

Shizuka Tanaka

Exploring Potential Segments for Wellbeing Tourism in Finland: A Case Study of Japanese  
Tourists

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Author: Shizuka Tanaka

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**Abstract:**

Previous studies on wellbeing tourism in Finland have identified the unclear profiles of potential consumers as a significant challenge in attracting wellbeing tourists to rural areas. To address this issue, the present study employed the AIO (Activities, Interests, Opinions) segmentation method to identify potential segments of Japanese wellbeing tourists based on their lifestyle factors. Furthermore, the study aimed to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences among the identified segments in terms of socio-demographic factors, factors pertaining to travel behavior, and interests in various activities, and nature connectedness. travel behaviour, and interests in diverse activities. Data on tourist profiles were collected in April 2023 using a self-administered electronic questionnaire, resulting in 219 responses. These collected data were subsequently analysed using the factor-cluster method to classify the respondents into different segments. A total of four segments were identified: Indifferent about Arts; Interested in Arts; Indifferent about everything; and Interested in everything. Significant differences were observed among the segments in terms of socio-demographic factors, travel preferences, wellbeing experiences, and interests in activities. This study aims to address this research gap and contribute to a better understanding of Japan, which represents a significant tourism market for Finland, as a potential customer for wellbeing tourism in Finland.

**Keywords:** Wellbeing tourism, Japanese tourists, Lifestyles, Market segmentation, Finland

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NR: Nature Relatedness

AIO: Activities, Interests, and Opinions

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Thematic Introduction

Finland's pristine natural beauty, including its rich water areas and peaceful forest landscapes, is renowned and plays an essential role in the well-being experience. In response to the growing demand for well-being tourism, the industry has been actively expanding in Finland, with many businesses providing tailor-made packages and services to cater to visitors seeking wellness experiences (Konu et al., 2010b, p. 127; *Visit Finland*, 2023).

Many studies have been conducted on wellness and well-being tourism in Finland (e.g., Hjalager et al., 2011; Konu et al., 2012, 2017; Konu & Pesonen, 2018; Pesonen et al., 2011). For example, Konu et al. (2010b) conducted a study on developing well-being and wellness tourism products that utilize Eastern Finland's lakes and aquatic environments. The aim was to create a "Lake Wellness" experience product based on interviews with local enterprises, that maximizes the potential of the region's natural landscape charm.

According to this study, nature, peace, quietness, and tranquility are considered the biggest drawing factors of Eastern Finland (Konu et al., 2010b, p. 134). In a study by Konu (2015, p. 9), it was found that walking in nature while being surrounded by silence was the most popular experience among Japanese tourists during their trip to Finland. Moreover, according to a survey conducted by Visit Finland (2018, p. 4), nature was the top reason for Japanese tourists to visit Finland. However, despite these facts, the coast and archipelago area and Lakeland area are the least selected destinations among Japanese holidaymakers in Finland (visit Finland, 2018). The reasons for these challenges in developing tourism industries in rural areas are mainly attributed to the weak profile of the destination, the lack of skills among entrepreneurs and workers, the long distance and poor transportation availability, and the lack of marketing actions to advertise the rural area (Konu et al., 2010b, p. 134; Suvanto et al., 2017, p. 8).



Furthermore, the unclear profiles of potential consumers in wellness and well-being tourism are also considered part of the challenges to be addressed in developing tourism industries in rural areas (Tuohino and Kangas, 2009, as cited in Konu et al., 2010b). The resources of rural areas such as the quiet and peaceful environment and natural surroundings have immense potential for the development of wellbeing tourism, as emphasized by Pechlaner (2006) on the significance of nature in the context of wellbeing experience. Pesonen & Komppula (2010, p. 151) also supports the potential of rural areas as destinations for wellbeing experiences by claiming that tourists traveling to rural areas have the same motives as those traveling for wellbeing tourism. As a result, to successfully develop wellbeing tourism in rural areas of Finland, it is crucial to understand and analyze the profiles of potential consumers.

There has been a growing body of research on customers of wellbeing tourism of Finland (e.g., Konu, 2010a; Konu & Laukkanen, 2009; Pesonen et al., 2011). In contrast, most research about Japanese tourists tends to focus on wellness or health tourism (e.g., Kim et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2012; Yu & Ko, 2012). Additionally, despite the substantial general research and statistics on Japanese tourists in Finland (e.g., Matilainen & Santalahti, 2018; Suvanto et al., 2017; visit Finland, 2019, 2020), there is a scarcity of research specifically examining the involvement of Japanese tourists in wellbeing tourism in Finland, apart from the series of studies conducted by Konu (Komppula & Konu, 2017a, 2017b; Konu, 2015; Konu et al., 2017). Drawing on this background, this study aims to fill that gap and provide information that can contribute to the development of rural areas of Finland through wellbeing tourism targeting Japanese tourists.

## **1.2 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to identify potential Japanese customers interested in wellbeing tourism in Finland. To achieve this, I will investigate various potential tourist segments based on their lifestyles and analyze if there are any statistically significant differences between the segments in terms of socio-demographic factors, factors pertaining to travel behavior, and interests in various activities, and nature connectedness. Developing an effective marketing strategy for well-being tourism in Finland requires a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of potential Japanese customers. An in-depth comprehension of the potential customer segments is vital for developing an effective marketing strategy. This study aims to

contribute to the advancement of the Finnish well-being tourism industry by providing a deeper understanding of the potential target segments.

### **1.3 Structure of the Study**

In Chapter 1 of the thesis, the introduction provides a thematic overview and states the study's aim. It is followed by an outline of the study's structure. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 explains the methodology employed in the thesis. In Chapter 4, the results are presented. Subsequently, Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings, and Chapter 6 presents the conclusions.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Well-being and wellness tourism

The terms "well-being" and "wellness" are frequently used in the fields of health, well-being, and tourism, although they are not always used in exactly the same way (Konu et al., 2010b). In Finland, there have been issues with these terms because they are all translated into the Finnish language as "hyvinvointi," which has led to the terms being used interchangeably and caused confusion (Konu et al., 2010b). In the following section, the definitions of well-being and wellness will be explored, as well as their distinctions in the context of tourism.

#### 2.1.1 Definitions of well-being and wellness

Well-being is a complex concept that has been studied by various disciplines, resulting in a variety of definitions. There is no universally accepted definition of well-being, and the existence of multiple theories has contributed to a broad and unclear understanding of this phenomenon (Carlisle et al., 2009; Jayawickreme et al., 2012). Wellbeing is often discussed in the same context as health. The term "well-being" was mentioned in the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health in 1948, which states that health is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity"(WHO, 1948). At this time, there were multiple perspectives and approaches proposed for understanding the concept of well-being, which can be classified into four general approaches: hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, quality-of-life, and wellness (Cooke et al., 2016). Especially, The hedonic and eudaimonic schools have been the most significant approaches in psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The concepts of hedonic and eudaimonic roots in hedonism (a life focused on seeking out pleasure) and eudaimonia (happiness achieved through virtuous actions), which is distinguished by Aristotle in his work called *Nicomachean Ethics* (Kashdan et al., 2008). The first approach, hedonic well-being, is focused on an individual's own assessment of their life satisfaction, based on pleasant and unpleasant feelings (Tov, 2018). The second approach, eudaimonic well-being, emphasizes the fulfillment of essential needs for psychological growth and development, allowing individuals to reach their full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). These concepts of Eudaimonic and hedonic well-being have been a growing interest

within tourism studies in recent years, with the aim of deepening our understanding of tourists' experiences. Voigt et al. (2010) examines whether tourism experiences can be classified as hedonic or eudaimonic using the framework of casual versus serious leisure, finding that wellness tourism experiences vary between the two along a continuum. Rahmani et al. (2018) uses text analysis to measure how tourists' holiday experiences affect their hedonia and eudaimonia states, with implications for destination management and tourist decision-making. Additionally, Filep et al. (2022) proposes a new conceptual model to reveal the specific psychological domains that underpin tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Psychologists have different ways of measuring happiness or subjective well-being. Konu et al. (2010b) cites the Australia Institute (2008) and New Economics Foundation (2004) to explain that the idea of well-being is based on essential factors that influence our lives. These factors can be measured in various ways, such as through indicators like wealth, access to food and services, and other necessities. Diener (2000) the hedonic approach as a way to measure well-being, which emphasizes the balance between positive and negative emotions and overall life satisfaction. This approach views well-being as a subjective feeling of happiness and enjoyment of pleasurable experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2001). On the other hand, Ryff & Keyes (1995) suggest the eudaimonic approach to well-being, which takes into account additional factors such as having a sense of purpose and meaning in life, as well as other adaptive characteristics. This approach emphasizes the importance of personal growth, self-actualization, and fulfilling one's potential in achieving well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Given the diversity of perspectives on happiness and subjective well-being among psychologists, a clear definition is crucial to achieving a comprehensive understanding of well-being and its various components (Cummins, 2013; Langley & McKenna, 2021). In order to define "wellbeing" in a practical way, it is important to examine how it relates to other similar terms. Next, the differences between similar concepts will be briefly defined.

The connection between wellbeing and health has been frequently made, with the aim of taking a holistic approach to human health rather than solely adopting a biomedical and pathogenic approach. Simons & Baldwin (2021) suggest that the terms "health," "welfare,"

"wellness," and "QOL" have been used interchangeably with "wellbeing" and have significant overlap in their concepts (Figure 1). Although "welfare" shares components with "wellbeing", it includes a financial aspect that sets it apart (Cambridge University Press, 2023). "Quality of life" is often used in healthcare, while "wellbeing" is more commonly used in psychology and sociology (Hunt, 1997).

In the context of tourism, the concepts of "health" and "well-being" are often used together. The tourism industry encompasses a range of related concepts, such as health tourism, health care tourism, well-being tourism, and wellness tourism. Health tourism involves traveling outside of one's home to take care of one's health, with the purpose of the trip being to heal or prevent illness and promote well-being (García-Altés, 2005). Well-being and health care tourism are considered sub-concepts of health tourism (Konu, 2010a). Wellbeing tourism and health-care tourism differ in terms of their motivations for travel. While the main motive for traveling in health-care tourism is to treat illness, the primary objective in well-being tourism is to prevent illness or maintain one's health and well-being. Moreover, the aim of well-being tourism is not only to provide pleasure and luxury experiences, but also to preventing illness and maintaining well-being. (Matkailun edistämisskeskus, 2005; Müller and Lanz Kaufmann, 2001; Suontausta and Tyni, 2005, as cited in Konu, 2010a)

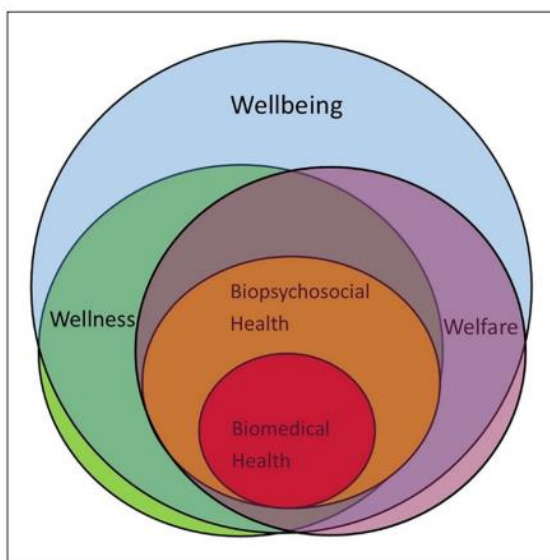


Figure 1. Concept diagram of the proposed relationship between health, wellness, welfare and wellbeing (Simons & Baldwin, 2021).

## Wellness

As shown in Figure 1, wellness is a narrower concept compared to well-being (Konu et al., 2010b). Global Wellness Institute (2023) has defined wellness as ‘the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health’. The concept of wellness has its origins in the integrated concept of well-being and fitness promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Koncul, 2012). Wellness has various meanings, from exploring existence to reconciling body, mind, and spirit. Even in activities like massage or relaxation experiences, which have physical dimensions, there are also spiritual, psychological, or holistic aspects, reflecting the consensus that wellness is multidimensional. (M. Smith & Kelly, 2006). The significance of physical and spiritual practices can be observed through wellness activities practised across different cultures. Countries in Central and Southeast Europe prioritize activities that involve exposure to sunshine, sea air, and thalassotherapy for their beneficial effects on well-being. In contrast, Asian countries place value on spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation as part of their daily wellness routines (Koncul, 2012).

While the terms "well-being" and "wellness" are occasionally used interchangeably, more commonly, the two concepts are differentiated from one another (Konu et al., 2010a). Gallie (1955) noted, as cited in McMahon et al. (2010), that both wellness and well-being are essentially contested concepts because they are everyday terms that are often assumed to have a shared understanding.

Bart et al. (2018) argue that the distinction between "wellness" and "well-being" lies in the fact that wellness is considered an individual responsibility, while well-being is believed to be more influenced by external factors. Similarly, Grénman & Rääkkönen (2015) claims that the former emphasizes personal responsibility and is often associated with indulgent experiences like spa treatments, while the latter encompasses a broad range of factors and activities.

Grénman & Rääkkönen (2015) summarizes the differences between well-being and wellness as follows: Well-being encompasses both material and abstract elements such as standard of living, subsistence, education, and freedom, as well as subjective facets like quality of life, happiness, and life satisfaction. It can be pursued through activities such as relaxation and

engagement with nature, as well as more active pursuits like physical activity and professional training. In contrast, wellness is seen as a lifestyle characterized by self-discovery and personal responsibility and is more closely associated with material well-being, commercial products and services, and indulgent experiences like spa treatments. As a result, it is often viewed as a more passive form of enjoyment. (Grénman & Rääkkönen, 2015, p.15)

However, Sarvimäk (2006) and Greenberg (1985) as cited in McMahon et al. (2010) claims that their meanings can be subjective and vary depending on the context in which they are used. Considering this, the differences between the concepts of wellness and wellbeing will be further explored in the context of tourism.

### **Wellbeing and wellness tourism**

The hedonistic lifestyles in developed countries, combined with the global economic situation since 2007/2008, have increased pressure on people's mental and physical health, leading to a growing interest in new forms of relaxation and rejuvenation. As a result, there has been a rising interest in well-being and wellness tourism in both tourism research and business, with the concepts of well-being and wellness becoming firmly established in tourism terminology. (Kangas and Tuohino, 2008 as cited in Konu, 2010a; Ryff, 1989; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Filep, 2014 as cited in Kazakov, 2021; Koncul, 2012; Smith & Puczko, 2014).

Kazakov (2021) presented a conceptual framework of the wellness tourism research timeline in a figure and stated that the main research fields in the present era are wellness tourism and health tourism. The concept of well-being is considered a sub-concept of wellness tourism and is discussed under the topic of perception and conceptualization (Kazakov, 2021; Sheldon & Bushell, 2009).

On contrary, Finnish Tourist Board (Matkailun edistämiskeskus, 2005 as cited in Konu, 2010) has defined wellbeing tourism as a broader concept that encompasses wellness. Wellness tourism is typically associated with luxury goods and services, often provided by five-star hotels. For instance, luxury hotels provide a range of wellness services, including but not

limited to spa and health treatments, beauty treatments, occupational health therapy, sports facilities, spiritual activities, massages, and rehabilitation programs (Koncul, 2012; Voigt et al., 2011). On the other hand, wellbeing tourism is considered a comprehensive entity that comprises a more diverse set of products and services than wellness tourism. Well-being tourism may also involve luxurious activities and experiences, and pampering, but it is not always require high-end hotels (Konu et al., 2010a). To capture a wider range of offerings beyond these high-end products, the term "wellbeing tourism" is commonly used instead. Figure 2 illustrates that wellness products are a component of wellbeing tourism, consisting of one or multiple types of wellness services. (Matkailun edistämiskeskus, 2005; Suontausta and Tyni, 2005 as cited in Konu, 2010; Pesonen & Komppula, 2010)

On the other hand, Grénman & Rääkkönen (2015) claims that although wellness tourism is a part of well-being tourism, it extends beyond the scope of well-being by being strongly linked to indulgent and luxurious experiences. However, they also argue that Finnish tourism products seldom meet the expectations of international wellness tourists. The broader term of well-being is more suitable for describing and promoting Finnish tourism products (Finnish Tourist Board, 2005; 2008; 2014 as cited in Grénman & Rääkkönen, 2015).

When defining well-being and wellness, it is also important to consider linguistic, translational, and cultural differences, as they can cause confusion between the two concepts (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Konu (2010a) agrees with Grénman & Rääkkönen's (2015) argument by suggesting that, in the Finnish context, the concept of wellbeing tourism is more appropriate because it better captures the Finnish understanding of the term 'hyvinvointi' (well-being in Finnish).

In Finland, research on well-being tourism has largely been based on the strategic work of the Finnish Tourist Board (Finnish Tourist Board, 2005; 2008; 2014 as cited in Grénman & Rääkkönen, 2015). As this current study aims to investigate the potential of Japanese tourists for well-being tourism in Finland, the definition of well-being provided by the Finnish Tourist Board will be adopted and followed. Subsequently, the definitions of well-being and wellness tourism in Finland will be examined.



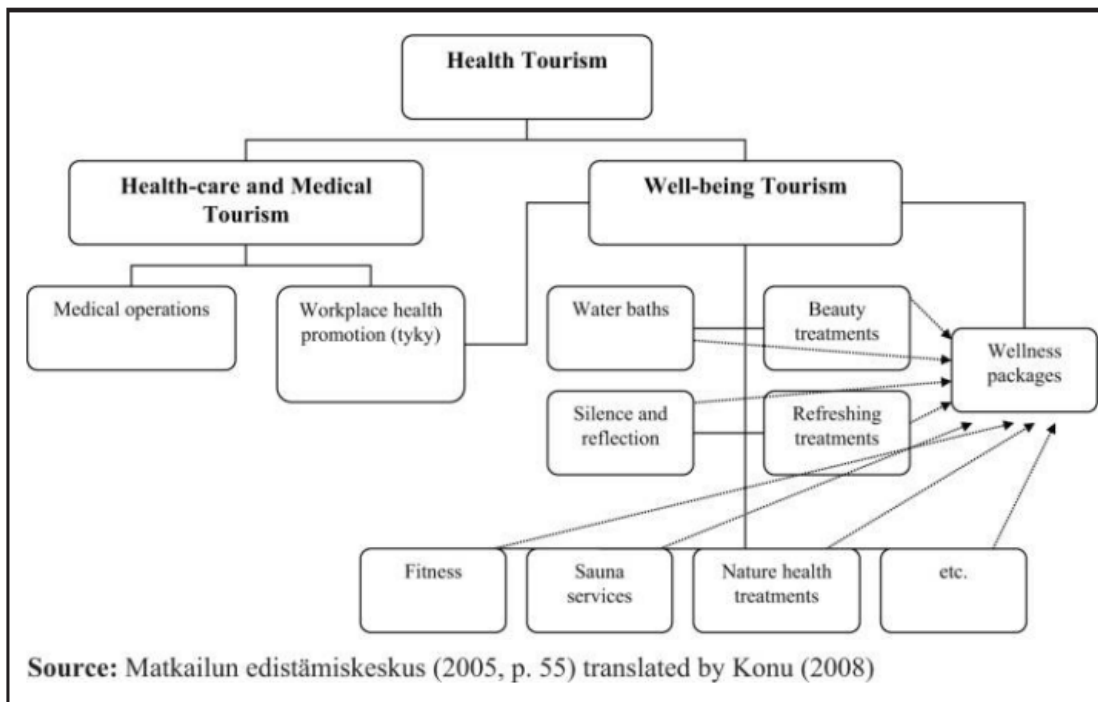


Figure 2. Recommended concepts of health tourism by Finnish Tourist Board (Konu, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Wellbeing tourism in a Finnish context

Physical activities and relaxation are the primary motivations for travel in Finnish well-being tourism, reflected in the products and services offered by Finnish well-being tourism companies (Kangas and Tuohino, 2008, as cited in Konu, 2010a). This focus can also be observed in the wellbeing tourism product recommendations (hyvinvointimatkailun tuotesuosituksset) published by visit Finland (2020). Visit Finland's definition of well-being tourism includes eight sections, highlighting relaxation, peace and silence, nature activities, authentic Finnish culture in retreats and beauty treatments, and health and fitness.

Specifically, the recommended wellbeing product include experiences such as sauna and other traditional Finnish beauty treatments, staying in a cottage, and taking a personalized guided tour of traditional Finnish sports or exercises with detailed instructions in the nature, emphasizing the use of Finnish materials and brands, and a peaceful connection with nature in all experiences. (visit Finland, 2020)

In Konu et al.'s (2010a) study on potential well-being tourism product development in Eastern Finland, she outlined the fundamental pillars of the Lake Wellness concept, which included

elements that were consistent with the concept of well-being as defined by the visit Finland. The pillars of the Lake Wellness concept were established by referencing Müller and Lanz Kaufmann's (2001) model, as well as through interviews conducted with well-being companies. According to Konu et al. (2010a), the fundamental pillars of the Lake Wellness concept consist of:

- Spirit, mind and self-development: relaxing excursions in the forest and lacustrine environment
- Health: Nordic walking around the lake shores or through forests, traditional and preventative treatments
- Healthy cuisine: local raw materials and clear water fish
- Inner and external beauty: Finnish sauna, peat sauna treatment
- Relaxation and comfort: swimming in the lake, Finnish sauna experience, baths in hot water barrel, relaxation near open fire
- Tailor-made, movement/fitness: guided tours in and on the lake, kick sledding or trip skating on the ice of the lake

The present study adopted this Lake Wellness concept for a part of the questionnaire that aimed to assess participants' interest in well-being tourism products. Further details on this will be provided in the methodology section.

## **2.2 The profiles of Japanese people as tourists in Finland**

Research on the characteristics of health and wellbeing tourists has been limited. While there have been studies on specific sub-sectors like spa or spiritual tourism, general research on wellbeing tourists is relatively scarce (Konu & Laukkanen, 2010).

To the author's knowledge, there is no existing literature defining potential wellbeing tourists. This current research defines potential well-being tourists as individuals who are inclined to become leisure travellers and who are interested in experiences related to relaxation, maintaining physical and psychological health, as described in the wellness tourism concept. Additionally, the study specifically focuses on Japanese tourists who have an interest in overseas travel, as the goal is to identify potential Japanese well-being tourists for Finland.

### **2.2.1 The profile of Japanese tourists in Finland**

Japan is a significant market for Finland in terms of tourism, with over 180,000 trips made by Japanese visitors in 2018. In terms of the number of foreign visitors' overnight stays in Finland, Japan ranked in the top ten, accounting for approximately 2% of all foreign overnights. (visit Finland, 2018, 2019)

Since 2016, the number of holidaymakers from Japan has seen a significant increase, comprising nearly two-thirds of all trips made by Japanese tourists. In comparison to visitors from other countries, Japanese tourists tend to prefer solo travel, with 33% of holidaymakers traveling alone. Among solo travelers, the age group of 25 to 34 represents the primary demographic. Additionally, holidaymakers under the age of 35 account for 55% of the total number of visitors. The majority of travel parties consisted of friends (25%) or partners (20%), with younger travelers (aged 15-24) and older travelers (over 64) showing a preference for traveling with friends. (visit Finland, 2018, 2019)

Suvanto et al. (2017) conducted a study as part of the Caito project 2017-2019, which aimed to attract Japanese tourists in three Baltic Sea countries: Finland, Estonia, and Latvia. According to this study, the primary target group for Japanese tourists includes women in

their 20s and 30s who travel independently or with friends, as well as elderly individuals. Japanese women tend to travel abroad more frequently than men, and they are also more likely to stay for longer periods of time and be flexible with accommodation options. (European Travel Commission., 2013; Matilainen & Santalahti, 2018; Suvanto et al., 2017)

In 2018, Japanese holidaymakers spent an average of 2.7 nights at hotels in Finland, indicating a shorter duration compared to other tourists. It suggests that holidaymakers have a preference for exploring multiple countries rather than exclusively staying in Finland. Among Japanese holidaymakers, 62% chose Finland as their primary destination. Additionally, it is worth noting that a majority of Japanese holidaymakers who departed from Finland continued their journey to another country, excluding Japan. (visit Finland, 2018, 2019)

Japanese visitors accounted for the tenth largest share of all product and service expenditures during their trips to Finland among visitors from foreign countries. The accommodation was one of the areas where Japanese visitors spent more money compared to visitors from other countries in 2018. Hotels were the most popular choice for accommodation, while other types of accommodations were less commonly selected. (visit Finland, 2018, 2019)

Over 98% of Japanese holidaymakers chose the Helsinki area as their travel destination, while one in five tourists traveled to Lapland. The Lake District, coastal areas, and archipelago were seldomly visited by Japanese holidaymakers, with only 7% visiting the Lakeland region and 8% going to the coast and islands. (visit Finland, 2018, 2019)

According to visit Finland (2018), nature accounted for over 57% of the top motivations for Japanese travelers visiting Finland. Previous research, such as Konu (2015), also supports their interest in nature, particularly engaging in relaxed activities in peaceful surroundings. On the other hand, statistics published by visit Finland (2018) indicate that shopping, visiting traditional cultural sites, and meeting Santa Claus were the most appealing and commonly experienced activities among Japanese tourists. The study further revealed that while Japanese tourists expressed interest in nature-based attractions such as the Finnish sauna and northern

lights, as well as visiting national parks, these activities were among the least selected when it came to actual participation or experiences. (visit Finland, 2018)

Rural wellbeing tourism is witnessing an increasing demand in tourist markets, as highlighted by Tervo-Kankare and Tuohino (2016). These rural areas, abundant with natural resources, are ideal for the development of wellbeing tourism products. With Japanese tourists showing a growing interest in experiencing the tranquil beauty of Finland's nature, wellbeing tourism is seen as an expanding opportunity for rural enterprise development, according to Suvanto et al. (2017).

### **2.2.2 The research on Japanese wellbeing tourists**

Tourism involving various aspects of physical and mental health, including health tourism, is a relatively new concept in Japan. In contrast to Europe, where it has been acknowledged since the 1970s, Japan began to take notice of this concept in the 2000s (Yonemura, 2010). Although the term "well-being" is used within the Japanese tourism industry, it is mostly employed occasionally in concepts such as health tourism and wellness tourism. Moreover, in tourism research in Japan, particularly in relation to wellness tourism, there is a lack of fundamental research on the definitions and relationships between health tourism, wellness tourism, and medical tourism in Japan (Morita, 2017). Due to these backgrounds, there is a significant lack of research on the characteristics of Japanese customers in the field of health tourism and wellness tourism. Moreover, there is almost no research specifically focused on well-being tourism in Japan.

However, there has been wellbeing tourism research conducted in Finland targeting Japanese tourists. For example, Konu has published a series of studies along the development process of service modules for wellbeing tourism for Japanese tourists. This project aims to create a variety of wellbeing tourism products that showcase the unique features of Eastern Finland specifically designed for Japanese tourists. Konu et al. (2017) explored the needs and interests of Japanese tourists regarding forest-based wellbeing products. Using insights from this study and information about Japanese consumer behavior and trends, businesses developed service modules. In a virtual product testing environment, Konu (2015b) evaluated the developed

service modules by discussing the content and usefulness of comments provided by Japanese customers. Konu (2015a) subsequently conducted an on-site study with a Japanese test group to externally test the developed service modules and the overall tourism package product.

To effectively attract Japanese tourists, Nozawa (1992) as cited in Sangpikul (2006, p. 203) advises that a destination community must acquire knowledge about the market and devise products specifically tailored to the Japanese market. It is crucial to pay attention to market trends and preferences in order to meet the unique needs of Japanese visitors. To gain a deeper understanding of Japanese tourists as potential customers for wellbeing tourism in Finland, this current study utilized lifestyle segmentation, which will be further discussed in the following section.

### 2.2.3 AIO segmentation

In 1964, Lazer introduced the concept of lifestyle in the fields of marketing and consumer research. Since then, researchers have been working on creating tools to assess consumers based on various factors in order to categorize them into different lifestyle segments. Lifestyle significantly influences various aspects of everyday consumer behaviour, including the selection of vacation destinations and activities, making it a valuable foundation for segmentation. (Füller & Matzler, 2008, p. 118)

Lifestyle segmentation is widely recognized as a highly effective method for segmenting markets based on psychographic factors (Lee & Sparks, 2007, p. 506). In the travel industry, there has been extensive research on lifestyle segmentation, with the earliest studies dating back to the 1970s (Woodside & Pitts, 1976, as cited in Füller & Matzler, 2008, p. 118). It has been recognized that conducting psychographic research, which involves studying activities, attitudes, interests, opinions, perceptions, needs, and daily routines (also known as lifestyle characteristics), enables the development of more effective and efficient marketing programs for a better understanding of tourists as consumers (Lee & Sparks, 2007, p. 506).

AIO (Activities, Interests, and Opinions) segmentation, introduced by Wells and Tigert in 1971, is one of the most extensively validated methods among the various approaches used for lifestyle segmentation (Santos, 2006, p. 149). It is widely adopted and includes variables related to attitudes, activities, interests, and opinions (Konu, 2010a, p. 43). AIO refers to measures of activities, interests and opinions. According to Plummer (1974, p. 33), activities involve work, hobbies, social events, and vacation. Interests encompass family, home, job, and media, while opinions include social issues, politics and business. This approach based on activities, interests, and opinions has proven the strong dependency relationship between tourists' behaviors and lifestyle (Gonzalez & Bello, 2002, p. 81).

The growing personalization in consumer behavior patterns, especially in the tourism context, is less effectively explained by socio-demographic and economic criteria. Tourists have diverse backgrounds and travel preferences, as they come from different regions and lead unique lifestyles. Their choices of destinations, activities, and accommodations are influenced by their individual motives, personalities, and lifestyles. Given the market's diversity, incorporating AIO-factors becomes crucial for more accurate segmentation. This approach provides a comprehensive perspective on tourists, leading to improved predictions of customer behavior compared to relying solely on geo-demographic information (Gonzalez & Bello, 2002).

AIO method has been commonly used in research on tourism segmentation. For instance, Srihadi et al. (2016) utilized the AIO approach to investigate the lifestyle typologies of international tourists visiting Jakarta. James et al. (2017) segmented staycation travelers in Ohio, Duman et al. (2020) have segmented Austrian domestic tourists, and Konu (2010a) utilized this method to segment Finnish wellbeing tourists. Konu's (2010a) research findings demonstrated the possibility of identifying potential segments within the wellbeing tourism market using general AIO segmentation. Drawing on this, this current study employed lifestyle question battery developed in Konu's study to investigate potential segments of Japanese tourists seeking wellbeing experiences in Finland.

## 2.3 Nature relatedness

People who have a strong connection with nature tend to be happier and more concerned about the environment. However, modern lifestyles often lead to disconnection from nature, which can have negative consequences for both human and environmental health (Conn, 1998). It is therefore important to investigate the relationship between humans and nature relatedness, and the scale measuring this connection is increasingly being used in research on sustainability and well-being (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013).

### 2.3.1 The positive effects of nature

Research on humans' relationship with nature has been influenced by Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that people have an inherent need to connect with nature due to our dependence on other living organisms for survival. Kellert & Wilson (1995) further suggest that this connection between humans and nature is biologically based and plays a vital role in our overall health and development. Our fondness for outdoor activities, gardening, and animals, as well as the positive health effects of being in nature, such as improved mood (MacKerron & Mourato, 2013), cognition (Berman et al., 2008), and longevity (Mitchell & Popham, 2008), support the concept of biophilia. As a result, numerous studies have demonstrated the significance of nature for our well-being, with many indicating that connecting with nature has positive effects on our physical and emotional health (Frumkin, 2001; Lai et al., 2019). For example, Pouwels et al. (2012) argue that engaging in outdoor activities and experiencing nature can lead to advantages in physical and mental well-being, social cohesion, and environmental consciousness. Similarly, Capaldi et al. (2014) highlights the positive effects of connecting with nature, including increased vitality and life satisfaction. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Levine et al. (2005) found that students who participated in outdoor schools had higher levels of self-esteem, problem-solving abilities, relationships with peers, motivation to learn, and attitudes in class than those who did not. Moreover, their scores on science exams improved, suggesting that contact with nature can positively impact academic performance. In addition, Schultz & Tabanico, 2007) claim that developing empathy towards the natural environment through a close relationship with nature could inspire individuals to be more caring towards others.



One important aspect of connecting with nature is its potential to promote environmental awareness and action. There are various academic fields that suggest reconnecting people with nature may help address environmental problems, as evidenced by the research conducted by Mayer & Frantz (2004). Individuals who view themselves as part of the natural world tend to care about environmental issues and engage in behaviours that contribute to environmental protection, according to Schultz (2000) and Howard (1997) and Martin et al. (2020). This is because a strong connection to nature leads to greater awareness of one's impact on the environment, concern for all living things and less self-interest (Dutcher et al., 2007; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Schultz, 2000). As a result, these individuals are more inclined to adopt self-reported behaviors that promote environmental friendliness (Nisbet et al., 2009; Schultz, 2000, 2001). Additionally, Wells & Lekies (2006) revealed that childhood experiences in nature have been shown to have a significant impact on adult environmental attitudes. Specifically, participation in activities such as walking, playing, hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing in wild nature before the age of 11 is significantly correlated with positive adult environmental attitudes and behaviors towards environmental protection. This correlation is in line with the idea that connecting with nature can promote environmental awareness and action.

### 2.3.2 Measuring nature connectivity

While people are generally attracted to nature and can derive numerous benefits from it, there are differences in the extent to which individuals connect with the natural world. Some people feel a strong connection to their local ecosystems, while others feel completely disconnected from nature, particularly in urban environments where contact with nature may be limited (Maller et al., 2005).

Over the years, many researchers have studied the concept of connection to nature across various fields, leading to the development of different notions and measurements of this connection (Tam, 2013). Nature connectivity can be measured as a subjective assessment of one's interactions with nature, and some researchers have suggested that a values-based mindset may be defined as a connection to nature (Brügger et al., 2011; Whitburn et al., 2020). Nisbet et al. (2009) have found that people who score higher on the nature connectivity

scale are more likely to spend time in nature. This connectivity can either remain steady over time (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) or fluctuate based on contact with nature (Mayer et al., 2009).

To assess an individual's subjective connection to nature, several measures have been created, such as emotional affinity toward nature (EATN), connectedness to nature (CTN), the inclusion of nature in the self (INS), commitment to nature (COM), environmental identity (EID), nature relatedness (NR), Connectivity with nature (CWN) (Clayton, 2003; Davis et al., 2009; Dutcher et al., 2007; Kals et al., 1999; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Nisbet et al., 2009; Schultz, 2001). Although research indicates that they share many similarities, there are minor differences between the definitions and measurement methods of these terms. According to Tam (2013), the concepts of EATN, CTN, INS, and COM are unidimensional in nature. They each focus on a specific aspect of the connection between humans and nature, such as affective affiliation, cognitive representation, or relationship commitment. Emotional affinity toward nature (EATN) was introduced by Kals et al. (1999), and their research indicates that it predicts personal ecological behavior and willingness to support environmental movements. Similarly, Mayer & Frantz (2004) introduced connectedness to nature (CTN), which was found to be an important predictor of environmental behavior and subjective well-being. It also highlights a sentimental bond with the natural world and the connectedness-to-nature scale presented in the study and its goal was to evaluate people's emotional feeling of kinship or connection to nature. On the other hand, Schultz (2001) introduced the inclusion of nature in the self (INS), which perceives being in touch with nature as innate cognitive and identifies that it is the degree to which a person's cognitive self-representation incorporates nature. It describes how much an individual integrates their knowledge about the natural world into their self-concept. Finally, the concept of commitment to nature (COM) was developed by Davis et al. (2009), which is based on the idea that humans and nature are interdependent. They showed that COM predicts ecological behaviour and intention to offer help to local environmental causes.

While these concepts that have been discussed above are focused on a single aspect in terms of connection to nature, EID and NR have taken a multidimensional approach to the concept (Tam, 2013). Both EID and NR scales have been found to be internally consistent and positively associated with ecological attitudes and behaviors (Tam, 2013). Clayton (2003)

introduced the concept of environmental identity (EID), which is a sense of connection to the natural environment that impacts an individual's perception and actions towards the world. EID includes multiple dimensions, such as interaction with natural elements, the importance of nature, membership in nature, and positive emotions towards nature (Clayton, 2003). Similarly, nature relatedness (NR) was proposed by Nisbet et al. (2009), which predicts love for animals, membership in environmental organizations, self-identification as an environmentalist, preference for green products, and indicators of well-being. Connectivity with nature (CWN) is another concept related to connection to nature, defined by Dutcher et al. (2007) the perception of a fundamental sameness between oneself and the natural world. However, its reliability has been criticized for being relatively low and it remains unclear whether CWN reflects a cognitive appraisal or a sense of affective affiliation (Tam, 2013).

### 2.3.3 Nature relatedness scale

In our research, we utilized the Nature Relatedness Scale (NRS) to assess individuals' psychological attachment to nature. The NRS is a recommended measurement to examine the motivation and significance of nature-based tourism (Prebensen et al., 2018)

Nisbet et al. (2009) developed the concept of nature relatedness to encompass various aspects of human-nature relationships, such as cognition, affect, and experience. It measures people's interest, fascination, and desire for contact with nature. While nature relatedness shares similarities with environmental identity (EID), it has a broader scope as it encompasses emotions, experiences, and a comprehension of the relationship between humans and all living organisms (Tam, 2013). In addition, nature relatedness encompasses a deep understanding and appreciation of all aspects of the natural world, regardless of human appeal, going beyond mere aesthetic and practical values (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013). According to Nisbet et al. (2009), there are three sub-dimensions of nature relatedness, namely NR-Self, NR-Perspective, and NR-Experience, which describe various characteristics of a person's interaction with the natural world. It is assessed with a self-report, which participants were asked to rate their agreement with 21 items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Some of the items included statements such as "My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area" and "Animals, birds, and plants should have fewer rights than humans" (Nisbet et al., 2009).

We utilized a shortened version of the nature relatedness scale (NR-6) developed by Nisbet & Zelenski (2013) in this study. The NR-6 is composed of 6 items from the "self" and "experience" dimensions of the original scale, making it a more efficient measure that can be applied to a wider range of research studies. Although the NR-6 may not capture all aspects of nature relatedness as extensively as the full scale, it has been shown to have the same relationship with happiness and environmental variables. This new, brief measure of nature connectedness is particularly useful when time and resources are limited and when the focus of the research is on connectedness rather than environmental attitudes. (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013)

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Scientific approach**

In this study, I have chosen to adopt a quantitative approach, which aligns with the positivist philosophy. Positivism holds a realist orientation that believes in the existence of a single, objective truth that is independent of human perception (Sale et al., 2002). The quantitative approach allows for an objective examination of the phenomenon by maintaining the independence of the researcher and the subject of study and by differentiating facts from values (Deshpande, 1983; Sale et al., 2002). Quantitative methods are frequently utilized in tourism and hospitality research, as it draws heavily from established fields such as sociology, marketing, and management that have a strong influence from the positivist perspective (Walle, 1997).

Drawing on these principles, this study will use the quantitative method to investigate potential segments of Japanese well-being tourists in Finland by examining factors related to their lifestyles. The purpose of this study is to determine if there are significant statistical differences in demographic factors, travel behaviors, interests in various activities, and nature connectedness among the identified segments. The quantitative approach aims to measure and analyze causal relationships objectively and in a generalizable manner using experimental methods and statistical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To align with the principles of objectivity and generalizability inherent in the quantitative positivist approach, this study employs methods based in statistical analysis, such as inferential statistics, mathematical analysis, and randomized experimental or quasi-experimental design, structured protocols, and questionnaires with a limited range of pre-determined responses (Lee, 1999).

#### **3.2 Ethical Considerations**

In this study, ethical considerations were taken into account in accordance with the principles outlined by the the ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland (*Ihmiseen Kohdistuvan Tutkimuksen Eettiset Periaatteet Ja Ihmistieteiden Eettinen Ennakkoarviointi Suomessa; TENK guidelines*, 2019). The guideline emphasizes the importance of respecting the dignity, autonomy, and rights of research participants, protecting cultural heritage, and avoiding harm to participants or other subjects.

The autonomy of research subjects is a critical ethical consideration in any study. In this particular study, several measures were taken to give the research subjects freedom and control over their participation (*Ihmiseen Kohdistuvan Tutkimuksen Eettiset Periaatteet Ja Ihmistieteiden Eettinen Ennakkoarviointi Suomessa*, 2019).

The participation of the survey was voluntary, which meant that individuals could choose whether or not to participate. The research participants provided their informed consent to participate by completing the questionnaire. Participants were informed that they had the freedom to choose whether to complete the questionnaire or to discontinue it at any time. Only complete data sets were included in the results, because it was assumed that early termination was equivalent to withdrawing from the study.

The letter of consent briefly explained the research topic and objective, and the approximate response time was estimated to inform respondents. The questionnaire also included contact information for the researcher, allowing the research subjects to ask any further questions about the study. Additionally, the survey respondents were informed about data collection and storage.

To ensure that no harm was caused to research subjects, the study was conducted in a respectful manner. This was achieved by using sensitive language and gender-appropriate wording, as well as handling sensitive topics with care. The goal was to ensure that research subjects felt safe and comfortable throughout the study.

Additionally, to protect participant privacy and maintain ethical standards, the study did not collect any specific personal or sensitive information, such as exact salaries. Instead, participants were given the option to select a salary range or choose the 'I don't want to answer' option. Similarly, age was not a mandatory question, and participants were given a choice to skip it. The gender question also included a wider range of options, such as 'others' and 'I don't want to answer.'

To further ensure data and privacy protection, the personal data collected and stored was used solely for this study. The study was anonymous, and no information could be traced back to individual participants since tracking cookies were turned off.

Overall, the researchers were committed to conducting the study with high ethical standards, with a focus on respecting and protecting the rights of research subjects throughout the research process.

### **3.3 Population and sampling**

The objective of this study is to investigate the characteristics of potential Japanese customers who are interested in wellbeing tourism in Finland. Therefore, the target population for this research is the adult Japanese population. The study excludes individuals under the age of 18, which is considered the legal age of adulthood in Japan. According to Ministry of Justice (2023), individuals under the age of 18 are legally considered minors. They are unable to enter contracts without parental consent. Hence, the researcher has decided to limit the study population to Japanese adults over 18 years old. The estimated adult population of Japan, defined as individuals over 18 years of age, is 12,238,000 (the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023), all of whom are eligible to participate in the survey. However, participants were informed at the beginning of the survey that only one member per household can answer the questionnaire. This decision was made because the survey includes questions about household income and the number of significant others residing in the same household.

This study relied on non-probability sampling techniques, which are commonly used in online surveys such as those conducted with opt-in panels. Non-probability sampling methods are varied and do not have a unified framework encompassing them all. Nevertheless, these methods are often used due to their practicality and cost-effectiveness. (Baker et al., 2013)

The sampling techniques employed in this study were convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling was used to gather data from a population that is easily accessible to the researcher, such as family, acquaintances, and friends. Snowball sampling,

on the other hand, involved contacting a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and using them as referrals to contact others. The researcher asked the aforementioned individuals to spread the survey to their acquaintances, family members, and friends. (Rahi, 2017)

The sample obtained in this study may not be an accurate reflection of the broader population due to the non-probability sampling techniques used. While these techniques have practical advantages such as cost, speed, and convenience over probability sampling, they also introduce potential biases (Baker et al., 2013). As a result, the findings of the study should be interpreted with caution and may not be generalizable to the broader population.

### **3.4 Survey**

The study collected data through a survey that comprised of 6 sections. The survey included questions related to 1) socio-demographic profile, 2) travel behavior, 3) interests in various activities, 4) motives for engaging in wellbeing tourism, 5) lifestyle, and 6) nature connectedness. The researcher created the survey, which was designed based on the Konu (2010a) and theoretical concepts explained in chapter 2. The survey was originally developed in English and then translated into Japanese by the author for the purpose of data collection.

The focus of this study was the Japanese population, and the dependent variable was whether participants resided in Japan and spent a considerable amount of time in the country. Instead of asking for nationality, the researcher asked if participants had lived in Japan for at least 10 years and held a certificate of residence. The reason for this was the diversity of nationalities and the ambiguity of who qualifies as Japanese in recent times. The 10-year duration was selected because people from overseas can acquire permanent residence in Japan after living in the country for that length of time (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2019).

Furthermore, the question regarding current residency in Japan was included in order to ensure that only those currently living in Japan was included in the study. This was important because the aim of the research was to improve marketing strategies for trips to Finland from Japan, and thus the target population was individuals currently residing in Japan. Participants



who did not meet the residency criteria were unable to answer further questions and directed to the end of the survey. The dependent variable was measured nominally.

Furthermore, participants who indicated that they are not interested in overseas trips have been excluded from the dataset, as the purpose of this survey is to identify potential segments of Japanese wellness tourists in Finland.

### **Socio-demographic profile**

On the first page of the survey, questions were included to gather socio-demographic information about the participants. The purpose of this was to identify any differences in socio-demographic factors among lifestyle segments that were later identified. The survey included questions about age, gender, marital status, education, household income, and employment status. These questions were adapted from the survey used by Kessler et al. (2020). All questions, except for age, were nominal. As mentioned earlier, age was not made a mandatory question due to ethical reasons, and participants were allowed to type in their age as a numeric value. In addition, the gender question included options such as 'male', 'female', 'others', and 'I don't want to answer'.

The question about marital status "as b'en revised from its original version in Kessler et al. (2020) to reflect the increasing diversity of family structures in recent times. There is now a wide range of family types, including those where couples choose not to marry but still maintain a long-term partnership. To account for these evolving family dynamics, new questions have been created as alternatives to the traditional marital status question. These questions ask about the number of significant others you live with, as well as the number of children and elderly people in your household, while still capturing essential information about your family composition. Questions asking whether you are living with someone and whether they are significant others are presented with response options of 'yes', 'no', or 'other' (open-ended). Additionally, questions about the total number of people living in the household, as well as the number of children and elderly individuals, can be answered by specifying their age in numeric values.

The questionnaire also had a question about the participant's highest level of education, which was modified to better suit Japanese people. The options for this question is 'Junior high school', 'High school', 'University (bachelor's degree)', 'Master/Doctorate', 'Others' (open-ended), and 'I don't want to answer'.

Regarding household income, the original version in dollars was converted to the yen, and the ranges were determined based on the income distribution statistics of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2009), with options ranging from 'Under 2 million yen' to 'More than 7 million yen' in 1-million-yen increments. 'Others' and 'I don't want to answer' options were also provided due to ethical considerations, as mentioned before. The employment status question includes options such as 'employed', 'self-employed', 'homemaker', 'retired', 'unemployed', 'student/scholar', 'others', and 'I don't want to answer'.

### **Travel behavior**

The second part of the survey focused on travel behavior, specifically for international travel. The first four questions asked participants to identify countries they would like to visit or revisit, and the reasons for their choices. Participants were given the option to indicate whether they had any countries in mind (nominal), and if so, to list them (open-ended). The reasons for their choices were also asked in an open-ended format. The purpose of these questions was to investigate the relationship between participants' preferred travel destinations and their level of connection to nature. The following three questions were about travel companions, travel duration, and accommodation preferences, and were developed with reference to Konu (2010a). Travel duration was presented in ranges, and all the questions used nominal values. The response options for the travel companion questions were developed from visit Finland (2018), which was conducted specifically for Japanese individuals. The aim was to investigate any differences in travel behaviors among the identified lifestyle segments.

### **Interests in various activities**

The third part of the survey focuses on participants' interests in a range of activities. The list of activities was derived from a survey conducted by Visit Finland (2018), which investigated the types of activities that Japanese travelers were interested in pursuing during their visits to Finland. The list was modified to exclude activities that were too specific to Finland. Visit Finland (2018)'s list was chosen over Konu (2010a)'s list because it features activities that Japanese travelers are more likely to experience while visiting Finland. Participants were asked to select all the activities that they find most attractive to participate in during their travels, from a list of 23 options.

### **Well-being tourism**

The fourth part of the survey focuses on participants' interests in well-being tourism, with the aim of identifying whether they are interested in engaging in such tourism during their trip and determining any differences in interest among different lifestyle segments. When it came to this section, I made the decision not to refer to the work of Konu (2010a) as I had concerns that the concept of well-being tourism may not be well-known among Japanese people. In fact, while wellness is frequently linked to tourism, wellbeing is generally more connected to one's way of life and overall quality of life. Consequently, research on wellbeing tourism is quite limited in Japan, and the term wellbeing tourism is not widely recognized. Simply asking participants if they were interested in this type of tourism may not have yielded accurate results. To address this issue, I instead utilized the 'lake wellness' concept presented by Konu et al. (2010b), who identified 6 fundamental pillars based on Mullar's model of lake wellness tourism in Eastern Finland. Please see Chapter 2 for more information on this. The survey questions were developed using these 6 pillars as a framework, with modifications to ensure they were applicable to a wider range of contexts beyond Eastern Finland. Participants were asked to rate their level of interest in each option on a 4-point scale, ranging from 'Not at all important' to 'Very important'.

### **Lifestyle**

The fifth part of the survey aims to measure participants' values in their lifestyles and identify lifestyle segments based on their responses. The 24 options presented in this section were

adapted from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD) survey, which was conducted in 1995 and modified for use in Konu (2010a) study. The FSD survey was chosen by Konu (2010a) because it includes items that are not specific to any particular theme and are relevant at a general level. As an equivalent lifestyle survey conducted in Japan could not be found, the FSD survey was chosen as a suitable alternative for this study. Participants were asked to rate the importance of each option in their lives using an 4-point scale, with 1 being ‘Not at all important’ and 4 being ‘Very important’.

### **Nature relatedness**

The objective of the sixth section of the survey is to measure the level of nature relatedness among participants, which refers to the degree of connectedness people feel towards nature. This measure was used to identify potential differences in the level of affinity or interest that participants have towards the natural environment among lifestyle segments identified later in the study. The survey questions were adapted from Abe (2019) and include six statements. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale ranging from ‘Disagree strongly’ to ‘Agree strongly’. For more details, please refer to Chapter 2.

### **3.4 Data collection**

The survey was conducted online via Webropol on April 10, 2023, and distributed through a web link. It was shared via LINE, social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. The initial participants were requested to refer the survey to individuals they know. The survey link was active until April 18, 2023, and data collection concluded on that day.

Table 1 displays the socio-demographic information. The largest age group among the respondents was those in their 20s, making up over 64.5 percent of the total participants. This was likely due to the fact that the researcher herself is in her 20s and distributed the survey to friends of the same age group. More than 80 percent of the respondents were female, which was acceptable given the assumption that the majority of potential well-being tourists are likely to be women. This is supported by previous studies that have found women to be the dominant demographic in wellness and wellbeing tourism (Lehto et al., 2006; Pesonen &

Komppula, 2010). In addition to men and women, there were three respondents who answered 'other'.

Over 57 percent of the respondents reported living with family, while more than 30 percent were living alone. Among those living with family, the majority had children. The survey results showed that most of the participants had completed a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, while more than 23 per cent had finished high school as their highest level of education. One person responded, 'I don't want to answer'. It should be noted that this survey includes respondents who are under 23 years old, some of whom may still be in the process of completing their bachelor's or junior college degrees or attending high school or vocational school. The household gross income per year of the majority of respondents was over 7 million yen, which may be due to the fact that many of the respondents were living with family. Over 48 per cent of the respondents were employed workers, and more than 37 per cent were students.

For data analysis, the survey responses were imported into SPSS software. Initially, the data was processed by examining the responses and determining the number of participants who were not currently residing in Japan and those who indicated a lack of interest in travelling overseas. This resulted in 15 individuals being excluded from the total number of respondents, bringing the final number of participants to 204. To ensure that the data could be properly processed in SPSS, individual variables were named, and missing values were defined as '-1'. Descriptive statistics were then calculated to determine how many responses were given per variable.

In addition to this, some modifications were made to the response data. In cases where respondents answered "others" in open-ended questions, their responses were examined to see if they could be included in other pre-existing response options. For example, a respondent who answered, "sole proprietorship" under the "others" option for employment status was recategorized as "self-employed".

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile.

	n	%
<b>Age group (not mandatory, n=197)</b>		
10s	9	4.6
20s	127	64.5
30s	11	5.6
40s	16	8.1
50s	29	14.7
Over 60s	5	2.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	164	80.4
Male	37	18.1
<b>Residential arrangements</b>		
Family	118	57.8
With children		50
With elderly people		27
Others		41
Sharing room	21	10.3
Living alone	65	31.9
<b>Education</b>		
Vocational school	13	6.4
High school	47	23.0
Junior college	10	4.9
Bachelor degree	117	57.4
Master/Doctor degree	16	7.8
<b>Income</b>		
- 2 million yen	37	18.1
2 million yen - 3 million yen	30	14.7
3 million yen - 4 million yen	26	12.7
4 million yen - 5 million yen	9	4.4
5 million yen - 6 million yen	7	3.4
6 million yen - 7 million yen	5	2.5
7 million yen -	49	24.0
<b>Employment status (multiple answers, n=214)</b>		
Employed	99	48.5
Self employed	19	9.3
Housemaker	12	5.9
Student	77	37.7
Unemployed and others	7	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

This section briefly introduces the systems and tools used for the survey analysis (Table 2). It aims to provide an overview of the tools and methods employed without providing an overly comprehensive explanation.

Table 2. Instruments, Methods, and Analysis Flow

Instruments	
	Webropol
	SPSS
Methods and Analysis Flow	
1	Principal component analysis (PCA)
2	Reliability analysis: Cronbach’s alpha
3	Computing sum variables
4	K-means clustering
5	Chi-Square tests

Initially, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with oblimin rotation was applied to identify the factors related to the phenomenon. Then, K-Means Cluster Analysis was conducted to categorize the participants into similar groups based on the sun variables.

Factor-cluster segmentation is a popular approach used in tourism segmentation studies (Andriotis et al., 2008; Beh & Bruyere, 2007; Cha et al., 1995; Chiang et al., 2015). On the other hand, this method has been also criticized for losing information contained in the original variables and for being accepted without questioning its efficacy (Dolnicar, 2019; Dolnicar & Grün, 2008). Despite the criticism, factor-cluster segmentation is still widely used by several researchers (Carvalho et al., 2023; Gu et al., 2021; Kamata & Misui, 2015). One justification for using factor analysis is that it reduces the amount of correlation among variables, which can be problematic in cluster analysis (Hair, 1995). This method is also valued for its ease of interpretation and its potential for facilitating comparisons across similar studies (Woo, 1998).



#### **4 Results**

Based on PCA eight components were identified: Education, status, tech, and sports, Appearance, Attachment, Arts, Home, and Health and enjoying life (Table 3). The identified components were selected based on eigenvalues greater than 1, with component loadings less than 0.4 removed. The appropriateness of PCA was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy ( $KMO = 0.770$ ) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < 0.001$ ). These identified components explain 57.2% of the variance of the variables.

Table 3. Components with their corresponding Cronbach's Alphas and their respective variable loadings in the PCA analysis.

	Components						
	Education, status, tech, and sports	Appearanc e	Attachmen	Arts	Home	Health and enjoying life	
love			.690				
family			.804				
spirit			.510				
health							-.794
friendship			.469				
materialwellbeing		-.647					
looks		-.538					
shopping		-.672					
art				-.790			
theatre				-.728			
music				-.825			
cooking					.642		
furnishhome					.778		
handicrafts					.466		
societalactivities							
studying	.593						
status	.585						
technology	.607				.412		
computers	.667						
sports	.627						
nature		.461					
travelling							
spirituality		.646					
enjoylife							-.771
Cronbach's Alpha	.714	.722	.634	.754	.591	.519	

I computed the sum variables for each component by calculating the average of the variables within those components. The variables were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates not at all important, 2 indicates slightly important, 3 indicates somewhat important, and 4 indicates very important.

Subsequently, K-means cluster analysis was performed using these sum variables. However, the "Attachment" and "Health and enjoying life" component were excluded from the cluster analysis due to its high overall value and lack of differentiation among the clusters.

Solutions ranging from two to seven clusters were run multiple times, and a four-cluster

solution was chosen due to its satisfactory distribution of cases across the clusters and interpretability (Table 4).

Table 4. Cluster analysis results: identifying four segments.

	Cluster				(1= not at all important, 2= slightly important, 3= somewhat important, 4= very important)
	indifferent about arts (n=56)	interested in arts (n=53)	indifferent about everything (n=33)	intrested in everything (n=62)	
Education, status, tech, sports	2.91	2.40	2.22	3.08	
Appearance	3.30	2.67	2.44	3.40	
Arts	2.30	3.03	1.70	3.46	
Home	2.74	2.58	2.20	3.35	

The segments were named based on the loadings of the components. The first lifestyle-based segment (n=56; 27.5 per cent; first column in Table 5) consisted of respondents who valued education, status, tech, sports, and appearance, as well as home related matters. Home related matters includes cooking, furnishing home, and handicrafts. This segment showed the second-highest interest in these factors, following the fourth segment which valued all factors. However, they displayed relatively low interest in arts, leading to the segment being named "Indifferent about arts". The segment was named indifferent about arts.

The second segment (n=53; 26.0 per cent; second column in Table 5) comprised individuals who were the third most interested in education, status, technology, sports, appearance, and home-related matters compared to the other segments. Notably, they exhibited a significantly higher interest in arts. Based on these factors, the segment was named "Interested in arts." Based on these factors the segment was named Interested in arts.

The third lifestyle-based segment (n=33; 16.2 per cent; third column in Table 5) was the smallest and the people belonging to this segment demonstrated low interest across all factors in general. They exhibited the lowest interest, particularly in arts, leading to the segment being named "Indifferent about everything".

The fourth segment (n=62; 30.4 per cent; fourth column in Table 5) was the largest and it is characterized by respondents who valued all factors. They exhibited the highest interest in all factors compared to the other segments. Hence, the segment was named interested in everything.

There were no statistically significant differences between the segments regarding gender, residential arrangements, education, employment status and income. The respondents in all segments were fairly evenly distributed across gender categories, with the majority of respondents being female. The segment "indifferent about arts" had a slightly higher proportion of individuals living alone and a lower proportion of individuals living with children. In contrast, the segment "interested in arts" had a slightly higher proportion of individuals living with family. The participants in each segment showed a relatively balanced distribution across different educational backgrounds, with the majority having junior/bachelor/master's degrees. In terms of employment status, the segment "indifferent about everything" had a relatively higher proportion of homemakers and unemployed

individuals. Segments “indifferent about arts” and “indifferent about everything” had higher incomes, while “interested in arts” and “interested in everything” tended to have lower incomes.

However, there was a statistically significant difference between segments regarding generation. For instance, the chi-square test revealed that the segments "Indifferent about arts" and "Interested in everything" had the highest percentages of individuals who were under 30 years old (79.6 percent and 80.3 percent, respectively). Table 6 displays the remaining responses.

Table 6. Socio-demographic factors within clusters (%).

	Indifferent about arts (n=56)	Interested in arts (n=53)	Indifferent about everything (n=33)	Interested in everything (n=62)	Total (n=204)
<b>Generation</b>					
Under 30	79.6	58.8	45.2	80.3	69.0
Over 30 under 50	9.3	15.7	19.4	13.1	13.7
Over 50	11.1	25.5	35.5	6.6	17.3
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	78.6	86.5	78.1	82.0	81.6
Male	21.4	13.5	21.9	18.0	18.4
<b>Residential arrangements</b>					
Living with family	53.6	67.9	63.6	50.0	57.8
Sharing room	5.4	7.5	18.2	12.9	10.3
Living alone	41.1	24.5	18.2	37.1	31.9
<b>Education</b>					
Vocational/High school	25.0	35.8	28.1	29.0	29.6
Junior/Bachelor/Master degree	75.0	64.2	71.9	71.0	70.4
<b>Employment status</b>					
Employed	48.2	50.9	54.5	43.5	48.5
Self-employed	5.4	13.2	15.2	6.5	9.3
House maker	3.6	3.8	12.1	6.5	5.9
Student	44.6	32.1	24.2	43.5	37.7
Unemployed	0.0	1.9	6.1	4.8	2.9
<b>Income</b>					
- 2 million yen	16.3	22.5	20.0	30.0	22.7
2 million yen - 3 million yen	16.3	22.5	10.0	22.0	18.4
3 million yen - 4 million yen	7.0	22.5	16.7	18.0	16.0
4 million yen - 7 million yen	23.3	7.5	16.7	6.0	12.9
7 million yen -	37.2	25.0	36.7	24.0	30.1

Table 7. Travel preferences within clusters (%).

	Indifferent about arts (n=56)	Interested in arts (n=53)	Indifferent about everything (n=33)	Interested in everything (n=62)	Total (n=204)
<b>Preferred duration of an overseas trip</b>					
1-4 days	36.4	22.6	12.1	32.3	27.6
5-6 days	16.4	20.8	21.2	27.4	21.7
1 week	41.8	45.3	54.5	30.6	41.4
2 weeks	5.5	11.3	12.1	9.7	9.4
<b>Accommodation preference</b>					
Yes	54.5	43.4	36.4	50.0	47.3
No	45.5	56.6	63.6	50.0	52.7
<b>Travel companions</b>					
Myself	35.7	45.3	36.4	37.1	38.7
Friends	85.7	73.6	45.5	75.8	73.0
Nuclear family	37.5	34.0	57.6	46.8	42.6
Extended family	5.4	5.7	6.1	11.3	7.4
Tour	7.1	5.7	6.1	3.2	5.4

No statistically significant differences were found between the lifestyle segments regarding the preferred duration of an overseas trip and the preference to stay at the same accommodation for most of the trip. Overall, the majority of respondents expressed a preference for a one-week overseas trip. Specifically, the segment "Interested in arts" had a relatively higher proportion of individuals who shared this preference.

When asked about spending 80 percent of their overseas trip at a single accommodation, the responses were divided equally between yes and no. However, the segment "Indifferent about everything" had a slightly higher proportion of individuals who preferred to change accommodations within the 80 percent duration of the overseas trip.

Statistically significant differences were found between the segments regarding travel companions. In general, the majority of respondents expressed a preference for travelling with friends. The second most preferred travel companions were oneself and the nuclear family. The segment "Indifferent about arts" showed a higher preference for travelling with friends, while the segment "Indifferent about everything" notably preferred not to travel with friends. Although no statistically significant differences were found regarding other travel companions, the study revealed interesting patterns. For instance, the segment named "Interested in everything" demonstrated a stronger preference for traveling with extended family members. The whole response can be found in Table 7.

The study also uncovered significant differences between the segments regarding interests in wellbeing experiences. Overall, among the participants, a majority expressed the importance of experiences associated with mental growth (79.9 percent), healthy food (68.1 percent), and relaxation (95.6 percent). Notably, the importance of relaxation exceeded 90 percent across all segments.

Specifically, significant differences were observed in experiences regarding mental growth, disease protection, and beauty. The segments "interested in arts" and "interested in everything" showed a slightly higher level of interest in engaging in wellbeing experiences that promote mental growth, specifically in terms of the spiritual, mental, and self-development. Responses related to experiences in disease protection and beauty were



approximately evenly split between those who found them important and those who did not. Participants belonging to the "Interested in everything" segment showed a higher level of interest in disease prevention and beauty experiences compared to other segments. On the other hand, a larger proportion of individuals in the "Indifferent about everything" segment indicated a lack of interest in beauty experiences.

Although statistical significance was not found for the importance of relaxation and fitness, there were noticeable trends. The segment identified as "Interested in everything" had a slightly greater percentage of participants who perceived healthy food as important. Likewise, the "Indifferent about everything" segment displayed a higher inclination to view fitness as unimportant during their trips. All the other responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Wellbeing experience respondents are interested in (%).

	Indifferent about arts (n=56)	Interested in arts (n=53)	Indifferent about everything (n=33)	Interested in everything (n=62)	Total (n=204)
Mental growth	69.6	86.8	72.7	87.1	79.9
Disease protection	48.2	52.8	45.5	72.6	56.4
Healthy food	58.9	69.8	63.6	77.4	68.1
Beauty	60.7	43.4	30.3	69.4	53.9
Relaxation	92.9	96.2	93.9	98.4	95.6
Fitness	46.4	45.3	33.3	50.0	45.1

Participants expressed interest in various activities, including visiting national parks (62.7%), UNESCO World Heritage sites (60.8%), other cultural destinations (68.6%), and shopping (66.2%). Significant differences were observed between segments for activities such as cycling, mountain biking, visiting museums, and attending concerts and music festivals. The segments "interested in arts" demonstrated a slightly higher interest in cycling and mountain biking. The "indifferent about everything" segment displayed considerably lower interest in visiting museums. On the contrary, the "indifferent about everything" segment showed relatively low interest in attending concerts and music festivals compared to other segments, while the "interested in everything" segment exhibited relatively high interest in the same activities.

The remaining activities did not exhibit significant differences among segments, although there were some noticeable variations. For instance, the "indifferent about arts" segment demonstrated slightly lower interest in activities such as boating, paddling, and kayak trips, and relatively low interest in hiking. Similarly, the "indifferent about everything" segment displayed relatively low interest in swimming, visiting theme parks, and other cultural destinations. The segment "interested in arts" also showed relatively low interest in visiting theme parks, while showing relatively high interest in staying at a cottage.

A few of the activities that generated the least interest were fishing (2.9 percent), attending concerts and festivals (4.4 percent), going on sightseeing cruises (9.8 percent), and engaging in spas and yoga, among others (8.3 percent). The rest of the activities are listed in the Table 9.

Table 9. Activities respondents are interested in engaging in (%).

	Indifferent about arts (n=56)	Interested in arts (n=53)	Indifferent about everything (n=33)	interested in everything (n=62)	Total (n=204)
Boating, paddling, kayak trips	10.7	26.4	15.2	24.2	19.6
Cycling, mountain biking	14.3	35.8	12.1	27.4	23.5
Fishing	1.8	1.9	0.0	6.5	2.9
visiting national Parks	58.9	62.3	66.7	64.5	62.7
Swimming in a lake or in the sea	30.4	32.1	9.1	27.4	26.5
Walking, Hiking, Trekking in the nature	39.3	58.5	57.6	50.0	50.5
Wildlife watching and their photography	33.9	35.8	24.2	30.6	31.9
Snow sports (skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing)	12.5	11.3	3.0	14.5	11.3
visiting museums	48.2	67.9	24.2	67.7	55.4
visiting UNESCO World Heritage Sites	62.5	62.3	57.6	59.7	60.8
visiting Amusement and theme parks	37.5	18.9	18.2	35.5	28.9
visiting other cultural destinations (buildings, castles, monuments)	73.2	71.7	57.6	67.7	68.6
Culinary Experiences	23.2	11.3	15.2	24.2	19.1
Concerts and music festivals	17.9	45.3	12.1	54.8	35.3
Sports events	12.5	11.3	9.1	11.3	11.3
staying at cottages	19.6	37.7	18.2	21.0	24.5
Getting to know the Lifestyle of local	50.0	54.7	57.6	46.8	51.5
Shopping	73.2	58.5	51.5	74.2	66.2
Sightseeing cruises	7.1	11.3	6.1	12.9	9.8
Spas and yoga, among others	10.7	7.5	6.1	8.1	8.3

There was no significant difference between segments pertaining to nature relatedness. Overall, the majority of participants showed middle to high nature relatedness score (93.1 percent). The segments “interested in arts” and “interested in everything” showed higher scores, while the other segments “indifferent about arts” and “indifferent about everything” showed lower scores. The complete set of responses is available within Table 10.

Table 10. Nature relatedness scores (%).

	indifferent about arts (n=56)	interested in arts (n=53)	indifferent about everything (n=33)	intrested in everything (n=62)	Total (n=204)
Low	7.1	9.4	3.0	6.5	6.9
Middle	57.1	26.4	54.5	25.8	39.2
High	35.7	64.2	42.4	67.7	53.9

## 5 Discussion

The objective of the research was to identify potential customer segments for well-being tourism in Finland among Japanese tourists. A total of four distinct segments were created based on lifestyle-related factors: Indifferent about arts, Interested in arts, Indifferent about everything, and Interested in everything. Statistically significant differences were observed among the segments in terms of socio-demographic factors, travel preferences, wellbeing experiences, and interests in activities.

The study by Smith and Puczko' (2009), as referenced in Konu (2010), indicates a strong relation between individual lifestyles and their tendency towards wellbeing and wellness tourism. In the present research, segmentation was created based on lifestyle factors, as the aim was to determine the potential well-being tourist segments. According to Konu & Laukkanen (2010), the larger field of wellbeing tourism has been relatively underexplored in general research. Furthermore, there's a noticeable research gap regarding the participation of Japanese tourists in well-being tourism, specifically in Finland. This current study aims to address this knowledge gap and enhance comprehension regarding Japan's potential as a customer for wellness tourism in Finland.

The study showed that, in general, the participants were interested in engaging in wellbeing experiences related to mental growth, healthy food, and relaxation during their trip. Particularly noteworthy is that 90 percent of all segments valued relaxing during their trip. Additionally, about 70 percent of the segment "interested in everything" expressed interest in wellbeing experiences aiming for disease protection and beauty enhancements.

### **Wellbeing experience aiming at disease protection and beauty enhancements**

Although the segment "interested in everything" showed interest in beauty-related well-being experiences, participants across all segments demonstrated a minimal inclination towards activities like spas and yoga during their trip. A survey by Statista (2023), revealed that most yoga practitioners fall between the ages of 25 and 54. Similarly, a study conducted in Japan by Recruit Beauty World Research Institute, Ltd. (2013) on the frequency of spa facility and service usage over the past year showed that a slightly higher frequency of usage was

observed among individuals aged 25 to 29 and 35 to 39. Additionally, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in Japan (2009) states that the main customer segments for spa services are individuals in their 30s. Given that the majority of participants in this current study were in the age range of 21 to 25, with the "interested in everything" segment having a higher proportion of young participants compared to other segments, it is likely that the results were influenced by the fact that this particular age group, which is not the primary target audience for spas and yoga, constituted the majority.

This indicates that the "interested in everything" segment may have expressed interest in beauty-related well-being services as they were looking for experiences other than spas and yoga. Korea is popular among younger Japanese tourists as a beauty destination (Takayanagi & An, 2019), and medical tourism is a key motivation for Japanese tourists in their 20s when visiting Korea (C. Lee, 2012). Research by Yu and Ko (2012) found that Japanese tourists in Korea demonstrated more interest in rehabilitation and psychological therapy (such as horse riding, meditation, and yoga) rather than aesthetic or healthcare services (such as skincare services, diet programs, diagnostic programs, spa programs, massage services, and thalassotherapy). On the contrary, there are additional studies that support that aesthetic and healthcare services are appealing to Japanese tourists visiting Korea. Kim and Kim (2010) as cited in J.-M. Lee & Son (2012) reported a preference for aesthetic services among Japanese women visiting Korea, while J.-M. Lee & Son (2012) found that medical check-ups, skin aesthetics, orthopedics, and gynecology were popular choices among Japanese tourists. Yoon et al. (2010) claimed that cosmetic surgery and traditional Korean medicine (KTM) treatments were also highly preferred services. While some of these beauty-related services may involve medical interventions and lean towards medical tourism, the "interested in everything" segment also expressed interest in disease prevention, indicating that these beauty enhancement and illness prevention services may meet their expectations.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of participants in this study were in the age range of 21 to 25. The segment labelled as "Interested in everything" consisted primarily of individuals within this age group, showing a particular interest in beauty enhancements and disease prevention. However, the study revealed that 90% of the participants did not show interest in spa and yoga experiences, indicating that Japanese tourists aged 21 to 25, who constitute a

significant portion of the participants, are not the main target audience for such activities. Therefore, a reassessment of beauty enhancements and disease prevention-related wellbeing experiences in Finland might be necessary, considering that the current offerings in Finland predominantly revolve around spas and similar activities (visit Finland, 2020). As mentioned in Chapter 2, nearly half of all Japanese travelers to Finland are leisure tourists below the age of 35, with the primary target audience being women in their 20s to 30s. Japanese tourists aged 21 to 25 are part of this demographic, who are not the main target audience for spa and yoga experiences. Hence, reassessing wellbeing experiences related to beauty enhancements and disease prevention in Finland becomes crucial. However, this study does not provide specific insights into the particular beauty treatments and illness prevention services that Japanese tourists would be interested in, or how these preferences may differ based on age. Further research is necessary to explore these aspects and determine the specific types of beauty treatments and illness prevention services using Finnish resources that would be appealing to Japanese tourists.

### **Wellbeing experience aiming at relaxation**

One major finding of this study is that Japanese tourists highly value relaxation during their travels. According to Recruit Jalan Research Center (2019), Japanese travelers tend to prioritize relaxation, escaping from daily life, and relieving stress as their main motivations for traveling overseas. The study also revealed that Japanese travelers exhibit a stronger inclination compared to travelers from other countries in seeking a change of mood and environment during their trips. This is also supported by Hayashi and Fujiwara (2008, p. 23) who claimed that relaxation and stress relief are popular reasons for traveling overseas among young and middle-aged Japanese tourists. In many of the previous studies, "relaxation" is frequently mentioned in relation to "escape" when examining travel motivations (He & Luo, 2020, p. 9; Jang, 2002, p. 371; Loker and Perdue 1992, as cited in Kamata & Misui, 2015, p. 284).

The main motivations of Japanese tourists to travel abroad, such as "relaxation" and "escape from daily life," are highly compatible with the concept of wellbeing tourism, especially in the context of rural area. Previous studies have indicated that relaxation and the desire to escape from hectic daily life are shared motivations for both rural tourism and wellness

tourism (Konu, 2023, p. 6; Konu & Pesonen, 2018, p. 151). Notably, relaxation plays a central role in motivating rural tourists (Park & Yoon, 2009, p. 102).

"Tranquility" is a key aspect of wellbeing services in the Finnish countryside, aimed at facilitating relaxation. This aspect of "tranquility" is frequently associated with relaxation and is also a common motivator for tourists seeking rural and wellbeing experiences (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010, p. 151). Visit Finland has consistently emphasized the connection between relaxation and silence as a core value of Finland as an international travel destination (Konu et al., 2017, p. 2; visit Finland, 2020). The aim is to position Finland as a counterpart to busy city life, a destination where visitors can embrace tranquillity, find peace, and have the freedom to relax (visit Finland.com, as cited in Konu et al., 2017). Konu et al. (2010b, p. 134) also highlighted Eastern Finland as a location possessing attractive qualities such as natural beauty, peace, quiet, and tranquility. Previous study revealed that these core values of Finland are also highly appreciated among Japanese tourists. According to Konu et al. (2017, p. 8), which aimed to develop service modules for Forest wellbeing packaged tours, Japanese tourists highly appreciated the silence they found in the forest. They found it to be soothing and calming, considering it the most valuable aspect of their experience.

Although the peaceful and relaxing wellbeing experiences available in the rural regions of Finland, such as the Lakeland and coastal areas, it is a reality that Japanese tourists rarely travel to these countryside destinations (visit Finland, 2018). Previous studies have identified several reasons for this phenomenon. One major obstacle in the development of wellbeing services in rural areas is the significant distance from major cities (Tuohino and Kangas, 2009, as cited in Konu et al., 2010b, p. 134). While Konu et al. (2010b, p. 134) suggests that this distance can be seen as an advantage, ensuring a serene and tranquil atmosphere, there are other challenges to overcome. These include the relatively low recognition of these destinations, a lack of expertise among local entrepreneurs and workers, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and insufficient marketing efforts to promote these rural areas (Konu et al., 2010b, pp. 127, 134; Suvanto et al., 2017, p. 8).



As previous studies have suggested, the Finnish relaxation experience, characterized by silence, is greatly appreciated by Japanese visitors. However, despite the alignment of Japanese tourists' needs and Finnish wellbeing offerings, Finland's rural areas, with their serene tranquility as a key draw, have yet to significantly attract Japanese tourists. To more effectively connect Japanese tourists' desire for relaxation with wellbeing development in rural areas, it's essential to address the challenges mentioned earlier through ongoing research.

### **Visiting national park and UNESCO world heritage sites as popular activities**

As well as the high value of relaxation, visiting national parks was identified as one of the most preferred experiences among all segments. Furthermore, participants showed interest in visiting UNESCO World Heritage sites, which is consistent with the findings of a previous survey conducted in 2018 (visit Finland, 2018). However, the same survey highlighted that the gap between expressed interest and actual experience of Japanese tourists in Finland was highest for activities such as visiting national parks or UNESCO World Heritage sites. Nature is perceived as a significant aspect associated with Finland among Japanese tourists (visit Finland, 2019), and it is reported that for the majority of Japanese tourists, nature serves as the primary reason for visiting Finland (visit Finland, 2018). This raises the question of what causes the gap between the interests of Japanese tourists and their actual experiences.

One of the potential reasons for the existence of this gap can be attributed to limited time availability. Japanese people tend to have shorter holiday trips in general. compared to Europeans. Synodinos (2001, p. 242) revealed that the Japanese population generally has less available leisure time, and many individuals do not fully utilize their entitled vacation days. Instead, they prefer to take time off during official public holidays such as New Year, Golden Week, and Obon, which typically last less than a week. The findings of this current study, which indicate that the majority of participants among all segments considered a one-week trip to be the ideal duration, further support this observation. Additionally, a survey conducted by visit Finland's (2018) found that the average length of stay among Japanese holidaymakers was 2.7 nights, compared to 3.7 nights for other visitors. On average, Japanese holidaymakers had a shorter duration of stay in Finland. Furthermore, the travel habits of Japanese tourists may also contribute to their relatively short stay in Finland. Komppula & Konu (2017, p. 257) discovered that Japanese tourists who travel long distances to Finland find trips that include

multiple destinations more appealing than single-destination trips. Similarly, Yoshihara (2012) describes the characteristic of Japanese tourists often engaging in round-trip journeys lasting around seven days. Taking into account this background, the limited time resulting from the relatively short duration of their trips and their preferred travel style could be factors contributing to the gap between the expressed interest and the actual experience of Japanese tourists in Finland, particularly when it comes to activities such as visiting national parks or UNESCO World Heritage sites.

This poses a significant challenge in developing wellbeing tourism products that utilize Finland's natural environment for relaxation purposes. As previously mentioned, relaxation is the primary motive for Japanese travelers, and the serene natural environment, peace, and quietness offered by Finland, including national parks, are highly appealing to them. However, if we consider the challenges posed by the distance to natural environments, the short length of Japanese travelers' stays, and their preferred travel style, it becomes increasingly difficult to develop rural, nature-rich environments like national parks as wellbeing tourism destinations specifically tailored for Japanese visitors.

The present study has only revealed that a significant number of participants consider a one-week trip to be optimal and have expressed interest in national parks. However, to determine whether the short duration of Japanese travelers' stays and their travel style truly contribute to the gap between their expressed interest and actual experience in Finland, further research is needed.

### **Mental growth as wellbeing experience**

The findings of the current study indicate that the segments labeled as "interested in arts" and "interested in everything" show a strong interest in personal growth and development during their trips. It is worth noting that self-development is a popular motivation for traveling abroad, especially among younger generations (Hayashi & Fujiwara, 2008, p. 26). Watkins & Gnoth (2011, p. 10) also claims that young Japanese backpackers are motivated by their own personal goals, aspirations, and desires. The higher representation of young individuals within the "interested in everything" segment could be attributed to these factors.

The concept of mental growth, as a wellbeing experience, discussed in this study is derived from the Lake wellness pillars proposed by (Konu et al., 2010b). One of the elements within Lake wellness is "Spirit, mind, and self-development: relaxing excursions in the forest and lacustrine environment" (p. 136). The idea of attaining wellbeing through self-development is rooted in the concept of eudaimonia (Kashdan et al., 2008). The concept similar to Konu's notion can also be found in the wellbeing tourism product recommendations by visit Finland (2020). The key point is that the focus is not solely on exercise itself, but rather on incorporating nature into physical activities as a means to fully experience it and stimulate both mental happiness and physical well-being. This highlights the recognition of nature as an essential element in the context of self-development as well. Interestingly, the segments "interested in arts" and "interested in everything" exhibit a stronger affinity for nature compared to other segments, indicating a deeper connection to the natural environment. There could be potential links between the inclination towards mental growth and the level of attachment one feels towards nature.

Based on research by Komppula and Konu (2012), as cited in Konu et al. (2017), well-being tourists seek relaxation, and a break from their daily routines while engaging in physical activities. A visit to a national park in Finland would provide a great opportunity to relax by being surrounded by the silence in the forest (Konu et al., 2017), while also engaging in moderate physical activity. Konu (2015, p. 9) found that hiking, kayaking, and guided tours were among the most preferred activities for Japanese tourists visiting Finnish national parks. While the survey participants did not show particular interests in those activities overall, the "interested in arts" segment demonstrated a keen interest in engaging in activities such as cycling and enjoying the serene atmosphere of a cottage. These activities align with the wellbeing travel product recommendations by Visit Finland, which can be easily implemented using Finnish resources. Combining visits to national parks with cycling excursions and cottage stays might provide a comprehensive and fulfilling experience for Japanese wellbeing tourists, particularly for this specific segment. However, the aforementioned challenges regarding the Japanese tourists' travel style have to be taken into account.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the study has identified four distinct customer segments for well-being tourism in Finland among Japanese tourists: Indifferent about arts, Interested in arts, Indifferent about everything, and Interested in everything. These segments were created based on lifestyle-related factors and exhibited statistically significant differences in socio-demographic factors, travel preferences, well-being experiences, and interests in activities.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of customer behavior and provides valuable insights into potential customer demographics. To provide satisfaction to customers, companies must strategically allocate resources for product or service improvements. Analyzing how specific features contribute to overall satisfaction and customer delight at the segment level is essential (Füller & Matzler, 2008). The findings of this study could assist Finnish wellness and well-being companies in designing wellbeing experiences that effectively utilize the existing attractive Finnish resources to attract specific segments of Japanese tourists.

In order to further enhance the understanding of Japanese tourists' preferences in the development of well-being tourism products, it is necessary to explore which well-being-related resources offered by Finland specifically match the needs of the younger generation. Furthermore, in order to effectively utilize the interest of Japanese tourists in nature and relaxation to drive the development of well-being tourism in rural areas of Finland, it is necessary to conduct research that specifically addresses the existing challenges already identified in previous studies on the development of well-being tourism in rural areas.

## **7 Limitation**

There are several limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results. The first limitation relates to the sampling technique used. The study relied on a non-probability sampling technique to recruit participants easier. As a result, the sample may not be representative of the population of interest, and the findings may not be generalizable beyond the sample. Furthermore, the sample may have been biased due to the personal connections between the researcher and the participants, potentially leading to over- or under-representation of certain groups or perspectives.

A major limitation of this study is the language issue. As a non-professional translator and native speaker of Japanese, the researcher translated the survey questions and instructions from English to Japanese. This may have introduced errors or inconsistencies in the translation, potentially leading to misunderstandings or confusion among the participants. Additionally, the translation process may have introduced unintended nuances or biases in the survey questions and instructions, potentially influencing the participants' responses. Moreover, during the translation process from Japanese to English, the researcher's subjectivity may have influenced the accuracy and nuances of the translated survey responses.

While the findings of this study provide some insights into the phenomena of interest, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results due to the limitations of the study design and the accuracy of the survey responses.

## Appendix

### Section 1: demographic profile

#### Part 1:

1. Do you have an experience of living in Japan for more than 10 years, AND do you currently have a certificate of residence in Japan?
  - yes
  - no
2. what is your birth year?
  - (open-ended)
3. what is your gender?
  - female
  - male
  - others
  - I don't want to answer
4. Do you currently have anyone living together with you?
  - yes
  - no
  - others
5. If yes, are they/is it "family member(s)" or/and "significant other(s) that you've been living together for more than 2 years"?
  - yes
  - no
  - others (open-ended)
6. if you chose yes and others, how many are they in total (not including yourself)?
  - (open-ended)
7. How many of people in number 6 are under 18 years old (not including yourself)?
  - (open-ended)
8. How many of people in number 6 are over 65 years old (not including yourself)?
  - (open-ended)
9. What is your highest level of education completed?
  - junior high school
  - High school
  - University (bachelor degree)
  - Master/Doctorate
  - others
  - I don't want to answer
10. What is your household income (approximately)?
  - Under 2 million yen
  - More than 2 million yen and less than 3 million yen
  - More than 3 million yen and less than 4 million yen
  - More than 4 million yen and less than 5 million yen
  - More than 5 million yen and less than 6 million yen
  - More than 6 million yen and less than 7 million yen

- More than 7 million yen
  - others
  - I don't want to answer
11. What is your employment status? (multiple choice)
- employed
  - self-employed
  - homemaker
  - retired
  - unemployed
  - student/scholar
  - others
  - I don't want to answer

## **Part2: Travel behavior**

1. Which countries or regions would you like to revisit as a tourist? (You can write more than one country)
  - I have a country that I want to revisit (open-ended)
  - I have never visited any foreign countries
  - I do not want to revisit any of the countries
2. Please briefly explain why you would like to revisit that country or region.
3. Which country or region would you like to visit for the first time in the future as a tourist? (You can write more than one country)
  - I have a country that I want to visit (open-ended)
  - I don't have any country in my mind, but I'm interested in traveling abroad
  - I'm not interested in traveling abroad
4. Please briefly explain why you would like to visit that country or region.
5. If you were to travel abroad as a tourist, who would you travel with? (Multiple selection possible)
  - alone
  - with nuclear family
  - with extended family
  - with a traveling group
  - other (open-ended)
  - I don't want to answer
6. If you are traveling abroad as a tourist, how many days would you ideally stay in one country?
  - 1-2 days
  - 3-4 days
  - 5-6 days
  - 1 week
  - 2 weeks
  - more than 3 weeks
  - others
7. Do you typically want to stay at the same accommodation for more than 80% of the trip?

- yes
- no

### **Section 3: interests in various activities**

Please select all activities that you find the most attractive to participate during your holiday trip overseas.

- Boating, paddling, kayak trips
- Cycling, mountain biking
- Fishing
- visiting national Parks
- Swimming in a lake or in the sea
- Walking, Hiking, Trekking in the nature
- Wildlife watching and their photography
- Other outdoor activities (write specifically if you can)
- Snow sports (skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing)
- Other winter activities and experiences (write specifically if you can)
- visiting museums
- visiting UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- visiting Amusement and theme parks
- visiting other cultural destinations (buildings, castles, monuments)
- Culinary Experiences
- Concerts and music festivals
- Sports events
- Other cultural events and festivals (write specifically if you can)
- staying at cottages
- Getting to know the Lifestyle of local
- Shopping
- Sightseeing cruises
- Spas and yoga, among others
- not interested in any of things mentioned here
- others (open-ended)

### **Section 4: wellbeing tourism**

How interested are you in each of the following options as part of your travel experience?  
Please rate the interests of following items using the scale from 1 to 4 as shown below.

1 Not at all important 2 Slightly important 3 somewhat important 4 very important

1. Spend time facing yourself/mental self-growth
2. Health maintenance/disease prevention
3. Healthy cuisine



4. Beauty maintenance
5. Relaxation and comfort
6. Fitness/Exercise to increase physical strength and muscle strength

### **Section 5: Lifestyle**

For each of the following, please rate the importance of following items in your life, using the scale from 1 to 4 as shown below.

1 Not at all important 2 Slightly important 3 somewhat important 4 very important

1. love
2. family
3. mental balance
4. health
5. close friendly relations
6. standard of living/material well being
7. clean-cut/groomed looks
8. shopping
9. art
10. theatre/opera
11. music
12. cooking
13. fixing up and furnishing home
14. handicrafts
15. societal activities
16. self-development/studying
17. status in society
18. technology
19. interest in computers
20. sport/fitness
21. being in nature
22. travelling
23. religion/spirituality
24. enjoying life

### **Section 6: nature connectedness**

For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from 1 to 5 as shown below. Please respond as you really feel, rather than how you think “most people” feel.

1 Disagree strongly 2 Disagree a little 3 Neither agree or disagree 4 Agree a little 5 Agree strongly

1. My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area.
2. I always think about how my actions affect the environment.

3. My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality.
4. I take notice of wildlife wherever I am.
5. My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am.
6. I feel very connected to all living things and the earth.

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