel experience to big cities differently. Whereas one regards them all alike, the other constantly finds new things to experience despite having visited the same place a dozen times. Similarly to accounting processes and as anticipated in the theory chapter, the interviews indicate that the element of safety is of great importance. Safety was often mentioned during the description of previous destinations visited by either the interviewees themselves or people close to them. Nakamura had a particularly fine sense of country evaluation in regard to safety. She mentioned having travelled a lot in Asian countries and were further asked if these also included countries located in the Middle East:

“Middle Asia? Middle East Asia is too dangerous right?! (...) I have no idea. These are the *last* places I would visit.” (Nakamura)

She also talks about her friend living in Saudi Arabia and that she never thinks about visiting her, in fact she does not want to either. Her son, having travelled to Egypt experiencing little to no hospitality as well as aggressive people, was also mentioned. She further narrates about her own experience while visiting China:

“(...) when people are not nice I don't want to go to the country. Like China, I went to Shanghai 10 years ago and it was okay but I look like a Chinese person, and they talk to me in Chinese, but even if so they are so aggressive and I feel as if I did something wrong and I was scolded. I was so scared. (...) And in Taiwan also they thought I'm Chinese, but they never talked like that. So Taiwanese people and Chinese people are very different. So I want to go to Taiwan more and more but I don't want to go to China right now.”
(Nakamura)

A similar evaluation is also reflected in the response of Tanaka when comparing Hong Kong towards Taiwan:

“I’ve been to Hong Kong 3 times. One thing I can say about it is that I don’t want to live there but it’s a very interesting city. (...) And the people are not so kind. That’s the biggest difference from Taiwan, because in Taiwan they have a good image of Japanese people in the first place so they are very nice to us. Too nice sometimes.” (Tanaka)

Suzuki also seems to value comfort and kindness when travelling:

“I didn’t like France. I went to Paris and I didn’t like it there. People were not so kind and everything is expensive and they don’t speak English so it was really hard to communicate.” (Suzuki)

Although the responses were scattered, it became clear that some of the participants constructed value judgements of travelling based on previous experiences, whereas others based it on the degree of comfort. Some, like Tanaka, based their evaluations on both. In other words, evaluating actions in this study mostly regard comparisons to *historical* and *normative* baselines. The more travel-experienced participants typically used the travelling framework to make comparisons, while the less experienced were more apt to applying an every-day framework. The former is perhaps not that remarkable as Holt (1995) notes that also baseball spectators having gained more experienced commonly use exactly the baseball world framework when comparing (Holt 1995, p. 5). On the other hand, some of the less experienced travellers compared the politeness and service experienced overseas towards that of Japan, resulting in disappointment and even fright. It might have to do with their use of an every-day framework from Japan, the land where customers are treated extremely well and even referred to with the same polite honorific (様 – “*sama*”) as Gods (Johansson 1990). Again, this reflects how important safety in the form of feeling comfortable (politeness) is being considered. Other studies indicate similar results. Reisinger and Turner

(2002) analysed five language groups of Asian tourists to Australia including Japanese. They concluded that Australian tourism providers should provide the best service they can, particularly to the Japanese, which was the group most distinct from the Australian sample. Hence, it seems like the perception of comfort/service politeness is particularly important when the Japanese evaluate travelling.

4.1.3 Appreciating

When appreciating, emotional responses occur towards the people, action, and objects that are involved in the consumption experience (Holt 1995). Especially related to this thesis and the aspect of appreciating is the emotions connected to visiting nature. As such, the interviewees were particularly asked about their feelings towards nature and being in nature. Many responses align well with the theory saying that the Japanese might have a unique relation to nature as they indeed made ties to metaphysical or divine matters when asked about their feelings towards nature:

“Now I am a Christian, so I know the beauty of the creating, Gods creation. And feel, yeah, so very much amazed ‘sugoi’ [jp: “amazing”]. Not only the nature such a big things, but like flowers, and birds, birds singing. Often times I feel really beautiful, it’s a creation of God.” (Watanabe)

She emphasises that she had such feelings when she was younger and before becoming a Christian as well:

“I was not a Christian, but I thought ‘wow’ ‘sugoi!’. The sea, the beauty, and blue sea. It was very calm so I feel something. Something holy, something special. Even I was not Christian, but I felt something.” (Watanabe)

The very young participants also expressed themselves similarly when asked about their feelings towards nature:

“Yeah, relaxed, it makes me relaxed. (...) Comfortable.” (Ono)

Additionally, when asked directly whether he had a scientifically oriented or supernatural oriented mind in relation to nature and the northern lights he replied:

“Both. Usually scientific, but also something over scientific.” (Ono)

Moreover, Aoki also attempts to explain her profound feelings towards nature:

“When I’m in nature I’ll be... I’ll be like dead, or small. So small small small as compared to this earth and space. (...) if I have a small problem or worries (...), those small problems in my mind become gone if I see the big things, great things. It’s too human thinking. If I become too much concentrated on, focus on the small problems, like human thinking, it’s gone when I see greatest, Gods creation. (...) It’s more for cleansing my heart and thinking. That becomes recover for heart, mental health.” (Aoki)

Even respondents expressing that they do not believe in any religion, nor think of anything in relation to Shinto (such as *kami*) when in nature, say that nature is a place for purification:

“(...) like pure. I think it’s kind of shower, like clean myself.” (Suzuki)

As mentioned in the theory, not only positive feelings lies under the aspect of appreciating. Also negative feelings are part of it. Tanaka surprisingly indicated a sense of fright when being in nature:

“Where there was a big waterfall I felt that I was kind of scared. You know it’s like, if I get lost here I wouldn’t know what to do, something like that, I felt that my own existence is very very subtle, and nature doesn’t care about whether I exist or not. So I had this sense of fright. And I can say that about any kind of nature, the ocean, the rivers, mountains. There’s nothing a human can do about it, once there is some trouble. But I

think that's one of the most attractive things about nature. Because you can't handle it.”
(Tanaka)

These kind of feelings again relate back to the element of nature being physically safe or not. This is evident when Tanaka was later asked about his view on nature in relation to Shinto thinking. He mentions something interesting in regard of nature, the divine, and safety:

“I think that's why, I don't speak on the behalf of Japanese people, but if you ask me that's why I stay away from nature. Because it belongs to God, God belongs to nature so there's nothing you can do about it, you just have to leave them alone. So I think most Japanese people are generally afraid of nature. And almost subconsciously they are afraid of it. That's why they kind of like pray for the mountain, worship the mountain. They build shrines in the mountain because it's not for humans and they need permission to go inside. (...) Yeah, it's very deep.” (Tanaka)

Although many of the respondents comment on their feelings towards nature in a divine context, there are however exceptions in the sample. Nakamura for instance indicated that she had no feelings of something “godlike” or divine when visiting nature. Her appreciation of nature was rather purely because of its beauty and its ability to make her relaxed. Kobayashi believes that if one were to ask Japanese people whether they think there is some God in everything and in nature (Shinto way of thinking) they would say “no”. He further physically points at some Japanese persons engaged with making food in the vicinity of a stone statue located just outside of the window. In relation to this, he says that even though Japanese might not believe in the Gods in the nature, they still have some unique pattern of thinking and behaviour.

It all boils down to which framework is being used to appreciate the situation, people, actions, and objects (Holt 1995). Having pure aesthetic responses simply means that a nature-framework (e.g. when comparing the nature in Japan to that of Norway) or even an everyday-framework is being used, in the same way as baseball spectators use an everyday-framework to appreciate professional player's “*feats that are beyond what they can imagine themselves doing.*” (see Holt

1995, p. 6). On the contrary, those who emotionally respond in a way related to the divine use a different framework, or perspective, through which they appreciate what is being experienced.

4.2 Consuming as Integration

4.2.1 Producing and personalizing

The world of tourism opens for great opportunities for the consumers to produce the trip themselves. As pointed out in the method chapter, producing within tourism greatly depends on how one chooses to travel. As opposed to theory saying that Japanese mostly travel in group tours (e.g. Prideux and Shiga 2007), the participants of this study all more or less travelled independently. When asked about their thoughts of group travelling and touring in a group, many stated a rather strong opposition against these forms of travelling:

“Yeah, I don’t like it, it’s so boring (...) because you don’t have any chances to talk with local people if we’re in a group.” (Suzuki)

“I think that’s boring! Place, place, place!” (Matsumoto)

“I hate it! I could never travel with people who are like that, it’s so stressful.” (Tanaka)

“I hate. It’s kind of like no privacy. Or too fast to move, I can’t really see the things I want to see. It’s cheap, but only good point, cheap.” (Aoki)

Itou admitted to having taking a group tour in Grand Canyon, but declares:

“But other than that I don’t think I have ever joined a group tour. It’s not that I detest the group itself but then I need to have my own days rather than their set days.” (Itou)

These statements are rather definite in answering *why* they do not wish to engage in group travelling/touring. It appears that having a high degree of freedom in choosing where to go and how to perform the vacation is crucial for these particular individuals. When further asked what

kind of persons they thought would participate in group tours and why, old people and people who doesn't comprehend foreign languages (especially English) were frequently mentioned. Similar findings can be found in several studies concerning the Japanese and their travel habits (e.g. Watkins 2008; Reisinger and Turner 2000; Nozawa 1992; Ziff-Levine 1990). Graburn (1983) directly ties the preference for group travelling/touring to Japan's historical isolation and its relatively late entry into international tourism. Consequently, English language education in Japan is lagging behind although starting to improve (Yashima 2002). As all the interviewees in this study spoke English, they undoubtedly experience little problems with communication on trips, and thus feel no reason to participate in Japanese-spoken tours.

4.2.2 Assimilating

As mentioned earlier, assimilating in the tourism world will be direct as the traveller directly participates in the trip. The goal of assimilation is to become a competent participant of a social world. The question is which social world one wishes to assimilate with. As seen above, none of the study participants preferred group travelling/touring. As such, it then became interesting to see *how* they in fact prefer to travel. The consuming as integration metaphor refers to the identity (or self) of people. As the theory chapter covers, the two directions *self-extension processes* and the *reorientation of the self-concept towards an institutionally defined identity* must be examined under this metaphor.

Integrating practices were evident among some of the participants. To the question of whether they were attempting to temporarily become a part of the community they were visiting, many agreed. They were probed in order to extract the “hows” of how this is done in particular. Suzuki talked about her experience in China where she did as the Chinese and put the dinner fish bones at the table as opposed to the Japanese custom of putting them on the dishes. Tanaka enjoys travelling to cities in order to get a glimpse of local people and their customs:

“(...) in cities there are many local people walking around and I like observing them. And I like observing what people are eating, what local people are eating and I want to eat that.” (Tanaka)

One of the young students having recently visited Slovenia recalled his integrating activities:

“For example diving in not clean water. For Japanese we don’t like to go, but Slovenian people do. And my homestay ‘brother’ didn’t put on shoes, even in the road or supermarket. Even mountain they don’t, he don’t. I also tried. Pain.” (Ono)

When asked why he wanted to do this he answered:

“Cause like Slovenian style. I wanted to near by Slovenian. I went to church in Sunday morning, even I’m not Christian I went there to pray.” (Ono)

Watanabe performed integrating practices through visiting markets. She finds it very interesting to talk to people in the specific country and see how they go about their daily lives. Also Aoki enjoys talking to the locals and deems it a necessary part of the trip. She illustrates it by saying that going to Korea for shopping and not talking to anyone would invoke a feeling of never actually having been in Korea.

Experiencing the host community is obviously important, but these statements outline the “hows” of how integrating practices are performed by these particular participants. When looking into the “whys” of why they actually do it, it might be an indication of their willingness to learn something from the community. This desire to learn may be related to the desire to extend the self-concept, however separating self and learning in this context is difficult. The Scandinavian Tourist Board (2006) also performed research on Japanese tourists. Their findings indicated that individual travellers went for longer stays in fewer destinations as opposed to group travellers. They further state that these individual tourists attempt to integrate the place they visit into their lives and that delicious foods and safety were very important for them (Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006). Hayashi and Fujihara (2008) saying that Japanese travelling alone want an unsure and almost risky experience also enhance these claims. Independent travellers enjoy talking and meeting with the locals. On the other hand, the people joining the tours want the opposite; they

want more safety and want to feel comfortable. Such findings fit well with the findings of this study as well, but whether these integrating actions are performed in order to strengthen the self-concept or to simply learn something is still unclear. Whichever the reason, these actions are by any means instrumental actions (a mean to an end) and clearly important for individual Japanese travellers.

4.3 Consuming as Play

In this particular context, the consuming-as-play metaphor was determined through questions around the interpersonal actions that may occur during travelling. The participants' judgement of group travelling was covered in the last section. Most of them did not prefer group travelling or touring, characterizing it as "boring" or "stressful". The question further went in the direction of finding out what kind of travel form they actually preferred, why it was preferred, and whether or not it has anything to do with *communing* or *socializing*. Bear in mind that this metaphor contains autotelic actions meaning that using communication in order to learn or strengthen the self (as seen in the consuming-as-integration section) does not belong in it.

Aoki said that she wanted to speak to other Japanese if she for instance spotted them looking at maps, asking them where in Japan they are from et cetera. Tanaka, having visited Taiwan twelve times expressed that he always attempts to find new things to do and different foods to try out, but that he meets the same people every time. For him *communing* is a very important part of travelling:

"(...) it's very important for me to talk to people that I'm travelling with, about the trip. It gives me better feedback than travelling by myself. And I like discussing what we experience, what we ate, while travelling and after." (Tanaka)

Several responses indicated a desire to visit friends living in other countries, or travelling with friends from the home country:

“Friends, mostly two people, me and my friend. I go to countries where my friends live and I want to stay at their house. So two people is the best for me for travel.” (Suzuki)

Nakamura tells a story about her trip to Laos where she talked vigorously to fellow Japanese whom she met, even sightseeing with one of them. She recalls it as a nice experience and states that when she travels alone communing is important and being somewhat less important when travelling with friends. Itou also enjoy talking when travelling, especially in foreign languages. She also adds that when admiring something beautiful such as nature, she would like to share the experience together with somebody. It is evident that almost all of the participants of this study preferred travelling together with someone close to them, be it friends or family. Sharing the experience (communing) with others seems somewhat important.

Moreover, icons or totems often serve as the basis for sacred experiences. Within tourism, special attractions or locations can acquire the status as icons (Prebensen 2012; Holt 1995; Belk et al. 1989). Group communication is then focused on these icons, creating powerful interaction (Holt 1995). Interviews in this study show signs of certain tourist destinations serving as an icon. According to some of the interviewees, Paris (France) is one of the most iconic cities for the Japanese. Suzuki, having been “hyped up” before travelling to Paris found herself in disappointment over how dirty the city actually turned out to be. Matsumoto admired Paris and had a desire to travel there while Nakamura also talked about how cities such as Paris are perceived as fashionable and sophisticated by the Japanese. Admiring of certain locations are also evident in previous theory and studies (e.g. Moeran 1983; Guichard and Moon 2008). In fact, some Japanese tourists visiting Paris become ill from (among other factors such as exhaustion) the difficulties they have accepting the disparity between the idealised image they have of Paris, and the reality, giving birth to the term “Paris syndrome” (Tamami 1998; news.bbc.co.uk). Apparently, such iconic tourist locations are highly admired by the Japanese and frequently idealised by the Japanese media. Kobayashi from the focus group comments on this:

“If you go to the book shop in Japan you would see many many tourist guides and I think most of them that Japanese produce is Western European countries. So probably there is also the problem for advertisement (...) the mass media is making the image of what it is like to go to Europe.” (Kobayashi)

Matsumoto comments further on this and believes that particularly girls want to visit so-called 憧れ (“akogare” – yearning; longing for; admire) places such as a heart-shaped island or cities like Paris. Moeran (1983) confirms that there is a certain degree of admiration of Western culture as he explored the language of Japanese travel brochures.

4.4 Consuming as Classification

As mentioned in the theory chapter, classifying through *objects* and classifying through *actions* will be treated together when analysing the interviews, as they are highly difficult to separate in a tourism context. Within tourism, classifying can primarily be done by buying souvenirs, taking photos or buying clothing linked to the place one has visited. Since the Japanese are notoriously known for both buying souvenirs *and* taking a great deal of photographs when they travel, this study tried to figure out why and how this in fact is being done.

4.4.1 Omiyage (souvenirs) as a means of classification

With the purpose of figuring out the reason behind *why* Omiyage is such an important aspect of travelling for the Japanese, the participants of this study were initially questioned about their general thoughts about this culture. Most of the interviewees (8) were either neutral or positive towards the culture, whereas one thought it was unnecessary and one expressed strong hatred towards it. One of the more positive views regard Omiyage as a way of caring about others:

“Omiyage? It’s great. (...) it’s just how you care about, show how you care about a person, not become selfish (...) it’s great to care about others for your journey, even you’re having fun you can share with others.” (Aoki)

Other answers demonstrate a more neutral view of the Omiyage culture:

“It’s not such a bad idea. But then if you just spend the whole trip to look for Omiyage all the time it is just ridiculous I feel.” (Itou)

Whereas one of the participants utter his hate towards it:

“I hate it [*laughs*]. You don’t know how much I hate it. It’s one of the worst parts of our culture. I think it’s a waste of time, just to take time to buying souvenir. And people don’t even appreciate it (...) And I don’t get anything to *myself* either. Because I don’t want things from trips, I just want to travel and I just want to eat good food. I enjoy the trip itself, not shopping.” (Tanaka)

As displayed above, there are mixed feelings about the Omiyage culture. Nevertheless, they all participate in the culture, which points out the necessity of giving gifts. This then raises the question *why*? There already exist research regarding the meaning that tourists put into souvenirs (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). There is also research that covers individuals and their need to concretize their experience, proving that they have been to a foreign place by producing an object from it (Gordon 1986). However, specific studies focusing on a particular culture or country are scarce, let alone those concerning the Japanese and their Omiyage culture (Park 2000 being one of the exceptions).

Omiyage was one of the most discussed themes in the focus group. When asked if they often purchase something for themselves at the travel location Matsumoto expressed promptly that she had to buy souvenirs first. Additional discussions within the focus group included souvenir-giving to friends and family:

“For Japanese it’s the souvenir culture.” (Matsumoto) “We feel we can share experience by giving souvenirs.” (Yamamoto). “So we can (give) topic to speak.” (Matsumoto)

They then agreed that Omiyage are being used as a topic that allows people to speak about travelling. When asked why they talk about their travelling, Matsumoto replies that they want to share (the experience). Some of the depth interview participants also mentioned sharing:

“(...) maybe because we hope the other people also enjoy, we like to share the joy of travelling together. Because when I get some Omiyage from my friends who went to some travelling I am very happy too. I enjoy.” (Watanabe)

“Omiyage culture is not just the things, it’s also the story, like Omiyagebanashi [*jp: trip story; vacation story*], you talk to people about what you’ve experienced and you share your training or your learning to others (...).” (Aoki)

As seen, there is even a word for this: *お土産話* (“Omiyagebanashi”) which is the word for souvenir (omiyage) combined with the word for story (hanashi/banashi). Fundamentally, the word means stories one has gathered from travelling that are meant to be shared (Jaffe 2004). Serving as conversation pieces, souvenirs add context to stories. Having established the context, *storytelling* can further be used in order to pinpoint the quality of one’s relation towards the trip. This behaviour is exactly similar to the behaviour found in Holt’s (1995) observation of baseball spectators (p. 10/11), and points to the use of souvenirs as means of classification. Park’s (2000) study comparing the Japanese Omiyage culture towards the very much alike Korean “Sunmul” culture indicates similar reasons as to why Japanese buy Omiyage. Park found evidence of the desire to share the experience with those unable to join the trip. Additionally, another interesting reason was found in her study, namely the use of Omiyage as “*evidence that one has been to a region or a country, at the same time it is proof that ones knows something that is unknown to others. It derives from one’s desire to be paid due recognition and difference from other people.*” (Park 2000, p. 86). This is strongly suggesting the usage of consumption objects to classify in relation to others (consuming as classification) when bearing in mind that classifying actions serve both to build affiliation as well as enhancing precisely *distinction* (Holt 1995). If so, when the Japanese indicate that they want to buy Omiyage, the underlying reason might be the

storytelling that comes with it, diversifying them from others and in the end enhancing their self-image.

On the other hand, the concept of *giri* (social obligation) can be a reason for buying Omiyage. This is especially evident when observing those who have absolutely no desire to buy souvenirs (meaning they have no self-image building motives), but for some reason still buy them. One of them felt a pressure to buy as his wife bought for her side of the family.

“Well, especially we’re married and both have relatives. And they know we went to the States so we can’t help it. So we bought not that much, but pretty much and I think it’s a waste of time (...) but if she buys something for her side I think she would have to buy for my side too right, to make it fair.” (Tanaka)

Ono was asked whether he thought of Omiyage as important or not. After thinking a lot, he replied that he did not find it important but that he still keeps bringing home suitcases half-full of them. Further, when asked differently three times about the reason behind buying Omiyage despite thinking of it as unimportant, he concludes that he does it mainly because he has to and if it’s not done, some kind of depth occurs. Moreover, when the focus group discussed the effects of taking days off from work in order to travel they express that they feel sorry for their colleagues having to work harder in order to cover the shortfall. One of them indicated that giving souvenirs to the colleagues after returning is a polite way to show “thank you”. Even Tanaka, who strongly hates the Omiyage culture, agrees that it makes sense to give Omiyage to colleagues after taking unusual long vacations. He regards it as a sort of compensation for causing nuisance to fellow colleagues.

As predicted in the theory chapter, this only adds to the work of researchers such as Park (2000) and Ziff-Levine (1990) also linking the “whys” of Omiyage to the lubrication of social relationships, reflecting the effect of *giri* as a social obligation (Befu 1968). Park (2000) concludes that Omiyage is not bought as “proof” or used in order to engage in “boastful talk” as

much as it is a fulfilment of an obligation (p. 90/91). As none of the interviewees showed signs of this, and two of them even unwillingly bought Omiyage, Park's conclusion holds for the present study as well. Also experience sharing seems important when explaining Omiyage-giving. In the end, some Japanese might purchase Omiyage merely in order to share the satisfaction of the trip with others in an act of solidarity (Park 2000), such as Aoki who describes the culture as "great" and state that if people feel forced to buy Omiyage, they should rather refrain from it. Thus, when examining the "whys" of modern Omiyage-purchasing, there are little indications saying that Japanese buy and give Omiyage in order to classify themselves in a desired way. Neither does it appear to be related significantly to the extension of the *self*, which contradicts what was being anticipated in the theory chapter.

The "hows" of Omiyage were however more uncomplicated to explore. Throughout the interviews and during the focus group the message was clear from practically all the participants, the souvenir itself had to be "the real deal", or in Japanese: 本物 ("honmono"). This means that the souvenir should be something famous from the particular place. As an example, Ono tells about him buying Slovenian salt in Slovenia. Different kinds of food or candy was particularly considered as good Omiyage as it is light weighted, small, cheap and shareable. Suzuki viewed candy as a proper Omiyage as it lets the receivers feel the culture even though they could not go with her. Not forcing the receiver to keep the gift in his or hers house was also important for some. For instance, Ono describes non-food Omiyage as "bother" for other people.

4.4.2 Pictures as a means of classification

As pointed out by Holt (1995), photos are also a great way of documenting one's attendance to something intangible such as travelling. As the Japanese are widely known for taking a lot of photos when they travel (Reisinger and Turner 2000; Watkins 2008; Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006), figuring out the reason behind this is important in order to understand if picture taking serve as affiliation builders, as an enhancer of distinction from others, or if it relates to classifying actions at all. To reveal this, the participants of this study were asked whether they take many

photos or not when they travel, and if they did, what they do with them (e.g. show to friends/family, put on SNS etc.). They were further asked directly why they do what they do.

In general, some tourists may want to be recognized as a frequent traveller, an adventurer, an explorer, or similar. In the modern world, a great way of conveying this would be to use social networking sites actively by for example posting stories and pictures on Facebook (see for instance Krasnova et al. 2013; Mehdizadeh 2010). The interviewees in this study did however not seem to have such a goal despite the fact that some of them possessed an impressive array of travel experience. All the participants except Yamamoto reported that they take many pictures when travelling and when asked what they do with them, most of the young participants (under 40 years old) reported that they regularly upload them to Facebook for their friends and family to see. When further asked why they did so, the most common answer was that they wanted to share their experience with others or that they wanted to keep pictures there as memory for themselves, a modern way of photo arranging. They were then inquired to examine the possibility of these actions having some sort of “boasting” or “show off” effect, or if they wanted other people to see their travel success. The responses were negative. Indeed, some of the interviewees did not understand the question altogether. All the members of the focus group agrees that there are no intention of bragging when showing pictures to others. Matsumoto and Kobayashi explains their reasons for sharing photos:

“Because with the photo, people can understand easily. Only the letter ‘I went to bla bla bla’, that’s okay, but people cannot imagine.” (Matsumoto)

“Because otherwise I just forgot the views and things (...) That reminds of beautiful days when I travelled.” (Kobayashi)

Very much alike responses were present in the depth-interviews, dismissing the need for bragging:

“(...) when I see [*the pictures*] again I want to make the trigger to remember my memories from watching the photos, and I want to show my friends (...) I want to introduce the country that I’ve been experiencing.” (Aoki)

Aoki was further probed to figure out whether she usually share all her pictures or not:

“No! Not for showing off, it’s wasting time. (...) If it’s like everybody goes ‘Oh I’m on the front of Hawaii’ like Waikiki beach, bla bla bla those things. No point. For me Facebook is just for the place that I can put the information that is good for society or community (...)” (Aoki)

Itou, not actively using social networking services herself, agrees and comments on why Japanese like to share, be it offline or online:

“Not to show it off, not to show off so much, but ‘this is how it was’, to share either the joy or the beauty of the experience.” (Itou)

It is apparent that at least the participants of this study intend to use pictures as a method for sharing their experience without having any further thoughts behind. It seems like taking pictures in order to be classified as e.g. an “experienced traveller” or even as a regular tourist is not a goal. Of course should the reason behind showing photos from trips to others in fact be based in this, admitting it in a face-to-face interview would take a lot of courage and would likely be avoided. This is a weakness of doing face-to-face interviews (Saunders et al. 2012).

Although this study is very limited, it seems like the participants refrain from using Facebook as a tool of conveying desirable information about themselves (i.e. self-promoting) which Facebook is frequently being used for (Mehdizadeh 2010). Sharing in order to literally share their experience with others (instead of self-promoting) might be something unique to the Japanese. In a study concerning German students sharing behaviour on Facebook, Krasnova et al. (2013) note

that German users might have a distinct sharing behaviour. This may apply to Japanese users as well and is supported by the findings of Barker and Ota (2011) which indicate that (compared to American young women), Japanese young women are more privacy concerned and are much more likely to share their experiences with those they consider as close friends through the use of closed communities such as online diaries. Because practically all study participants express that they want to share their knowledge, picture sharing might rather be an attempt to bring knowledge to oneself and ones surrounding community. This is in line with the findings of Prebensen (2012) who explored the “whys” and “hows” of organizations and their cooperation activities in networks using Holt’s metaphors. The study also indicated signs of participants using their experience to share knowledge with others as well as increasing their own.

4.5 Travel motivations and the relation to nature

The respondent’s *feelings* towards nature has been partially covered under the *appreciating* heading. Under this heading, travel motivations and their perception of Norway’s northern lights and midnight sun will be further explored.

4.5.1 Associations and thoughts of the northern lights and the midnight sun

As seen in Table 2 and Table 3, the study participants associations towards the northern lights and the midnight sun were diverse. Overall they had a deeper understanding of the northern lights, or the オーロラ (Aurora) as it is called in Japanese, and they all expressed that they wanted to see it. There were less knowledge about the midnight sun (白夜 – “byakuya”). About half of the study participants could explain it, some had a brief idea of what it was, whereas others had never heard of it. They were further asked *why* they had a desire to see (mostly) the Aurora. Many were surprised over receiving such a “naive” question. Some, for example Itou, concluded with it being something “bigger than human beings” and a mystery, but also wanted to see it because she couldn’t see it in Japan. Ono regards the Aurora as something special, sort of a surprise, and compares it to rainbows. Tanaka and Aoki explain their reason for wanting to see it:

“Because there’s nothing you can see in Japan. So you know, when I step outside of Japan I want to experience things that I can never experience in Japan. That’s one of the reasons I travel. Since you can’t observe Aurora in Japan, why not in other countries. It means that I’m not particularly obsessed with Aurora, but just because it’s something new to me.” (Tanaka)

“Why? Because it could be beautiful... *[rethinks]* why? It’s like the nature activity that we never have in Japan. So it must be beautiful I believe.” (Aoki)

Thus, the interviews indicate the opposite of what was being predicted in the theory. Although mentioned when talking about nature in general, none of the interviewees talked about anything “godlike” or divine in relation to the Aurora nor the midnight sun. Even Aoki, having a very spiritually focused mind towards nature, expressed that she wanted to see it because of its beauty and uniqueness. They all expressed that their desire to see it was based on it being beautiful as well as something unique that cannot be found within Japan. Furthermore, when asked where they thought they could see the northern lights, Finland and Alaska were repeatedly answered. Norway as a northern lights destination was mentioned only approximately twice.

4.5.2 Travel motivations

When comparing the interviews, there is a recurring pattern generally pointing in the direction of relaxation and/or learning as a motivation for travelling. As all of the interviewees were living, or have been living, in relatively large cities (mostly Kyoto and Osaka), “escaping” the city for a while was seen as valuable. Some pointed out that going to nature was a good method to use in order to get rid of accumulated stress. Ono, having previously expressed that nature makes him relaxed, highlights this point:

“I live in Osaka, it is so many buildings and so many people, it frustrates me, and boring. And nature is not usual day for me, to come there.” (Ono)

There are however different ways of relaxing as one of the interviewees express:

“I want to relax, because in Japan I have to be like other Japanese people. If I have my own opinion I can’t express in public places and I don’t like it...” (Suzuki)

Another important motivation for travelling was to travel in order to learn something, or to experience something that cannot be found in Japan. Culture was often mentioned as something they wanted to experience and learn from. Half of the respondents answered *learning*, *experience*, or *training oneself* when asked what the most important thing gained from travelling would be. At the same question two respondents answered a mix between *learning* and *relaxing*, and two answered just *relaxing*. The last respondent thought socializing, meeting new people and making local friends, as well as doing the same things as the locals, was the most important objective. Tanaka explains how learning is an indirect effect of having fun:

“I think you can learn something even from having fun, and even from doing something stupid by mistake. But not in a serious way, but I think you end up learning somehow. I think otherwise there is no point in travelling.” (Tanaka)

Aoki views travelling as a way of training oneself:

“... travelling is more about process, who you see, who you talk [*to*], what you experience so... training!” (Aoki)

Learning seemed very important, but by learning there was not a sense of serious learning as in studying. Instead many pointed out that they learned indirectly by doing activities, participating in the culture and talking to people. One of the respondents even regards learning as a prerequisite for travelling.

5. Discussion and implications

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the “hows” and “whys” of Japanese tourism consumption as well as investigating if there might be some unique and unknown reason as to why Japanese wish to visit nature in a tourism context. There was a special focus on Norway with its natural phenomena such as the northern lights and the midnight sun. An exploratory research approach using seven semi-structured depth interviews and one focus group was selected in order to answer this. The focus group and the interviews were all conducted in Kyoto or Osaka, Japan. As a backdrop, Holt’s (1995) four ‘metaphors for consuming’ were chosen as well as theories concerning Japanese culture and culture in general, novelty and learning, self-image, as well as both Japanese and general tourism motivations. The results of the study were presented and discussed together with other findings in the previous chapter while this chapter sums up the key results. Practical implications will lastly be presented together with further research suggestions.

5.1 Theoretical discussion

In the theoretical discussion the theory framework from chapter 2 will be used in an attempt to answer the “hows” and “whys” of Japanese tourism.

5.1.1 Consuming as Experience

In the theory chapter it was hypothesized that the Japanese tourist were first and foremost concerned with *safety* when travelling. This was followed by *knowledge/learning* and *novelty seeking*. Based on previous research and culture (e.g. Reisinger and Turner 1999; Gilbert and Terrata 2001) safety was guessed to be very important for the Japanese tourist.

Knowledge/learning and novelty was also theorized to have relations to culture, but moreover a relation to the building of the self-image. The interviews and the focus group confirms that these aspects indeed are important when attempting to make sense (**accounting**) of tourism, but safety turned out to be the by far most important out of them. For almost all of the study participants the accounting process involved retrieving information from other people, and perhaps especially from other Japanese. The reason as to *why* this was so important was slightly unclear, but as

mentioned, it might perhaps be based in ethnocentrism, culture and the power of consumer-generated content (e.g. word-of-mouth).

Further, their **evaluation** actions were primarily done by applying comparisons to historical and normative baselines. It was found that the more experienced travellers typically apply the historical framework (previous experience) whereas the less experienced used an every-day framework when comparing. Experienced individuals using a historical framework was similar to Holt's (1995) observation of baseball players. An every-day framework applied by less experienced individuals was reasoned to be linked to the safety and comfort found in Japan and was similar to other studies (Johansson 1990; Reisinger and Turner 2002). Overall, these results were somewhat surprising as it was theorized that comparing to historical baselines when travelling is a hard task. However, the participants possessed a great deal of travel experience, thus making such comparisons easier.

Lastly, the emotional feelings that occur when **appreciating** were explored in relation to nature. As expected, most of the respondents explained that they have strong feelings when surrounded by nature and some indeed talked about spirituality and Godlike presence. Even the youngest of them described visiting nature as a way of spiritually cleaning. This was one of the most important theories this study set out to explore. A lot of background information related to the Japanese and their spirituality (Shinto) were presented, and the results indicate that such spirituality is still strongly alive. It was however surprising that none of the study participants mentioned this in relation to the northern lights or the midnight sun, which seemingly had little to do with emotions (appreciating), but instead was linked to the desire to see something that cannot be seen in Japan. This rather took the direction of being connected to another theory given, namely *novelty*. As such, it in fact aligns well with e.g. Chen et al. (2013) motivation studies suggesting that *novelty*, *learning* and *knowledge* appear very frequent in relation to nature-based tourism. It also fits well with the Japanese and their interest in learning (Kajiwara 1997) together with the fact that new destinations and experiences likely are educational (Crompton 1979).

5.1.2 Consuming as Integration

Under this metaphor it was guessed in the theory that the Japanese prefer travelling in groups/touring, thus having limited control over the **producing** and **personalizing** process of their trip. This was based on their concern for feeling safe in regard to language (e.g. Gilbert and Terrata 2001) as well as group tours being an easier and more comfortable choice (e.g. Scandinavian Tourist Board 2006). On the other hand, based on Yashima (2002) it was also thought that the younger generation being more competent in English as well as being more internationally oriented would refrain from group tours. This proved to be true for this study. In fact, none of the participants had a desire to travel in groups together with other Japanese, as they perceived it as too stressful. Furthermore, as they all speak perfectly good English they had no reasons to rely on the organization of others. Instead, they preferred travelling alone or with similar-minded friends or family as this gave them more freedom. As also the older participants avoided group tours, the findings suggest that the ability to speak English is the decisive factor when it comes to the choice between independent travel and group tours. The ability to speak English also seemingly has great influence on the desire to **assimilate** and integrate with the host country. The participants express their eagerness to communicate with locals, act in the same way as them, and eat local food, which is an indication of their willingness to learn about the host country. There were however no findings suggesting a desire to assimilate towards nature.

5.1.3 Consuming as Play

The play metaphor turned out to be difficult to explore in an interview context. Nevertheless, the results point towards willingness to travel together with (a few) companions closely related to them. **Communing** and **socializing** with others seemed more or less important, although far from a critical aspect of travelling. An interesting feature under this metaphor was the fascination some of the respondents had towards so-called *icon* or *totem* destinations. This was not foreseen in the theory chapter, but it suggests that the willingness to see the northern lights and/or the midnight sun is related to it being an *icon*. It is worth seeing it just to have seen it. If so, it is strongly indicating a link to the construction of self-image by integrating unique experiences into their self (e.g. Schiffman et al. 2008), and as such be an act of consuming-as-classification (consuming through actions) (Holt 1995).

5.1.4 Consuming as Classification

The theory chapter focuses strongly on the Japanese and their usage of Omiyage (souvenirs) and pictures as a means to classify themselves and build on their social self-image. Results from the interviews tell a two-fold story. It seems as some of the interviewees use Omiyage and pictures as a topic starter when returning home enabling them to narrate about their trip (so-called “omiyagebanashi”). However, the “whys” behind this proved to be difficult to explore. It was claimed that the stories were told in order to share their experience with others, thus suggesting no relation to the self-image. Yet studies such as Park (2000) indicate that *some* Japanese give others Omiyage in order to prove that they’ve been somewhere, thus differentiating themselves from others (building distinction), suggesting apparent attempts of consuming as a means of classification. On the other hand, some of the respondents utterly hate the Omiyage culture and only consume souvenirs because of the social pressure that essentially dictate returning travellers to give presents from the trip (*giri*). Accordingly, Omiyage as well as frequent picture taking seemingly have no relations with the self and the desire to “boast” or “brag” about the trip.

5.2 Profile of the Japanese traveller

Under this heading, a table summarizing the “hows” and “whys” from the results of this study will be presented as well as the general travel motivations found. Note that the classification actions written in *italic* in fact were not performed in order to classify, but instead because of a sense of obligation and the desire to share the experience with others (see discussion above).

Table 4: Travel motivations and the four metaphors for consuming – a Japanese profile

Experiencing	How	Why
- Accounting	- Information from others (esp. Japanese). - Interpersonal communication.	- Safety (Culture/ethnocentrism).
- Evaluating	- Comparisons to historical and normative frameworks.	- Safety (Comfort and politeness concerns).
- Appreciating (nature)	- Spiritual framework.	- Culture (e.g. Shinto).
- Appreciating (northern lights/midnight sun)	- Every-day framework.	- Novelty seeking.
Integration		
- Producing/Personalizing	- Independent travelling.	- Freedom. - English language ability.
- Assimilating	- Communication with locals, act as locals, eat local food.	- Learning (available through foreign language ability).
Play		
- Communing/socializing	- With travel companions (friends/family).	- Share experience.

Classification		
- Through objects	- Buying Omiyage (souvenirs).	- <i>Share experience with family and friends.</i> - <i>Obligation (giri).</i> - <i>Importance that the gift is the “the real deal” (honmono).</i>
	- Taking pictures.	- <i>Share experience with family and friends.</i>
- Through actions	- Through “icon” locations and experiences (e.g. Paris, northern lights, midnight sun).	- Self-image builder. - (boasting).
Travel motivations		
- In general	- Learning.	
- Nature	- Relaxation.	
- Northern lights/Midnight sun	- Novelty seeking. - Self-image building.	

5.3 Practical implications

This thesis contributes to the (yet scarce) body of knowledge related to cultural differences between Western tourists and Japanese tourists. As such, it can help providers of tourism and tourism marketers to understand the Japanese tourist better, avoiding potential negative perceptions or dissatisfaction. The deeper the understanding of each segment of tourists, the easier targeting, position and segmentation. Understanding cultural differences gives tourism providers a powerful tool that can be used for winning (or stealing) segments from others.

As seen in the study, the Japanese tourist strongly value learning and novelty, which perhaps is not as important for Western tourists. In relation to this, marketers and tourism providers can focus on learning when dealing with Japanese tourists. As suggested by Reisinger and Turner (2002), the Japanese tourist could be given educational material such as pamphlets, books or videotapes when waiting at airports or hotels. Also giving informational material pre-travel might

be beneficial as it reduces uncertainty and strengthens the perception of safety. Furthermore, physical safety as well as politeness is important for the Japanese tourist. Through the whole chain of interaction, providers should be aware of their behaviour and act politely. “Rough” and humorous behaviour (often found in the northern parts of Norway) should perhaps be avoided as it may frighten the tourist.

Moreover, facilitating opportunities to buy souvenirs (Omiyage) is very important. Tourists might not be aware of how unavailable shopping can be in foreign countries (e.g. shops close at Sundays/early or there are few shops around nature areas). In relation to nature, the Japanese are seemingly more spiritually oriented than their Western counterparts. Consequently, modifying or destroying too much nature should be avoided as some Japanese deem it as a place of the *kami* (“Gods”). The rare nature of the northern lights and the midnight sun should be promoted more clearly as the participants of this study were overall unsure of where they are observable, and indeed what they are. Especially knowledge about the midnight sun proved to be scarce.

In the end, one of the most important and clear findings of this study was the great difference between Japanese who can speak a foreign language and those unable to. Primarily, tourism providers should assess whether the visiting tourists travel in a guided group or on their own. Although individual Japanese tourists seemingly are very security concerned, the group travellers likely value safety even higher. This counts for both physical safety as well as their perception of comfort.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This thesis addresses Japanese tourists as a whole. Despite this, only study participants from two cities of Japan attended (Kyoto and Osaka). As such, one can discuss how representative these participants are for the whole nation of Japan. Further limitations regard sampling issues. Typically, snowball sampling can result in huge bias problems as participants are likely to choose others that are similar to themselves (Saunders et al. 2012). However, this study had several

initial contact points which created a fairly diverse sample. More variation in occupation were yet desired, especially as there are no so-called “blue collar workers” within the sample. The perhaps biggest limitation of the sample is still the fact that all participants speak English more or less fluently, indicating an above average interaction with people coming from outside of Japan. This might not reflect the average Japanese who is often characterised as not being particularly internationally oriented. Validity may take harm from this. Although not the ambition of this study, a small sample of seven interviews and one focus group is scarce in terms of generalization. The results cannot be generalized, but they give some indications as to how Japanese consume tourism and why. The value of this study must all in all be seen in connection with its exploratory nature as there are very little research on the field.

In future research it would be interesting to examine the metaphors one by one in order to deepen the understanding of each of them. Especially the consuming as play metaphor that proved to be difficult to comprehend from the use of depth interviews and focus groups. A more suited research method for exploring this metaphor would perhaps be participant observation where the observer actually observe how the tourists interact with one another.

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