Development of Japanese-style Ecotourism Based on School Excursion: A Case Study in Iida City, Nagano Prefecture

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I Introduction

Iida is a small city in the south of Nagano Prefecture, but a pioneering area that has succeeded in developing experience-based school excursions. The city’s ecotourism model was honorably selected as one of the typical thirteen multi-ministerial ecotourism promotion projects in 2004, and rewarded first place in Ecotourism Awards in the following year.

Undoubtedly, there have been many papers referring experience-based school excursion and farm-stay tourism by various points of view. School lectures show interests in analyzing the impact of these tours on students from an educational standpoint (Yasuda 2006). Agricultural experts focus on the socio-economic effects of these trips on rural communities, and farmers participating in home-stay tourism activity (Hanamura & Torikai 2006; Miyazaki 2006). Economic and tourism experts examine both demand and supply sides, i.e. the host and the guest, considering economic and managerial aspects (Kuraoka et al. 2009; Takamine 2007). In regards to the Iida’s case, H. Inoue, a pioneering researcher on ecotourism/green tourism in Iida tends to focus on practical issues, emphasizing the rural-urban exchange tourism activity for children and its impacts on the local community (Inoue 2010).

However, analyses on practical business models to apply ecotourism effectively at local level are either limited or insufficient. Shikida (in Shikida et al. 2008, 83–84), though emphasizing that ecotourism in Japan should be managed by local bodies instead of outside tourism enterprises, gives a very general, and vague idea of such businesses as “a local ecotourism promotion association or group.” Maita et al. (2010) highlight the procedure to develop ecotourism in Japan with a case of Ninohe City, Iwate Prefecture, but put little notice to any particular model. Kaizu (in Maita et al. 2011, 213) points out the emergence and development of Japanese-style ecotourism occurred in rural areas such as satotchi, satoyama, satoumi revolving around small villages or a self-governing body; but mentions no practical business model, either. Closely related to this issue are studies on Japan’s green tourism (or rural tourism). When discussing green tourism in Japan and its characteristics, Miyazaki (2002, 27) discovers the popularity of third-sector locally-owned businesses. He and other authors show various types of business owners through case studies, but no comparison or an economic analysis is provided.
This article attempts to examine the issue in Iida City with a view to understanding the tendency of Japan’s ecotourism development, and to give some hints for applying to Vietnam. By analyzing the process of ecotourism development in Iida City, it highlights a practical business model that can help local governments to effectively increase the economic scale of ecotourism in rural areas. It also gives guidelines on how to move towards ecotouristic products by managerial techniques. These lessons are also valuable for rural tourism development in developing countries such as Vietnam, where the government has endeavored to promote tourism and sustainable tourism at rural and remote areas for poverty alleviation, but has not yet figured out an effective and sustainable model in practice.

The paper makes a contribution in two points: explaining empirically why local government’s intervention is necessary for the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism at local scale, and why a semi-governmental stock company is effective for the revitalization of rural areas. Moreover, it also analyzes the mechanism and the drawbacks of this school excursion-based ecotourism model with suggestions for improvement.

To do that, the paper is structured into three parts: 1) summary of basic concepts and the ecotourism development of Japan, 2) analysis of the “ecologicalizing” process in school excursions adopting experience-based programs in Iida City, and reasons for its application in other rural areas; and finally, and 3) studies on the tourist’s and home-stay providers’ satisfaction to suggest solutions for better tourism development of Iida City.

II Research background, questions and methods

(1) Ecotourism, school excursion and their development in Japan

Ecotourism is a relatively new but hot-debated term in tourism industry, having started in the first half of the 1980s (Fennell 1999). As the International Ecotourism Society defines, “ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” Though conceptual definitions of ecotourism are various and controversial, its meaning is principally the concern for nature, searching methods to solve the issue between economic development and the environment conservation. Gradually, ethical thinking on local community adds a social responsibility dimension to ecotourism, making it “a positive triple-bottom-line” (Buckley 2003, 246) strategy for many nations.

As a tourism product, ecotourism contains the following components: (i) nature-based, (ii) conservational oriented (i.e. minimal-impact management, environmental education, contribution to conservation (Buckley 1994, cited in Buckley 2009, 2), and (iii) benefit-sharing (Donohoe and Needham 2006, cited in Buckley 2009, 2).

In Japan, ecotourism was formally initiated by the Ministry of the Environment as a new form of tourism that helps protect the environment while benefiting local communities. Later, with the establishment of the Committee of Ecotourism Promotion in 2003, ecotourism is defined “a type of tourism that is based on natural environment as well as history and culture of an area, to experience that environment and responsibly conserve it.” Since this promotion, ecotourism has targeted three issues: natural resource conservation, tourism promotion, and regional promotion (Maita et al. 2010; Shikida et al. 2008) rather than the “triple-bottom line” above, which “may differ in many aspects from ecotourism in other countries” (Adachi 2008, 6).

At practical level, ecotourism is criticized to be employed as a tool for “promoting regional development” and “economic regeneration” rather than a conservation tool (Adachi 2008).
Optimistically, Shikida et al. (2008, 54) advocate that local governments apply ecotourism not only for its economic effect but also because of the hope for local revitalization process, thanks to the effect of increased interactions between other locations and the rise in residents’ self-respect through tourism activity. However, what is the final target of developing new tourism in rural areas?

School excursion or school trip can be defined as a student–learning activity, conducted off the site of the school at which the student is enrolled, that is organized or managed by a member of the teachers. This parents–funded trip has been seen as a requisite at school, starting from the Meiji period. In this paper, the authors refer “school excursion” to all compulsory school trips, including shugaku ryoko, ensoku, kenshu, from primary school to university. School excursions also consist of oversea traveling, but in this paper we deals the domestic traveling only.

The development of school excursion can be briefly, but not separately, divided into four “revolutions”: the mass–formed group tour to famous sightseeing spots, temples, and shrines (in the late 1800s to the 1930s and from the 1950s to the 1970s); the peace education to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, or Okinawa (from the 1970s to the 1990s); the ski–based tour to Nagano, Niigata, or Hokkaido (from the 1970s to the 1990s); and, most recently, the experience–based tour to countryside areas (from the 2000s). In fact, the latest form mentioned above were reported over 40 years ago (first in Nagano Prefecture since 1979), but has just become widespread recently.

(2) Research questions and research methods

This research discusses two questions on Japan’s ecotourism development based on school excursions. The first question is “how ecotourism develops in rural areas”, as a reference to understanding the Japan’s ecotourism development. The second question is whether there is any issue on managing this new type of “ecotourism”, i. e. experience–based school excursion in Iida City.

In order to investigate the Japanese–style ecotourism development in rural areas, field–studies were conducted in 2010 and 2011, including an agricultural survey, several individual interviews with Iida’s tourism department, Minami Shinshu Tourist Association Company, and with some village coordinators and farmers in Kakinosawa Village (see Fig. 1) in October 2010.

Secondly, to identify the development issues of this Japanese–style “ecotourism” as an answer to the second question, the authors have conducted a students’ impression survey applying the participation observation method in Minami Shinshu Field Study 2011 (6th to 9th, August), and in–depth interviews with four home–stay committed farmers in Igara, Kanae, and in Shimo–hisakata area (see Fig. 1).

III The ecotourism development in rural areas based on the case of Iida

(1) Overview of Iida City’s ecotourism model

Iida City is located in the south of Nagano Prefecture, in central Japan (Fig. 1). Eighty percent of the 658 km² area is covered by forest (2009). With a considerably different height in terrains and various ecosystems, Iida City owns an inland position with beautiful scenery, but suffers the difficulty in transportation, and socio–economic interactions, with other regions. Recently, Iida City encounters the lack of labor force, resulting both from the depopulation and the low return rate of young people after their graduation.
As an answer to the requirement for local revitalization, an idea of half-day experience-based educational trip (taikengata kyoikuryoko) in 1995 turned into a local project in 1996, pioneered by the City Office. Overnight programs with home-stay experience were then developed for children in school excursions; which constitutes the current lida ecotourism model.

However, the tour has only gained achievement when it was handled under the management of a local tourist company. Minami Shinshu Tourist Association (Minami Shinshu Kankou Kosha as for MSTA) was legally registered as a “third-sector” public corporation in 2001. Of the capital of ¥29.65 million funded by shareholders from 33 local associations and organizations, the City Office’s investment accounts for the largest share (12%).

The company is relatively small and simply structured with two temporary members (one manager, one staff), and two contract staffs (up to 2011). It is closely connected with the City Office through the Broader-region Section of Iida’s Tourism Department. However, as a business entity, MSTA works independently with the City Office, except for the relationship of a stock company and its shareholder.

In managing experience-based tours, MSTA looks like a travel agency at local scale. It functions as: 1) an intermediate between outsider’s demand and local supply (i.e. MSTA receives orders from travel agencies and contact to local suppliers to implement the tour), 2) a...
marketing organization to promote experience-based programs (up to 2011, it has developed over 160 programs and produced a number of brochures), and 3) a guarantor responsible for the tours in case of accidents or emergencies.

In connecting the demand and local supply, MSTA receives 10% of the total fee as commission fee, and pays another 10% for the travel agency. The rest is for local home-stay providers, experience instructors, etc. MSTA may also earn another 5% of the accommodation fee from local hotel owners if students are introduced to use such lodging facilities (see also Fig. 2).

The results of the business are successful and prospective. The numbers of schools and students sharply increased, from 1 school with about 100 students in 1997, when first handled by City Office, to 84 schools, 9,500 students in 2001, 109 schools, 17,000 students in 2005, and 110 schools, 14,000 students in 2010. The number of home-stay providers also shot up, from 70 households in 2000, to 250 households in 2001, 389 households in 2005, and 401 households in 2010. For economic effects, the business generates JPY 327 million of direct economic revenue, and JPY 786 million of indirect economic revenue based on 50,000 programs and 20,000 tourist nights in 2010 (including non-school groups). Compared to tourism of Shimo-Ina District, the number of students participating in school excursions by MSTA accounts for only 1%, but the money generated by MSTA makes up 3.2% of that of all Shimo-Ina District. It indicates that the company economically contributes to the region at least three times more per visitor than a conventional business does. The direct social effect of the company is the employment of villagers as labors for tourism such as home-stay providers or instructors. However, social importance is more visible at village’s scale as mentioned by Inoue (2010) or Miyauchi during our interviews.

(2) The ecotourism development process in Iida

The traditional school excursion tours are organized as a group type (dantai ryoko), varying from approximately 40 to 100, or even 200 pupils traveling one time. A traditional pattern of school excursions to Nagano Prefecture is skiing or sports tour, in which students spend several days at a resort-type hotel, that can accommodate a large number of students. Significantly, it is often managed and organized by big travel agencies. This type of tour, thus, has been criticized for being neither environment-friendly nor really beneficial to the local community, both individually and publicly. Moreover, as a group activity, the tourists are likely to enjoy themselves more than to appreciate local values or authenticity. Consequently, these “collective cultures” of tourism are easily leading to “commoditization” and “consumerism”. Both of these characteristics are in conflict with the ecotourism principles. How could a mass form of tourism be changed into a more environment-friendly and less consumptive one?

a. The process of producing ecotouristic products by MSTA

MSTA has applied a number of new managerial methods as follows.

Minimize the group size
Figure 2 shows how large-sized school excursion to Iida City is divided by MSTA. Students are grouped often into 4, either female or male, for a home-stay experience. They are often picked up by their provided host families from a gathering place.

For other experience activity and mobility within the command area of MSTA, students are grouped into bigger sizes, often 20–30 people each, fitting to the capacity of mini buses. Utilize available natural resources and facilities

The tour takes advantage of available facilities such as rural houses of villagers as tourists’ accommodation. Such home-stay facilities can be considered an eco-lodge to some extent because it is locally-owned, local labor-hiring facility (farmers hire themselves or their relatives in helping to host the students), and investment-saved (no new buildings like hotels need to be constructed, no capitals be required, except for futon, Japanese bedding).

Other activities such as agricultural experiences are carried out by each home-stay families or communities without over-investing in equipment inventories. Sometimes, a new tourism facility for experience programs is needed; but it is constructed so that it can be used for other activities of the communities as well.

Increase the local participation

School excursion in Iida City has been tailored to fit the philosophy of ecotourism, which shows concern for local people, by increasing chances of face-to-face contact with local farmers. For tourists, it is more authentic. Instead of passively seeing, watching, and listening to a tour guide in a boat rafting, for example, students can now actively work with, talk with, and live with farmers in their day to day life.

Local people also play as tour instructors in agricultural and gourmet experience programs, such as in jams-making, rice planting, crop harvesting, fruit collecting, and so on.

b. New establishment of original ecotours or ecologicaling process in tourism

Let us emphasize that “the critical criterion” of ecotourism is “the potential positive contribution to conservation of the natural environment” and “it is the environmental bottom line that distinguishes ecotourism from its closest analogues in other sectors” (Buckley 2009, 3). However, the “ecotourism” model developed here is not for environment conservation. The role of this tourism in environment conservation has barely mentioned in most tour programs, and it is rather a side-effect when consumption is reduced and home-made products are more likely to be used. Based on the history of experience-based programs as mentioned, the Iida model aims to support the revitalization strategy of the city and communities. The bottom-line targets of the model are social and economic benefits, particularly the activation of the aging communities as Inoue (2010) notes. This shows agreement with previous criticisms of Adachi (2008).

We must wonder why the experience-based school excursion in Iida is being called “ecotourism” by the Ministry of the Environment, even though Iida itself rarely label it “ecotour”. As analyzed, the ecotourism model in Iida has successfully changed school excursion from a mass form product to a seemingly less consumptive and locally-ethnic one by a change in management. This change causes the application of ecotourism-oriented managerial methods such as minimizing group size, increasing the authenticity, and the participation of local people. In other words, it is just a successful process of ecologicalizing (ekoka) a segment in the traditional group tours along with the increase in authenticity (honmono). The targets are school excursions because this traditional segment has a large volume of tourists potentially and attaches to an educational purpose by definition.
c. Main factors contributing to the achievement of Iida City's model

As aforementioned, this experience-based school excursion product is not typical to Iida City; or neither was Iida the only region developing the tour. However, Iida is the one that has successfully nurtured this new “niche” product. The authors identify three reasons explaining why the model of Iida is typical and effective.

First, it is the structure of a local stock corporation business that has made Iida a great success. For Iida, from an ecotourism viewpoint, previous tourism managers, such as big tourism operators like JTB, Nippon Travel Agency, etc., are ethically criticized because they are outsiders, and thus, show a lack of responsibility towards the locals. Existing local private tourism companies are, however, being criticized for being unrepresentative for the general public, but taking care of their own benefit only. Other non-profit organizations are not skillful enough to carry out tourism business effectively, thus, the economic effect is limited. As a result, the foundation of a new local association that is capable to fulfill both requirements, i.e., profession and social responsibility, is a must. Fortunately, the model of a third-sector stock corporation, which allows both the government’s and other associations’ ownerships, with unlimited shareholders, thus facilitating a high participatory rate of the community, while being liable by law, proves to be structurally and legitimately suitable. This provides an explanation for the continuity of newly-established semi-governmental local stock tourism enterprises in Japan's rural areas as noted in a report of Japan Travel Agency (Japan Travel Agency 2009).

Secondly, it is a high level of intervention from the local government that has contributed to Iida model's success. The City Office has played an active role in the development of experience-based programs, as an idea-initiator, a creator, an investor, a supporter, and a supervisor. Compared to an exemplary case of Ninohe City (Maita et al. 2010, 140), it reaffirms that local governments play a magnificent role in supporting the ecotourism development, notably in its early stage.

Thirdly, it is the wide and strong support by the local community. The former manager of MSTA comments that he and his staff could not have done anything without the support of the community, particularly in the “infant” stage when creating the home-stay provider network. That is why, MSTA is considered unique from other models with such the low rate of the municipal’s capital share (12%), while many other local tourism companies are 25% to 100% government-funded. That also explains a statement that the foundation of MSTA is both a top-down and bottom-up model. Evidently, having community’s enthusiasm and support is the key to the development of any ethical tourism such as ecotourism.

(3) Lessons and prospects for other rural areas in Japan and in other nations

a. Tendency of ecotourism development in Japan

First, the visible popularity of newly-established local tourism associations indicates two significant trends in ecotourism development in rural areas of Japan. It shows a shift of ecotourism towards a more economically beneficial solution at local level, and the increasing autonomy of local governments.

Before the establishment of MSTA, the concern for authenticity (honmono) in tourism activities had appeared in Japan's tourism demand in general and in Nagano Prefecture in particular. With the emerging issues in rural areas, agricultural experience-based tours became a popular tool for revitalizing these regions by increased exchange between rural and urban citizens. Evidence of this is an introduction of “working holiday” tours adopted just before home
stay school excursions of MSTA. This tour, though reported successful, is simply volunteer-oriented. It results in no direct economic benefit from tourist activity (though home-stay farmers enjoy indirect profit by “non-paid labors,” who conversely are also the beneficiary with a free holiday). Therefore, voluntary types of rural-urban exchange tours are economically limited, and in turn, unable to generate wide and significant effects on the society. The business of MSTA and its socio-economic results proves the success of an ecotourism-oriented solution, in which economic parameter marks a major change.

This foundation of such local tourist companies also indicates the higher level of autonomy in the local society by transferring tourism business from big travel operators, headquartered in hub cities, to small and multi-functional local tourist associations. Along with this is the transfer of money, labor, and skills of tourism to the lower hierarchical level, i.e. from the central government to local government, from cosmopolitan city to rural city. In other words, it is the process of democracy, accelerated by tourism activity when a community sets up autonomic tourist businesses.

Secondly, this development of ecotourism also promises more various types of “ecotourism” that will be adopted into the tourism industry. While original types of ecotourism are implemented in remote and protected areas (such as Iriomote-jima, Shiretoko, Yakushima), “mass ecotourism” (Tran & Noma 2011) in well-developed locations (such as Rokko, Fuji-san, etc.), new combinations of alternative tourism and traditional tourism are dominating rural areas. From the geographical aspect, more and more modified forms of ecotourism will appear in-between regions. Alternatively, during the current transformation stage, the original boundary between mass tourism and ecotourism will be even indistinct.

b. Experiential lessons for other rural areas

First, to successfully change a tour towards an ecotourism orientation, a change in managerial skills should take place. Different from the ecologicalizing process in well-celebrated destinations where business managers enjoy a considerably large number of tourists, ecologicalizing process in less-developed locations such as rural areas needs a change in the managerial board. This is the mechanism how this transformation takes place. The most suitable model for new management is locally-owned corporation. In rural areas where the proactive role in tourism industry of the community is limited, the local government’s intervention is necessary. Thus, a recommended model for local governments is the Iida’ model, i.e. a third sector local tourism association business. The Iida ecotourism model is distinguishable and more democratic than other previous models, for example, the farm-stay of Hokkaido (Kuraoka et al. 2009), because it is suitable for even small-scale households who don’t own large farm-inns or pensions as in Hokkaido. It is also different from the agricultural cooperative foundation in the case of Kumamoto Prefecture (Hanamura & Torikai 2006), and many other regions, in the way that not only farmers in the foundation can take part, but also non-farmers and other villagers can; which encourages a wider participation of all villagers (see Table 1). Thus, this model is more applicable at local government level than other models built in green tourism in Japan as illustrated in Miyazaki (2002). It is because the model is led by the public sector, which has “mandates to represent the broader interests of the population”, and is “supposedly impartial” with “legislative empowerment” (Ruhanen 2012, 2).

Secondly, a niche market is always a big issue for new tourism, particularly ecotourism. As a result, it is understandable why it needs to combine with, or in fact is depending on, mass tourism, for the source of tourists, though this relationship is expected to gradually change over
Thirdly, if ecotourism development is needed, a local government in rural areas should take the initial step in establishing a tourism business, because by investing in such an economic system, the local government can gain benefits, directly by the economic profit owned by the business, and indirectly by the increased taxes and other economic effects that ecotourism promisingly brings to the local economy when it helps lower the economic leakage rate.

It suggests an explanation why MSTA has such an optimistic opinion although the volume of tourists has been quite limited and has had a downward trend recently.

Last but not least, the villagers play a significant role for the development of the ecotourism and ecotourism business, and without their cooperation, such a business could hardly succeed. To encourage the participation of various villagers, many methods should be adopted to widen channels of contact, and information.

For other Asian countries that have also experienced the development of agricultural-based tours in rural areas like Vietnam (Tsutsui 2010), these lessons implicate a more flexible application of the term “ecotourism” unless it is carried out by local organizations rather than alien big travel operators. However, as Buckley (2003, 237) warns, a “strong conservation framework” is needed. For Japan in general, and Iida City in particular, though environmental problems have not yet been a big issue of such a niche market (the tourists hosted by MSTA amounts at about 1% of all tourists to the region as in 2010), environment conservation methods as mentioned in Shikida et al. (2008) or Maita et al. (2010) should not to be neglected.

### IV Issues for sustainable development of experience-based school excursion

In this part, the authors focus on two managerial issues of experience-based school excursion in Iida City: the problem in home-stay provider network and the concern for repetition rate when this induced market is addressed.

**Home-stay providers: Who gains? Who losses?**

This section discusses whether the model in Iida is sustainable through an analysis on home-stay providers. Interestingly, statistics of home-stay providers within and without Iida City show contrasting trends (Fig. 3). Why has the number of home-stay providers in Iida City gradually decreased?
knowledge that reducing the number of tourists is often equal to the increased cost of a tour. Questions are raised: whether it happens in the case of Iida; and if so, who carries that burden. We don’t have formal statistics on the amount a school spent on a traditional school excursion vs. this agricultural experience-based school excursion to compare. However, it is believed that part of the increased cost has been put at home and not controlled by the school. Don’t need coordinator and easy to control the quality of tour and safety of students. In Iida City, a farmer only receives JPY8,000 to host a student for the same overnight accommodation with all main courses at JPY5,000, and JPY3,000 for breakfast and dinner, and JPY2,000 for participating in a one-hour rafting in Tenryu Gorge for instance), a farmer only receives JPY8,000 to host a student for the same benefit (i.e. one overnight accommodation with all main courses at JPY5,000, and JPY3,000 for

![Figure 3. Contradictory trends in home-stay providers within and without Iida City.](image)

Source: Based on the report of MSTA 2011, calculated and compiled by the authors.

Table 2. Four approach methods to contact with local villagers for home-stay experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach method*</th>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>W3</th>
<th>W4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting year</strong></td>
<td>1997–1998</td>
<td>2000–2001</td>
<td>2001 upwards</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Individual contact</td>
<td>Meeting, then individual contact</td>
<td>Local cooperation-based</td>
<td>Local administration-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters of participatory households</strong></td>
<td>Varied in households’ professions and household locations</td>
<td>Varied, based on the effectiveness of meetings, but limited to an area</td>
<td>Quite homogenous in professions and interests</td>
<td>Widest in scale of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Personal contact, thus, reliable and easy to control the quality of tour and safety of students</td>
<td>Don’t need coordinator system Based on the voluntary of households</td>
<td>Save time and labor to recruit new households</td>
<td>Simplest and fastest way to increase the number of households using existing administrative system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Requires lots of time and labor Limited to personal relationship</td>
<td>Limited to an area Requires time and labor</td>
<td>Difficult to control quality Affected by relationship between coordinator and members</td>
<td>No direct contact with households Difficult to control quality Many levels of management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of participatory households</strong></td>
<td>30 households (7.3%) (in 5 areas)</td>
<td>90 households (22%) (in 7 areas)</td>
<td>70 households (17.1%) (in 7 areas)</td>
<td>220 households (53.6%) (in 10 areas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: parts marked with * are based on the report of MSTA, others completed by the authors.
Table 3. The number of home-stay divided by villages and the method of approach by MSTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Area (a)</th>
<th>Way of contact (a)</th>
<th>Number of home-stay providers (b)</th>
<th>Characteristics (locations, population and numbers of farmer households) (c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 2005</td>
<td>Year 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shimoze</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kawaji</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kita-sato</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kanae</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kami-Iida</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Matsuo</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-total of W1</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shimo-hisakata</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tatsugaoka</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Miho</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Igara</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yamamoto</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Zakoji</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-total of W2</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kami-hisakata</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Imadahira</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tenryukyo</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Minami Shinano*</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-total of W3</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Chiyō</td>
<td>W4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-total of W4</td>
<td>W4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(96.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (a) and (b) are based on the report and statistics of MSTA, (c) is based statistics of Japan Census 2010, compiled by the authors

Note:* Minami Shinano has been merged into Iida City since 2005; for W1, W2, W3, W4, see Table 2.

Table 4. Descriptive features of household participating in the home-stay provider network by MSTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Area (village)</th>
<th>Host/ Hostess (age)</th>
<th>Supporter (age)</th>
<th>No. of Household Member (age)</th>
<th>Farming areas*</th>
<th>Year started</th>
<th>Experience-based activity for students</th>
<th>Self provided products for tourist’s consumption</th>
<th>No. of home-stay students/year</th>
<th>% in household income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kanae</td>
<td>Wife (61) House- wife</td>
<td>Husband, (64, city office, retired)</td>
<td>5 people daughter (36); And two grandchildren (11 &amp; 5)</td>
<td>vegetables (for household use); Forest</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Home-stay Traditional food, Ojihana</td>
<td>Tomato, Cucumber Other vegetables</td>
<td>40 (8/12 students/month)</td>
<td>Limited (about 1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Igara (Kitakata)</td>
<td>Wife (61) farmer</td>
<td>Husband (65, farmer)</td>
<td>3 people son (39)</td>
<td>Rice (90a); vegetables (20a); Apples (30a); Forest (1ha)</td>
<td>2001 (working holiday in 1998)</td>
<td>Home-stay Food Farming activities</td>
<td>Vegetables, Rice</td>
<td>50 (8/12 students/month)</td>
<td>Limited (less than 10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Igara (Ozaki)</td>
<td>Husband (70) farmer</td>
<td>Wife (69, farmer)</td>
<td>5 people (3 children don’t live together)</td>
<td>Fruits: apples; (20a); Japanese pear; (25a); Rice (55a); Persimmon (drying, 10a)</td>
<td>2001 (working holiday in 1999)</td>
<td>Home-stay Food and drink Farming activities</td>
<td>Vegetables, Fish, Rice Fruit drink (apple juice)</td>
<td>40 (maximum 14 times/month)</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shimo-hirakata (Kakinokawa)</td>
<td>Husband (79) farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 people (Wife, 82; 2 sons over 50 don’t live together)</td>
<td>Fruits (persimmon; 40a, plum: 20a); Rice &amp; vegetables (30a)</td>
<td>1995 (working holiday in 1995)</td>
<td>Gohe-mochi food making; Lunch box making</td>
<td>Eggplant, Cucumber</td>
<td>(home-stay activity from 1995-2001)</td>
<td>Not any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shimo-hirakata (Kakinokawa)</td>
<td>Wife (69, farmer)</td>
<td>Husband, (70 son 42)</td>
<td>3 people</td>
<td>Rice (17.5a); Fruit (5a)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Gohe-mochi food making; Lunch box making</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>Not any more</td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Results of interviews in the field studies

Note:* the acre (a) is a unit of area to measure agricultural land popularly used in Japan. 1a is equal to 4046 square meters.
two experience programs. Given that the cost of food, facilities, and labor for preparing and servicing at a cheapest hotel and a home-stay is similar, this 20% decrease is a loss to farmers’ profit because they are satisfied with a lower benefit rate.

Another question is raised why they are willing to accept that “loss”. It seems to be clear that they haven’t had to invest much, and can make use of their available agricultural products and vacant rooms. When students spend a day with a farmer household, they actually consume their farm products en route. In other words, the farmers “sell” their products (with added value of labor) directly to the final customer right at their home. Economically speaking, part of this “loss” is the gap between the price they send to wholesalers and the price the end-user has to pay. Thus, we believe that as long as the loss does not outnumber the gap, the farmer is economically beneficiated and they are still willing to receive more tourists as their home-stay guests. Of course, there are a lot of other elements affecting the willingness of farmers such as social impacts, cultural exchanges, and so on, but this economic analysis is effective in explaining why farmers may not be willing to welcome more tourists if they have to purchase food and materials to sell to customers as in the Kakinosawa’s case. Vice versa, the more the farmers can sell their home-made products to serve students’ needs, the more they are beneficial, and the better their feedback towards home-stay activity.

Thus, our advice is that MSTA should put a more careful consideration in selecting home-stay providers. Moreover, guidelines should be built up to help home-stay providers gain more benefits from participating in tourism activities. Also, there should be a prediction of an equilibrium point between supply and demand so that the development of the supply side does not outnumber the demand so far that lead a supply surplus.

(2) How participants respond: a demand analysis on repetition and satisfaction

School excursions, as analyzed, are induced demands as they are seen compulsory or a part of school curriculum. It means students have less choice whether to participate or not, and what kind of activity to do compared to a normal tour. Consequently, ethical questions are whether students feel satisfied with this activity in the Iida model, and thus, want to repeat it again in their own-selected tours. We have conducted a simple questionnaire survey on tourist satisfaction to examine: 1) whether the students negatively feel compulsory to the tour, 2) whether they are satisfied with the experience-based tour, and 3) whether they want to repeat the tour.

Given that young pupils are too difficult to survey, either because of school regulations or their immaturity to answer questionnaires, the study was conducted with university students participating in Minami Shinshu Field Study August 2011. The similarities between this tour and school excursions tours for primary and secondary schools are: 1) the activity within the Iida City area is organized by local managers, and 2) participants did a very similar range of activities including agricultural experience and home-stay experience by similar providers and instructors. As a result, on the dimension of students’ satisfaction and repetition rate in agricultural and home-stay experience-based tours, the result of this study is able to apply to a wider population.

Table 5 shows that the declared motivation and purposes for the tour are various even though they had more or less an educational purpose. The motivations for Hosei University and APU students are mainly for learning, while in Meiji University, it is more likely to be tourism-oriented, quite similar to that of conventional tourists. Surprisingly, the number of students choosing the reason of “taking the tour as a compulsory activity” is relatively low, in both Hosei
University and APU. It answers the first concern that students did not feel negatively participating in the tour even in the case of a compulsory activity.

In Table 6, the overall satisfaction rated for the tour and for experience-based activities are at level 4 and above (satisfied or very satisfied), which means that participants felt satisfied with the tour and the experience-based menu. In fact, only 17% (6/36) of all students felt dissatisfied by the tour (of which one third is of foreigners, and most are of the tourism-oriented group).
There are no significant differences between learning-oriented and tourism-oriented groups in both soba-making and home-stay experience. It implicates that students are generally satisfied with both experiential activities no matter what their initial purpose is. This result can be interpreted that the experience-based activity is not only attractive to learning-oriented people but also to other conventional tourists; thus, suggests Iida that it could possibly widen experiential tours for other groups beyond the school excursion market. There is also a statistically significant difference between the means of overall satisfaction and home-stay satisfaction, which indicates that participants felt more satisfied with home-stay activities than others. However, the correlation test doesn't show a close relation between the two (r=0.01), which, statistically speaking, means home-stay satisfaction has few effects on the overall satisfaction level assessed by participants. In other words, home-stay activity is not the determinant factor for the success of the FS tour, even though it enjoys the highest satisfied rate across the activity menu. One interesting thing is also found that a small but significant number of students express their positive impression on hot spring or onsen (Table 7), which reminds the Iida's tourism manager that traditional relaxation for Japanese tourists should not be neglected. Iida should add other comparative attractions, such as the beauty of nature, cool weather, onsen, etc, (those were highly assessed) to widen a niche market of experience-based tours.

Also in Table 6, the results show a high average score in learning-oriented self-motivated group and a lower score in tourism-oriented group in their desire for tour repetition. Vocally translating, students generally have a positive answer, higher in the former group (totally agree) than in the latter (quite agree). The significant difference between two groups in a T-test (at 95% confidence value) statistically indicates that learning-oriented people will be much more likely to repeat the Iida study tour than enjoyment-seeking people. Thus, Iida FS tour can highly locate itself as an exemplary model for autonomic tourism and community development to the former group. Marketing this tour should emphasize this comparative advantage of Iida tourism to gain more of such “conscious” tourists. When targeting less learning-motivated tourists, other elements should be added to ensure their satisfaction and repetition. The statistically wide gap between the two suggests that Iida can actually divide participants into different tours rather than a compound one, either high learning-oriented field study tour managed in cooperation with school teachers, or more general tourist-oriented refreshing tour.

V Conclusion

The Iida ecotourism model, which focuses on home-stay and experience-based educational trips, was developed in 2001 from a revitalization project in 1995, and quickly became an exemplary model well-known nationwide with an Ecotourism Award in 2005. It made the impression that this model was a new form of ecotourism in Japan. This paper has proved that it is actually not a new type of ecotour but a process of “ecologicalizing” mass school excursions combining with experience-based programs. It was implemented by managerial techniques including resizing large groups, increasing the local participation, and utilizing available local resources, facilities, and labors. To have it done, a change to a more responsible business leadership is a must.

The remarkable success of the model is an introduction of MSTA, a professional tourism organization representing the right for a wider local population than any earlier forms of locally-
owned tourism model. The Iida model proves that to be professional and responsible, local ecotourism businesses in less-developed tourist locations should take the form of a partly government-funded stock company, because it is an effective way for local governments to increase the economic effect of ecotourism. Therefore, there has been a popularity of such models in rural areas of Japan.

Moreover, the article also discusses two issues of this model. First is the mechanism why a particular group of farmers show great eagerness to participate, and yet some others are not so willing. It is believed that, consciously or unconsciously, the attitude towards tourism participation is affected by the amount they benefit, even though they seem to neglect the economic impact. Second is the concern for the repetition of this tour based on students’ satisfaction questionnaire surveys, followed by several suggestions to improve tour attractiveness.

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Japan School Excursion Research Association [Zenkoku Shugaku Ryoko Kenkyu Kyokai]


Ruhanen L. (2012) Local government: facilitator or inhibitor of sustainable tourism

Notes
1. Saito-chiri-saito-ya, as noted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (Japan), refers to the areas where the nature is much modified due to frequent interactions with human and human’s activities, in hilly and mountainous zones. Saitoumi refers to similar areas but in coastal zones, and thus, typical of fishermen’s villages.
2. The Vietnamese government states that its tourism development policy and investment will give priority to investment in tourism zones, routes, and sites in under-developed and remote areas that have potentials of tourism development, besides national—significant tourism zones, sites, cities. It also declares to create favorable policies to develop ecotourism, green tourism, community-based tourism, and responsible tourism, and promises to implement projects on community-based tourism for poverty alleviation and local economic structure shift in rural areas (The Prime Minister of Vietnam 2011, 5–6).
3. The International Ecotourism Society website.
4. The Committee of Ecotourism Promotion is a multi-ministerial committee founded under the Ministry of the Environment in 2003. It is now an NPO, under the name of the Japan Ecotourism Society (Shikida et al. 2008, 51).


9. Japan School Excursion Research Association website

10. Minami Shinshu Field Study is a program designed for students to learn about Iida’s policies in local development, environment, tourism, and so forth based on a field-study tour in Iida and its surrounding areas. It is much similar to a school excursion but is managed by City Office staff and several school teachers. It happens twice a year. The author did the research on the first Minami Shinshu Field Study in early August, 2011.

11. Iida City official website. According to Japan Census 2010, 28% of the population is over 65-year-old, whereas that number of Japan is 20% on average (see Statistics Bureau 2011). Meanwhile, 70% of young population headed for big cities for university and higher education, and job hunting, and only 40% of them have come back to Iida afterward.

12. Iida City Official website.

13. In Japan “first sector” implies government-funded companies, “second sector” implies private-funded; while “third sector” implies the rest, funded by both the government or local governments and civilian organizations. The later may include NPO and benevolent institution organizations but they are better called “fourth sector” in Japan. Kabushiki kōsha are legal public corporations (partly governmental-funded), based on stock investment, and having a limited liability.

14. Shareholders of MSTA buy stocks (at a value of JPY 50,000 each) to acquire their ownership of the company. If the company gets profit, they will receive interest according to their percentage of share.

15. Based on the report and interviews with staffs of the Iida City Office.

16. As an stock company, MSTA has its own Board of Directors elected at an Annual General Meeting.

17. In 2010, for instance, money spent by a student/day managed by MSTA is five times as much in comparison to the result of the district’s tourism (JPY 15,900 vs. JPY 3,200). Based on the statistics of MSTA’s report in 2009 and in 2011, tourism statistics of Nagano Prefecture Tourism Bureau 2011, compared and calculated by the authors.


19. Markus Oedewald (2009, 117) describes that this school excursion mostly aims at “form [ing] enjoyable memories of school life,” and other in-group interactions such as “deepen [ing] mutually the human relations of teacher and student, and student and student”.

20. “John Urry 2002 suggests contrasting “romantic” and “collective” cultures of tourism. The latter represents the culture that celebrates togetherness in visiting, focuses on enjoyment and activities amongst and between visitors rather than between visitors and the environment. The former is that of the travelers, who seeks an individual encounter with the place visited—with direct contact with the locale and perhaps locals.” Johnston, R. J. et al. eds. (2000, 763).

21. In this report, out of 13 business models introduced, 6 models are third-sector joint companies (kabushikikaiisha that is partly governmental-funded, 2 are 100% funded by local government, 2 are NPOs’ foundations, and the other three are limited or consolidated companies by local tourism enterprises such as hotel owners, taxi drivers, guides, etc. (Japan Travel Agency 2009).

22. Inoue (2010) and interviews with Mr. Miyasuchi (a leader in Kakinosawa Village) show that most people as instructors of experience-based programs are volunteers and the economic benefit they can earn is very limited, e.g., JPY500 per hour for an instructor of gohei-mochi making (interview in Kakinosawa Village).

23. Iida City Official website. See note 11.


25. Japan School Excursion Research Association website. See note 9)

26. Iida City Official website.

27. Inoue (2010) and interviews with Mr. Miyasuchi (a leader in Kakinosawa Village) show that most people as instructors of experience-based programs are volunteers and the economic benefit they can earn is very limited, e.g., JPY500 per hour for an instructor of gohei-mochi making (interview in Kakinosawa Village).

28. The result is quite reasonable because students at Meiji University were recruited through campus announcement, while students from APU and Hosei University were recruited by lecturers as compulsory or optional modules.
Development of Japanese-style ecotourism based on school excursion:
A Case Study in Iida City, Nagano Prefecture

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NOMA Haruo
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The paper discusses the issue of ecotourism development in Japan, particularly in rural areas filled with modified natural environment. Based on a case study of Iida, it argues that the origins of ecotour, which emphasize environment conservation, are hardly suitable in these areas. Instead, it is rather a combination of conventional tourism (i.e. school excursions) and alternative tourism (i.e. experience-based and home-stay programs). We would like to discuss this method as “ecologicalizing” process in school excursions. The model is called “ecotourism” by the Ministry of Environment because it has adopted the ecotourism-oriented managerial skills through a shift to local management.

The paper makes a contribution by explaining why a semi-governmental tourism stock company is effective, both economically and socially, for local governments to revitalize rural areas. By these explanations, the paper gives a hint to distinguish ecotourism businesses initiated by the Ministry of Environment and green tourism businesses by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery. This lesson is also valuable for local governments in other developing countries such as Vietnam, who want to increase the economic scale of ecotourism without scarifying sustainable principles. The final part of the paper concerns two issues of the Iida’s model: namely the participants’ degree of satisfaction towards its programs, and the current situation of home-stay providers, with suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: green tourism, school excursion, business model, ecotourism development, experience learning, Iida city

学校教育旅行による日本型エコツーリズムの発展
―長野県飯田市の事例から―

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本稿は二次的自然の卓越する日本の農山村地域でのエコツーリズム開発の問題について論じる。長野県飯田市を中心に行われている学校教育旅行（その多くが修学旅行）の事例をみると、環境保全を強調するエコツアー本来の概念の適用はあまり適切とはいえないと。筆者らは従来の修学旅行や遠足・研修旅
行などの学校教育旅行にみられるマスツーリズム的要素と、その代替的な観光である体験ツアーや農家民泊プログラムを組み合わせていくことの重要性を強調したい。これは学校教育旅行の「エコ化」過程として位置づけられる。地域の自然環境・天然資源やその特性とともに、地元の歴史や伝統文化・生活の仕組みも学ぶ方式は、環境省によって日本型「エコツーリズム」の一つの類型と定義されている。

本稿の意義は、なぜ第三セクター方式の観光株式会社が日本の農村地域の活性化に有効かを経済的・社会的に明らかにすることである。この説明から、日本では環境省が主導した「エコツーリズム」が、農林水産省が中心になってきた「グリーン・ツーリズム」の名称上の違いと実質内容の類似性という日本の特徴を指摘する。分析考察から得られた教訓は、エコツーリズムの経済的規模を増加させることの必要性である。今後、持続可能な観光を発展させねばならないベトナムなど発展途上国では、地方政府にとって、この事業はたいへん有意義なものである。最終章では「飯田モデル」の次の2つの問題点を議論する。1）エコツアーや参加者のプログラムに対する満足度、2）民泊を提供する農家世帯に対しての現状と改善のための提言。

キーワード：グリーン・ツーリズム、学校教育旅行、ビジネスモデル、エコツーリズム開発、体験学習、飯田市