

## Characteristics of percentage of foreign guests in Hokuriku region

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### Abstract

*The rates of the total number of foreign visitors from each country/region and the rates of the total number of guests in the Hokuriku region (including three prefectures: Fukui, Ishikawa, and Toyama) before the spread of corona infection (2019) are compared. The total number of foreign guests in the region were about 1.2 million in that year and the number of Ishikawa had the highest rate 64.3 % and Toyama was 27.5 %. The one for Fukui was 8.2 %. The number of guests from Taiwan were the largest in all prefectures and the total guest number from China was lower than the one for Taiwan. Chinese visitors account for 30 % of total number of foreign visitors to Japan and the number is maximum. In Fukui Prefecture, the personal travel expenditure for Chinese visitors is the largest of main countries/regions and it is necessary to increase Chinese guests for the local economy as a short-term target. The percentage of South Korean visitors is small even though there are regular flights. It is desired to increase South Korean visitors, for example by constructing a new market oriented strategy. Although there are some types of human exchange, friendship/sister-city tie-up can be thought of as a typical exchange. It is effective to promote educational and business exchanges based on a tie-up and to maintain a certain number of exchange people. And, it is important that the exchanging population is expanded. The number of partnered municipalities of foreign countries is about 90 in the Hokuriku region. The partner municipalities in China remains at a small rate (26 %), though Japan has some kinds of deep connections with China, especially in the economic field. There is a high potential to promote human exchange considering the Chinese population and bilateral distance.*

### Keywords

*foreign tourist, Hokuriku region, travel expenditure, promotion of exchange, sister-city tie-up*

### 1. Introduction

Since 2020, COVID-19 has spread all over the world and human exchange was severely restricted [Oyabu et al., 2021]. Entering 2022, the cross-border movement has been mainly relaxed in Europe and the U.S.A. and visitor numbers in each country are returning to pre-pandemic levels (although this may be a temporary phenomenon). It takes time to return to the original state (before the corona disaster) [Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2020]. Restricting the movement of people will affect various business managements and some companies will go bankrupt. Service industries such as transportation, restaurants and tourist business were damaged greatly in Japan [Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2021]. Local economy and movement of people are revitalizing due to the relaxation of restricting measures against infectious diseases in each country. It is desired to construct conscious measures of deregulation status by region [Kurahashi, 2020]. Especially, it is strongly desired for a new strategy on foreign visitors to Japan. It is necessary to construct long-term and short-term measures respectively, and it is preferable to indicate the short-term measures considering the data before the corona disaster (2019) [Mori, 2021]. It is necessary to construct a tourism strategy based on the reality in each region.

The countries/regions of origin having a high potential in the Hokuriku region (Ishikawa, Toyama, and Fukui Prefectures) are indicated in this study. The potential means a clue to increase the number of foreign visitors. Namely, the percentages of foreign visitors to Japan and the ones to the Hokuriku region are compared, and the target countries/regions for the region are introduced [Promotion Department for Tourism Strategy of Ishikawa Prefecture, 2021; Tourism Attraction Division of Fukui Prefectural Exchange and Culture Department, 2020; Tourism Promotion Office of Promotion Bureau for Tourism and Transportation in Toyama Prefecture, 2020]. About 30 % of foreign visitors to Japan came from China and the country was number 1 in 2019 (before the spread of corona infection) [Tourism Statistics Division, Tourism Strategy Division of Japan Tourism Agency, 2020]. However, the percentage of visitors from Taiwan accounted for 25-30 % and took first place in any prefecture in the Hokuriku region. The purpose of visit varies by countries/regions. The percentage is also influenced by the existence or non-existence of regular flights. Chinese visitors tend to spend more money than Taiwanese visitors during a trip [Tourism Promotion Office of Promotion Bureau for Tourism and Transportation in Toyama Prefecture, 2020]. Differences are recognized in the effects on regional economies by countries/regions of origin according to a survey by Fukui Prefecture. It is necessary to construct some increasing measures for Chinese visitors and to provide tourism attractions for South Korean visitors according to data analysis. Attraction measures have to be constructed while focusing on the inter-

governmental relations among the countries/regions of origin and Japan. The relation greatly affects the number of visitors. There are several visiting exchanges, for example education (including short-term study abroad), business and sister-city relationship in addition to tourism, and they contribute to the local economy on the whole [Kameyama, 2017]. The current status of sister-city affiliations in the Hokuriku region (three prefectures) is also reported in this study.

**2. Changes in foreign visitors**

In 2019, the number of foreign visitors to Japan increased more than 5 times based on 2011 ( $6.22 \times 10^6$ ) due to the tourism strategy of the Japanese government and the value is  $31.88 \times 10^6$ . The number in 2019 can be regarded as the one for Japan’s tourism strategy, which was not affected by the corona virus. It is a power in Japanese tourism [Ishimoto, 2016]. COVID-19 spread in 2020 and each country implemented various infection control measures. The number of foreign visitors as well the one for domestic tourists decreased as a result. There were many confused tourists as the infection control measures differed from country to country. WHO (World Health Organization) indicated regulatory standards early as a guideline, which were internationally harmonized [Otsuyama *et al.*, 2020]. The change in foreign visitors is indicated in Figure 1. Business to attract foreign tourists was expanded to make a tourism-oriented country and the aim of the business is to increase the visitors due to VJC (Visit Japan Campaign) provided by the Japanese government [Nakazawa, 2009]. Although the number of foreign visitors was 5.2 million in 2003, it exceeded 10 million in 2013. It took 10 years to reach 10 million and surpassed 20 million in 2016, and then surpassed 30 million in 2018. The span of over 10 million foreign visitors is getting shorter.

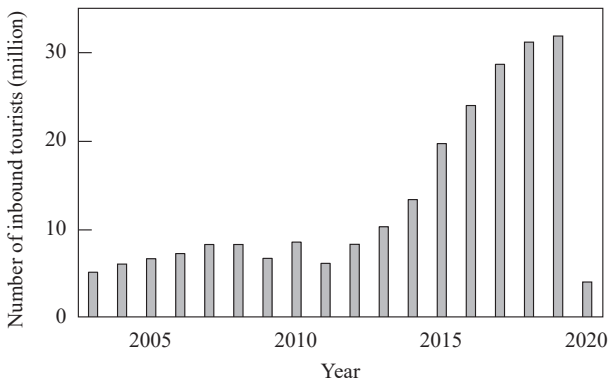


Figure 1: Change of number of foreign tourists visiting Japan

Natural disasters occur frequently in Japan due to the effects of global warming. Providing ‘safety and secure’ tourism resources is fundamental. It is natural to implement measures against infectious diseases as much as possible in addition to safety and security measures during natural disasters [Iwahara *et al.*, 2018]. The number of foreign visitors decreased significantly in 2020 and 2021 due to the government infectious

disease policy. Short-term measures are necessary for foreign visitors in addition to domestic tourists to revitalize not only the country but also the region.

The percentages of the countries/regions of origin in 2019 are shown in Figure 2. The summarized percentage for China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong becomes 70 %. It is considered that the geographic factor (relatively close) and Japanese cultural level greatly influences the result. The percentage of U.S.A. is 6 % and relatively high. The reasons are U.S.A.-Japan security, alignment of economic interests, and supply chain with the country. Total value of imports and exports with China is number one (24 %) and the one with U.S.A. ranks second (15 %). It is thought that Japan’s cultural power also contributes and it is sophisticated [Japan External Trade Organization, 2020]. It is necessary to construct attractive measures by each region and visitors from all over the world support the local economy.

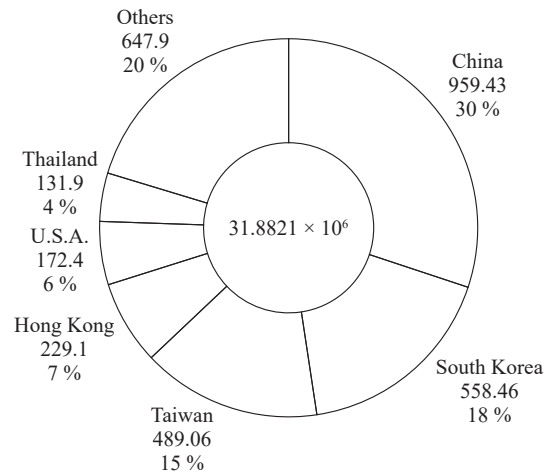


Figure 2: Rate of inbound tourists from major countries/regions

**3. Characteristics of the Hokuriku region**

The Hokuriku region is located approximately in the center of Japan and it faces the Sea of Japan. The region consists of three prefectures, namely Toyama (population about 1.022 million), Ishikawa (1.119 million), and Fukui (0.754 million). The total population of the three prefectures was about 2.9 million in 2022, and a declining birthrate and aging population are progressing. The tourism industry is important in the region. The Hokuriku Shinkansen line was extended from Nagano to Kanazawa in 2015 and the expectation for the regional tourism industry increased. The number of tourists has also increased significantly. The tourism resources of each prefecture are very similar, which are hot springs, food, craftwork, and natural resources (the Sea of Japan and mountain range). Especially, foreign visitors feel that the resources are almost similar. Therefore, those should be considered integrally. For example, an unlimited pass for railroad, scheduled bus, and short-distance taxi is effective. It is valuable in the area. The ticket offers foreigners and elderly people convenience. There are many

historic and cultural resources in Kanazawa City (capital city of Ishikawa) and the city could be the core. Features of foreign visitors by countries/regions are described in the following chapters.

### 3.1 Ishikawa Prefecture

Ishikawa Prefecture is divided into three major areas, namely ‘Kanazawa’, ‘Noto’, and ‘Kaga’. Kanazawa area is located in the center of the prefecture and Noto area is located on the Noto Peninsula located in the northern part. Kaga area is located in the southern part. Tourists increased remarkably in the Kanazawa area after the extension of the Hokuriku Shinkansen line [Oyabu et al., 2018]. The line will be extended from Kanazawa to Tsuruga City (southern part of Fukui Prefecture) in March 2024. A considerable increase in the number of tourists will be expected due to tourism strategy because two stations (Komatsu and Kaga) on the line will open in Ishikawa. The number of tourists will increase by connecting directly with the metropolitan area (Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa Prefecture), whose population is about 35 million. The change of the total number of foreign guests in Ishikawa Prefecture is shown in Figure 3. The data in 2019 increased by 2.1 times based on the data in 2015, in which the Hokuriku

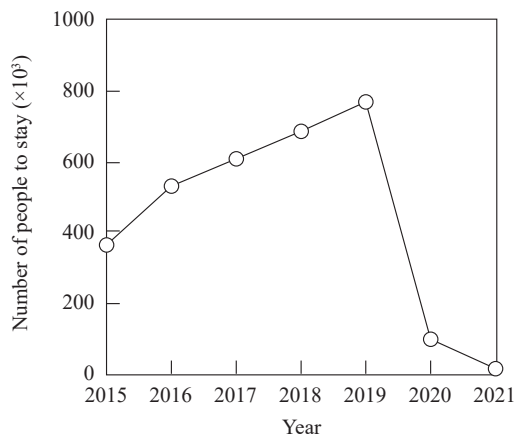


Figure 3: Change of total number of foreign guests in Ishikawa Pref.

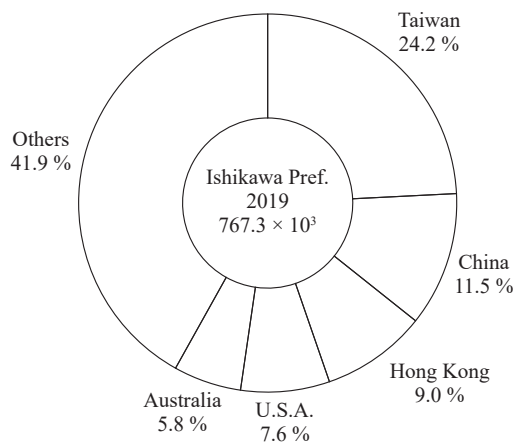


Figure 4: Rate of foreign guests in Ishikawa Pref. in 2019

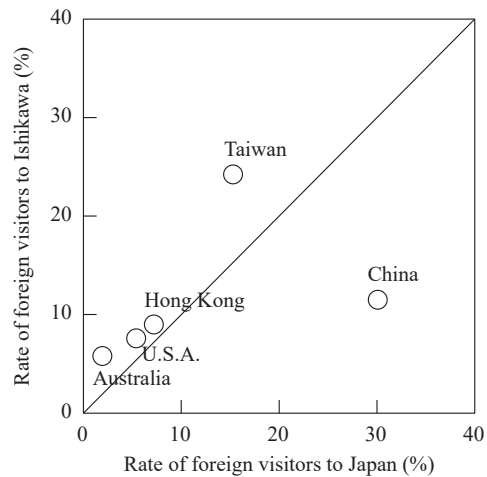


Figure 5: Correlation diagram between rate of foreign visitors to Japan and rate of total number of guests to Ishikawa Pref. in 2019

Shinkansen line was extended to Kanazawa. The increasing rate is larger than the one (1.62 times) for the visiting foreigners to Japan and it is understood that there is an extending effect. The percentages of the total number of guests from the countries/regions of origin in 2019 are expressed in Figure 4. The figure shows the percentage in Ishikawa Prefecture. The one from Taiwan is highest and followed by China and Hong Kong. These three areas account for 45 % [Promotion Department for Tourism Strategy of Ishikawa Prefecture, 2021]. The percentages for the U.S.A. and Australia are larger than the ones in Figure 2. It is thought there are some attractive tourism resources (historical or cultural) for the tourists from Western countries. The percentage of South Korean guests (2.2 %) in Ishikawa Prefecture is extremely small compared with the one for visitors to Japan from South Korea (17.5 %). The plot cannot be indicated in the figure because the value is small. The correlation diagram between the percentages for the visitors to Japan and the percentages of total guests from each country in Ishikawa in 2019 is exhibited in Figure 5. The percentage of China is quite a small (11.5 %) in Ishikawa. When the corona infection ends, the measures to increase Chinese visitors are necessary in a short term because their travel expenditure is three times of the average for the total number of foreigners and the most of it is shopping [Promotion Department for Tourism Strategy of Ishikawa Prefecture, 2021]. The total number of Chinese guests in 2019 were 88,200 people. If the number of Chinese visitors triples (about 264,000 people) similar to the percentage of visitors to Japan, a significant impact on the local economy can also be expected. The percentage of South Korean people is 2.6 % (very low) and it is included in the others. When counting other countries outside the top 5 countries as the others, they account for 42 % in Ishikawa Prefecture and the percentage for the total number of foreign visitors to Japan is 60 %. The one for Ishikawa is small and guests from certain countries tend to concentrate.

### 3.2 Toyama Prefecture

Toyama Prefecture is considered an industrial prefecture. The total trade value of Toyama Prefecture is slightly higher than that of Ishikawa Prefecture according to the data of Osaka Customs [Tourism Promotion Office of Promotion Bureau for Tourism and Transportation in Toyama Prefecture, 2020]. There is Tateyama mountain range as a natural resource and ‘Yuki-no-Otani’ (snow wall over 10 meters) in the prefecture. The wall can exceed 20 meters and visitors can walk on the promenade from mid-April to mid-June. The promenade is popular with Taiwanese visitors especially, who rarely touch snow. Therefore, the percentage of visitors from Taiwan (31.6 % in 2019) is the largest among the three prefectures of Hokuriku. The change in the number of overnight foreign guests in Toyama Prefecture is shown in Figure 6 which is very similar to Figure 3. The peak value in 2019 was less than 50 % of that of Ishikawa. Percentages of foreign guests in Toyama Prefecture in 2019 are indicated in Figure 7 by countries/regions of origin. The percentage for Taiwan is large. The percentages for China and Hong Kong are almost same as the ones in Ishikawa, and there are fewer visitors from Europe and America. The correla-

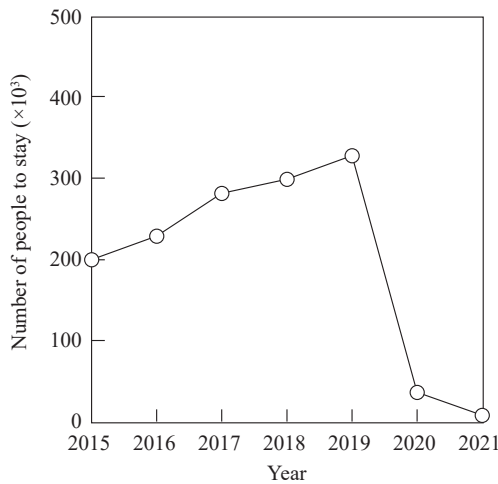


Figure 6: Change of total number of foreign guests in Toyama Pref.

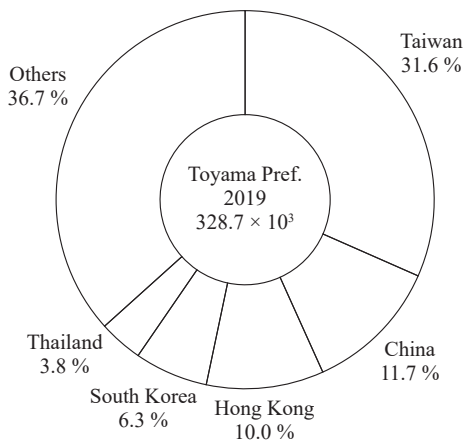


Figure 7: Rate of foreign guests in Toyama Pref. in 2019

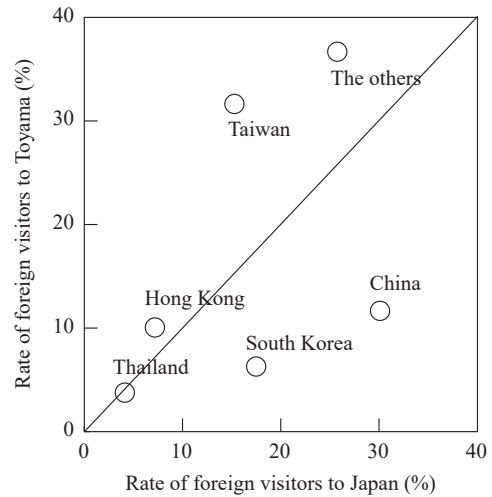


Figure 8: Correlation diagram between rate of foreign visitors to Japan and rate of total number of guests to Toyama Pref. in 2019

tion diagram between the percentages for the visitors to Japan and the percentages of total guests from each country in Toyama in 2019 is exhibited in Figure 8. The percentage of China is quite small, similar to Ishikawa. Although that of South Korea is also small, it is larger than the one (2.6 %) in Ishikawa. An increase in the number of visitors from those two countries is highly expected in Toyama Prefecture.

### 3.3 Fukui Prefecture

Fukui Prefecture has the lowest population among the three prefectures and it is located close to Kyoto. Therefore the prefecture has strong ties with Osaka and Kyoto (the old capital). It takes 1.5 hours by JR limited express train between Fukui and Kyoto. Shipment value of glass related parts is first place in Japan as an industry. Textile, chemical, and electronic components industries are also thriving. ‘Dinosaur Museum’ is in the limelight as a tourism resource. The museum has been publishing academic journals about fossil analyzes of ancient organisms such as ammonite, which is well known to foreigners [Goto, 2013]. The change in the number of overnight foreign guests in Fukui Prefecture is shown in Figure 9 [Tourism Attraction Division of Fukui Prefectural Exchange and Culture Department, 2020]. The number had a high rate of growth until 2019 (about 100 thousand). And, it has been declining in 2020 and beyond due to the outbreak of corona infection. In Fukui, it is very low in total compared with the ones for Ishikawa and Toyama. It is 12.7 % of Ishikawa Prefecture. Percentages of foreign guests in Fukui Prefecture in 2019 are indicated in Figure 10 by countries/regions of origin. The percentage of Taiwan is about the same as Ishikawa Prefecture and there are many visitors from Hong Kong (roughly the same percentage as Taiwan). It is very different from the ones for Ishikawa and Toyama. The correlation diagram between the percentages for the visitors to Japan and the percentages of total guests from each country in Fukui in 2019 is exhibited in Figure 11. The ones for China and

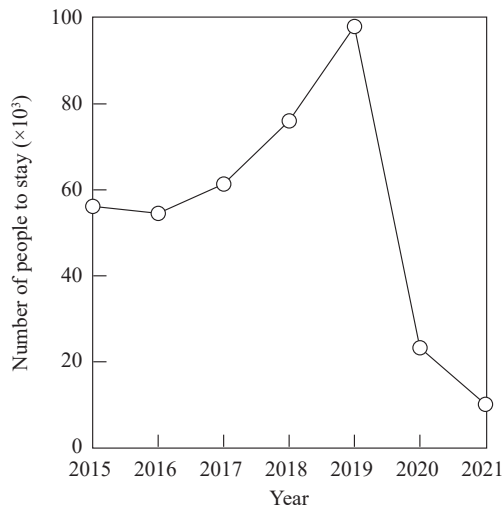


Figure 9: Change of total number of foreign guests in Fukui Pref.

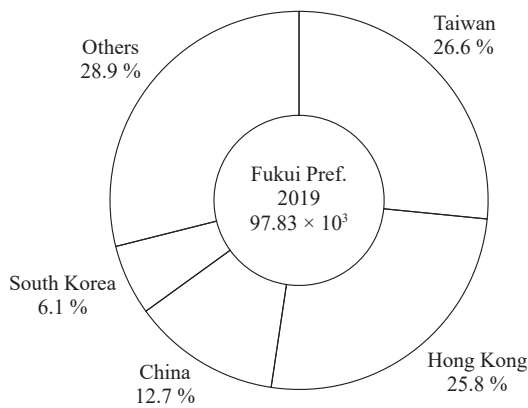


Figure 10: Rate of foreign guests in Fukui Pref. in 2019

South Korea are small and the characteristic is similar to that of Toyama. The plot for the others is equal to that of foreign visitors to Japan (about 30%). It is effective to increase the number of visitors from China and South Korea in Fukui as the short-term measure. The measure is the same as Toyama.

The correlation diagram between the rate of foreign visitors to Fukui and the rate of travel expenditure for each country/region in 2019 is shown in Figure 12. Visitors from China spend significantly more and the one for Taiwan is surprising. Fukui Prefecture has few resources that have a large consumption effect for Taiwanese visitors. On the other hand, the consumption of visitors from Hong Kong is relatively high. Consistency of tourism resources should be considered by region and it is necessary to provide more effective resources.

#### 4. Necessity of measures to increase visitors from China and South Korea

The percentages of foreign visitors to Japan and the percentages of total guests from each countries/regions in the Hokuriku region were compared and the characteristics were investigated. Japan has various characteristics for each region. Foreigners visiting Japan for the first time have a tendency to

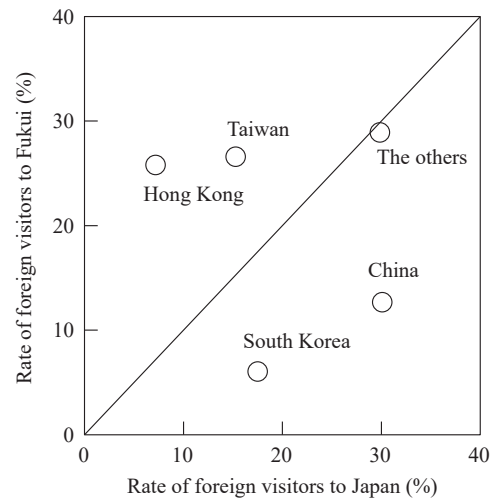


Figure 11: Correlation diagram between rate of foreign visitors to Japan and rate of total number of guests to Fukui Pref. in 2019

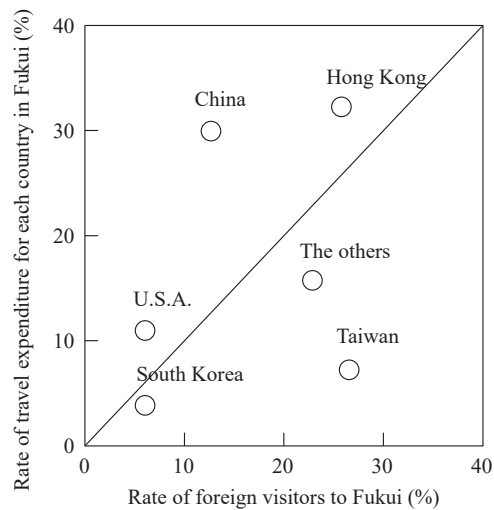


Figure 12: Correlation diagram between the rate of foreign visitors to Fukui and the rate of travel expenditure for each country in 2019

visit the popular cities like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. And, they also will have the psychological leeway to visit rural areas on their second and third visits and have more opportunities to go out to the countryside. The number of visitors to regions with Shinkansen stations will increase further due to the convenience [Mizutani and Sakai, 2019]. However many people enter Japan by air from Narita/Kansai International Airport, they may enter the country directly from a local airport or a local port by ferry. These number of visitors cannot be ignored when considering the local economy.

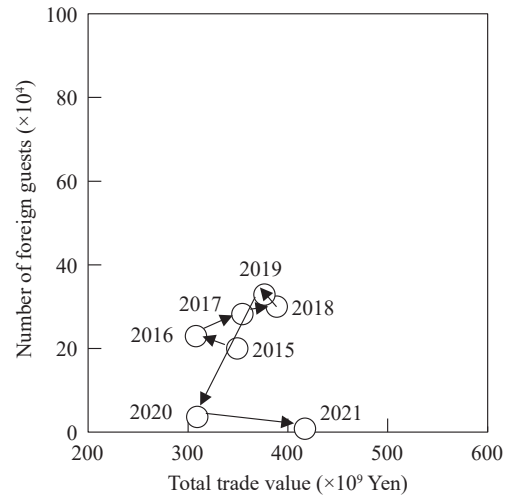
There are two airports (Komatsu and Toyama) in Hokuriku, which have regular flights and most of the flights are from Haneda. Although there is Fukui Airport, it does not have a regular flight schedule and it is for the departure and arrival of private propeller planes and gliders. It is necessary to focus on attracting not only airplanes but also regular ferry

services. It is also necessary to secure a certain number of users of regular flights by promoting not only tourism but also various exchanges including business and educational [Oyabu *et al.*, 2022]. Namely it is important to secure a number of people based not only on the appeal of tourism resources but also on the basis of human exchanges. If some measures are constructed and appeal factors to increase the related population are created by residents, it could be expected to increase the exchanging population as a whole. It is better to rectify the situation promoting exchanges between citizens including friendship/sister-city affiliation. Sisterhood affiliation between prefectures is naturally included in the exchanges. There are over 1750 affiliations with foreign municipalities in Japan. The number of the affiliations in Hokuriku is indicated in Table 1. There are about 90 affiliated foreign cities and Chinese cities account for 26 %. More partner cities are needed considering the intergovernmental relations, land, and population of China. South Korea, a neighboring country, accounts for 11.3 % and it is too small. The percentage of the U.S.A. is surprisingly high at 17 %. About 13 % of the export value of Hokuriku (the three prefectures) goes to U.S.A., China is 24%, and South Korea is 16%, namely the export value to the U.S.A. ranks third. This is reflected in the number of partnership affiliations. Japan can be said to be quite close to the U.S.A. from this point of view. It is necessary to conclude friendship/sister-city agreements with the cities in China, South Korea, and Russia considering regional characteristics as a long-term strategy. Strategies by region are effective to promote educational and business exchanges under the agreements.

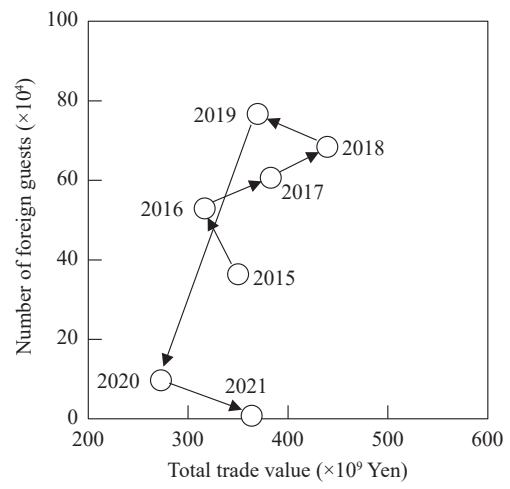
There are 5-6 % of foreigners visiting Japan for business purposes and some economic effect can be expected in a region. In addition, the foreigners may visit Japan for sightseeing at a later date. A breakdown of the total trade value in the Hokuriku region (in 2019) is roughly as follows: Toyama Pref. 40 %, Ishikawa Pref. 40 % and Fukui Pref. 20 %. A breakdown of foreign guests in the region is as follows: Toyama 30 %, Ishikawa 60 %, and Fukui 10 %. The characteristics between the total trade value and number of foreign guests in the Hokuriku region are very similar to the trend [Japan Foreign Trade Council, 2022]. Scattering diagrams of the total trade value and number of foreign guests in each prefecture are shown in Figure 13. Plots for 2015 to 2021 are shown and the migration trajectories of the figures are very similar although the total amounts are different. In anticipation of the extension of the Shinkansen to Tsuruga (in Fukui Pref.) from Kanazawa in March 2024, measures to improve convenience for visitors must be constructed as the three prefectures are working together.

**5. Conclusion**

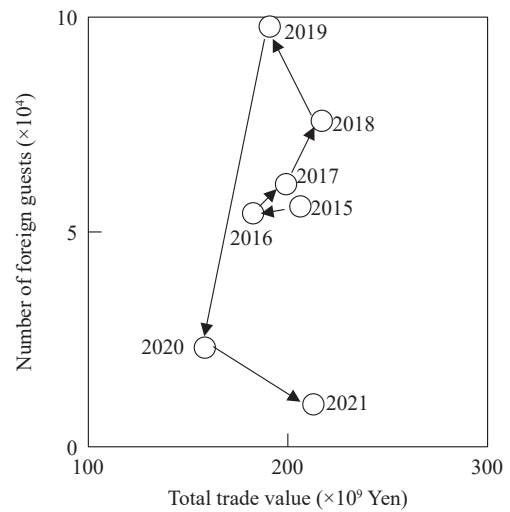
The Hokuriku region (three prefectures) has a population of less than 3 million people, which is less than 30 % of Osaka Prefecture. It would be more cost-effective for the three prefectures to build a tourism strategy, provide tourism resources, and cooperate as one. For example, an unlimited-ride transpor-



(a) Toyama Prefecture



(b) Ishikawa Prefecture



(c) Fukui Prefecture

Figure 13: Scattering diagram between total trade value and number of foreign guests in Hokuriku region

tation pass within the area is highly convenient for foreigners and elderly people. It is also effective for de-carbonization of the transportation industry as a whole. Above all, it is neces-

Table 1: Rate of local governments partnered with foreign municipalities (sister-city relationship) in Hokuriku three prefectures

Country/region	Percentage of municipalities (%)
China	26.14
U.S.A.	17.05
South Korea	11.36
Taiwan	9.09
Russia	9.09
Brazil	6.82
The others	20.45

Note: Total number of partnered foreign municipalities is 88 in the area.

sary to provide measures that improve convenience and cost reduction for all visitors. In this study, it was shown that there was a large discrepancy between the countries/regions of origin of foreign visitors to Japan and the total number of foreign guests staying in Hokuriku. In other words, the percentage of Chinese visitors is about 11-12 % in each prefecture, but the ratio of visitors to Japan exceeds 30 %. In addition, Chinese travel expenditure is high. If the ratio of visitors from China to Hokuriku is about 30 %, a high local economic effect can be obtained in the short-term. The scattering diagrams between total trade values and the numbers of foreign guests in each prefecture exhibit the same characteristics in plot transition trends. These trends need to be analyzed in detail from now on.

As shown in Table 1, the Hokuriku region has a high proportion of the U.S.A. in terms of the number of friendship and sister-city agreements. It is natural to maintain this situation and the number of agreements with China, South Korea, and Taiwan must be increased and enhanced. This strategy will improve the number of visitors that form the basis of the exchange population. Furthermore, the area should provide hardware and software infrastructures that are easy to use for visitors from countries/regions where the Japanese language is not native. Issuing a valid transportation pass is a matter of course. It is necessary to consider effective measures such as constructing a platform that utilizes ICT.

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