

Re-verifying the Tourism Racket Theory

— Relationship between the number of visits and the primary transport —

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Abstract

Primary transport, the transport between the tourist's home and the gateway of the travel destination, is a determining factor of various attitudes of a tourist. The relationship between the transport and such attitudes is discussed by Tadayoshi Suzuki, and it is commonly summarized in 1966 as the Racket Theory. One of the Racket Theory's teachings, the shorter the time of primary transport becomes, the less visits the tourists will make at the destination, is verified in this study after half a century of tourism and transport developments. The visit number data is taken from the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria publicized by the Tourism Agency, and the change in the primary transport time is based upon the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen in 2011. The analysis revealed that the tourists visited less tourism spots in Kumamoto Prefecture after the start of the Shinkansen. This can be seen as one of the proof of the validity of the Racket Theory, as Kumamoto is the major tourism destination along the Shinkansen track, and it was most influenced by the opening of the Shinkansen in terms of faster access from the largest source market, Fukuoka.

Keywords : tourism, tourism promotion, primary transport, Racket Theory

1. Introduction

As early as in 1966, before the dawning of the post-war Japanese tourism era, Suzuki has already pointed out that there exists a correlation between the tourists' traveling distance and their activity and movement.¹⁾ In the so-called "racket theory" of tourism, the basic distance, the word Suzuki uses for the distance from the tourist's residence to the travel destination area, and the size of the destination have a positive correlation. The basic distance and the length of the tour, or the number of nights spent during the tour, also have a positive correlation, whereas the distance and the repetition rate of the

trip to the destination have a negative correlation.

The Racket Theory tells us that when we compare a Tokyo tourist traveling a little less than fifty kilometers to the ancient capital of Kamakura, and another tourist going as far as Hakone Hot Springs on a one hundred-kilometer journey, the area the Hakone tourist travels around for sightseeing in Hakone is wider than that of the Kamakura tourist. Likewise, while the majority of Kamakura tourists are one-day travelers, more tourists will stay overnight in Hakone. This is clearly understood when we witness the scarce accommodation facilities in Kamakura, and the rich and vast variety of Ryokans, the Japanese style inns, in Hakone. Here, we see that when a tourist travels a longer distance, the tourists tend to travel in a wider area at the destination, and to stay longer in the destination. As for the trip repetition, we can expect that among the Kamakura visitors from Tokyo, there are more repeaters than among the Hakone visitors. The Theory teaches that people will frequently travel to a nearby destination, but not to a distant destination, naturally by cost and time factors. These are the influences the basic distance has upon the touring area in the destination, trip duration and the case of repeated visit to the destination.

What also Suzuki discusses in the Theory is the relationship between the basic distance and the number of visit spots at the destination. This relation is closely related to the first finding of the Theory, correlation between the distance and the size of the destination area. He points out the longer the tourists travel to the destination, the more tourism spots they would visit at the destination. In other words, it is quite natural that a tourist makes a visit to only one tourism asset, when the basic distance is short.

These indications of Suzuki propose that the distance traveled by the tourist from the residence to the destination area, the basic distance, as Suzuki calls, has a considerable influence on the tourist's movement, or other elements of travel.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study tries to verify the validity of one of the findings of the Racket Theory by Tadayoshi Suzuki: the correlation between the number of visits in the destination area, and the basic distance. The theory teaches us that when the distance is short, the traveler visits fewer tourist spots. Does this still hold true after a half century of many developments in the transportation field?

When we apply this rule to the earlier sample travelers to Kamakura and Hakone, the Kamakura tourist can travel from the residence in Tokyo to Kamakura to visit only one temple and return, while the Hakone tourist will visit more tourist spots in the area, such as museums, lake boat trips, and perhaps to historical monuments.

However, in this study, the focus is on the change of the number of visits in a specific tourism destination caused by the change in the distance. In other words, when the distance to the destination changes, the number of visits by tourists in that destination also changes. Of course, the geographical distance between the residence and the destination is absolute and constant. It is not a factor that varies. However, distance is not only measured by the geographical distance, such as kilometers or miles, but also by the time it requires to reach the destination. In modern tourism, such time distance is determined by the speed of the transport. The performance of transport may advance by technology, or more generally, the introduction of a new transport mode changes the time distance. Therefore, the distance factor in the racket theory is a variable.

This study will try to see scientifically if the number of visiting spots will change in a specific tourism area, when the transport shows a dramatic increase in its speed, or when a new faster mode of transport is introduced to access the area.

Transport is one of the major elements that determine the tourism flow.²⁾ It is an absolute necessity in the modern tourism, along with information, tourism assets, tourism facilities, and the traveler with sufficient time, money and motivation to travel. In this analysis, the transport is divided into i) primary transport: the transport that conveys the traveler on Suzuki's basic distance, and ii) secondary transport. The secondary transport includes transport modes that convey tourists from the gateway of the destination area, to the tourist spot. These are generally local busses or trains, or taxis in the destination area.

The purpose of this study therefore is to see, when there is a change in the primary transport, whether or not the number of visiting spots by travelers using that transport changes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Process

To show whether or not travelers will visit less number of tourism spots on their trip

when the time distance is shortened, the research requires the data of tourist's tourism spot visitation, in actual case where, by the changes in the transport, the destination has come to be reached in a shorter time.

As for the number of visits, the statistics are found in Japan Tourism Agency's data, National Visitor Statistics by Common Criteria (*Kyotsu kijun ni yoru kanko irikomikyaku tokei*). The Statistics was conducted and surveyed in 2009, and was first publicized in 2010. It has a great significance in that it is the first statistics that was compiled by one single criteria among all forty-seven Japanese prefectures. Before this Statistics, each prefecture was issuing visitor data based on their own criteria.

Even though the data is now available for studies, we must note that due to its short history of the survey, only six annual data are presently publicized. Furthermore, with the difference of processing speed among the prefectural authorities, and the difference in the volume of data some prefectures had to handle, there are only four completed annual data at the time of writing.

It comes with a surprise that in Japan, such statistics were not available until very recently. The situation of the tourism statistics of Japan will be discussed later.

When we look at the transport condition of Japan to study the change of time distance to the tourism destinations, the Country has seen some major developments. The foremost change in the recent years in the transport is the introduction of the Hokuriku Shinkansen train service between Nagano City and Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture. This new Shinkansen almost halved the time distance between Tokyo and Hokuriku District's top-ranking tourism destination of Kanazawa. This is an ideal situation for this study to see the change in the number of tourists' visits, however, since the Shinkansen started to run only in March 2015, the statistics of the following year, 2016, are not yet available, making it not feasible to take up the influence of the Hokuriku Shinkansen.

Four years prior to the Hokuriku Shinkansen, the Kyushu Shinkansen newly linked the Cities of Hakata and Kumamoto in March 2011. As a result of this linkage, the tourists in the tourism source market of Hakata, Fukuoka Prefecture, were able to travel to tourism destination of Kagoshima or Kumamoto in less than half of the time required by the conventional transport. Here, we can expect to see, if at all, a change in the number of tourists visiting Kagoshima or Kumamoto, before and after the new linkage by

Shinkansen.

Given these situations, the data of the number of visits by tourists visiting Kagoshima or Kumamoto will be extracted from the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria. As the change in the time distance was brought about in March 2011, the annual data of 2010 and before, and that of 2011 and after will be compared to see the correlation with the number of tourists' visit spots.

3. 2 Tourism Statistics of Japan

In this section, the condition of the Japanese tourism statistics is explained.

The history of the Japanese tourism administration is short. The Japan Tourism Agency, a governmental body that is responsible for the promotion of tourism, was established only in 2008, according to the stipulation in the Tourism-based Country Promotion Basic Act of 2007. Before that, a section in the Ministry of Transport was looking after Japan's tourism, treating it as a field surrounding the transport.

Tourism-based Country Promotion Basic Act called for the formulation of the Basic Plan, which is made up of Basic Tourism Promotion Policy (kihonteki seisaku). The policy includes implementation of building of attractive tourism destinations, education that brings up professional tourism personnel, promotional activity for international tourism and upgrading of tourism statistics. The Act required the Tourism Agency to upgrade the poor condition of the Japanese tourism statistics. The Agency announced in 2012 that, among the fields of statistics, they would focus on the research of tourism's economic impact on local districts, visitor statistics by common criteria, usage of accommodation facilities and promotion of statistics application to tourism activation. The National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria was the output of this Plan.

Before the introduction of this Statistics, the Japanese visitor statistics, i.e., how many tourists visited respective prefecture, were released by each prefecture which was conducting the survey under their own criteria. Therefore it was not practical to compare the number of visitors of different prefectures. This was obviously hampering not only the study of tourism promotion but also the devising of effective tourism activation plans.

The National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria replaced all individual

visitor number survey by each prefecture. It is now conducted quarterly, surveying visitors and producing figures on number of visitors, the amount of spending and the number of visited tourism spots by each tourist, in each prefecture. This study will use the output of this Statistics to determine whether or not any changes are seen in the number of visits in the tourism destination by a single tourist.

Beside this National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria, the Tourism Agency publicizes tourism statistics such as Travel Spending Survey, Tourism Accommodation Survey and Inbound Tourists Spending Survey.

3. 3 Opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen

Shinkansen is the name given to Japan's high speed rail service, run by the Japan Rail companies. The first Shinkansen, the Tokaido Shinkansen, then known as the Bullete Train, opened in 1963 between Tokyo and Shin Osaka stations. The Tokaido Shinkansen linked Tokyo and Osaka in about three hours, almost halving the time required by the conventional trains. After the start of the Tokaido Shinkansen, Sanyo, Joetsu, Tohoku and Nagano Shinkansens were built, making it possible for many people to travel to major areas in Japan in a reasonable time.

The Kyushu Shinkansen opened in March 2011. It linked the city of Hakata and Kagoshima in less than one and a half hours, and Hakata and Kumamoto in approximately half an hour. Currently, one hundred twenty-five services run per day on the Kyushu Shinkansen. It is a vital tool to the economic and cultural exchange in Kyushu, as well as an important transport for both business and leisure travelers.³⁾

Incidentally, the opening ceremony of Kyushu Shinkansen was scheduled to take place on March 12, 2011. However, all Shinkansen related ceremonies were cancelled due to the great earthquake and the tsunami of March 11, 2016. Naturally, during the first months, the passengers on the new trains were fewer than originally expected. The Kyushu Shinkansen had an unfortunate start.

The city of Fukuoka, the home of Shinkansen's Hakata Station, is the largest city in the Island of Kyushu, with population of about 1.5 million. Fukuoka is the fifth largest city in Japan. In other words, Fukuoka is the major tourism source market for tourist destinations in Kyushu.

Kumamoto Prefecture is a tourist destination, located in central Kyushu Island. Its tourist attractions include the Kumamoto Castle, the Amakusa Islands, and Mt. Aso. According to the Tourism Agency's statistics, Kumamoto Prefecture boasts the largest number of inter-prefectural overnight visitors in Kyushu of 2.4 million arrivals, and 7.4 million inter-prefectural day-trip visitors in 2014.⁴⁾ The figures are symbols of Kumamoto Prefecture being one of the top tourist destinations in Japan.

Kagoshima Prefecture is the southernmost prefecture on Japan's main islands. The volcanic Sakurajima Island and Mt. Kaimondake are its major tourism attractions. The statistics show that Kagoshima received 2.2 million overnight visitors from outside of the prefecture. Together with Kumamoto Prefecture and Oita Prefecture, it is one of the big three tourism destinations on the Kyushu Island.

From these facts and statistics, we can understand that the Kyushu Shinkansen has linked the tourism source market of Fukuoka with the major tourism destinations of Kumamoto and Kagoshima Prefectures, and drastically changed the time distance of primary transport between the market and the destination.

4. Literature review

The Racket Theory has been discussed by several Japanese tourism researchers and tourism developers.

Tadayoshi Suzuki, Professor Emeritus, Tokyo Institute of Technology, in "Basics of Tourism"⁵⁾, (Kanko Genron Kenkyu), gives "accessing to the destination, circling in the destination area, returning to home" as the basics of tourism movement. The distance from the origin of the tour to the destination is the "basic distance," the area of the circle in the destination area is the "movement area," and the whole structure is "racket structure." The longer the basic distances, the longer the radius of the movement area.

Tomoya Umekawa, Head Researcher, the JTB Foundation, in "Re-regionalization of the Nation seen from Tourism"⁶⁾, discusses that in sightseeing trips, as opposed to resort

Figure 1
Kyushu Shinkansen Route



Japan Railpass
<http://www.japanrailpass.info/>

trips, if the destination is near the home of the traveler, the sightseeing area is small, whereas, in proportion to the distance from home, the area enlarges. Umekawa names this trend as the “Fan-shape theory” and in his presentation also uses the word “tennis racket theory” to support this relation.

Tamami Imanishi, Associate Professor, University of Marketing and Distribution Sciences, explains this relation in her presentation “Movement of Travel.”⁷⁾ Travelers move differently depending on their distance from the origin to the destination. A traveler from Japan to France may visit Paris, Mont Saint Michelle, Avignon, or Nice, or may visit both Paris and London on a trip. But no domestic traveler will visit Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto and Hiroshima in one trip.

As seen in these studies and presentations, the Racket Theory or its contents are supported by many researchers of tourism. However, the verification of this theory was performed in 1974 by the Japanese Ministry of Construction⁸⁾ and in 1994 by Toshiya Hashimoto⁹⁾.

Additionally, Yasuhiro Watanabe, in “Rediscovering the ‘Racket Theory’ --- The Relation between the trunk transportation distance and the tourist’s touring area,”¹⁰ in 2013, verified the racket theory basic teaching that the longer the distance of primary transport, the wider the tourists travels around in the destination area, by analyzing the itinerary of packaged tours being retailed.

Similarly, studies on relationship between the distance of the primary transport and the expenditure are seen as below.

Laesser and Crouch (2006) discuss that the amount of tourism expenditure can be explained by objective elements for a trip such as place of origin or country of residence, choice of destination, number of companion on the trip, duration of the trip, travel mode and types of accommodation. While Craggs and Schofield (2009) find spending of visitors is influenced by age, frequency of visitation and visit motivation.

Kim et al. (2011) surveyed the expenditure of visitors to Macau and examined the factors that affect the amount. In their findings, the long-haul visitors to Macau, as compared with those from Hong Kong or China, spent more on entertainment, shopping, gambling and local transportations. Similarly, Tokuda (2008) investigated the amount spent by

tourists to the Hikone Castle to find out that the visitors who had come longer distance spent one and a half times more than short-haul visitors.

5. Discussion

To verify the correlation between the change of time distance of primary transport and the number of visits a tourist makes at the destination, this study uses the case of the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen in March 2011 as the change in the time distance, and the data provided by the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria, for the number of visits by tourists. The destinations used for the analysis are Kumamoto Prefecture and Kagoshima Prefecture, both major stops on the Shinkansen route. The study will trace the changes in the number of tourists' visits before and after the opening of Shinkansen.

It must naturally be noted that the data on the Statistics represents the number of visits in each prefecture by all visitors, i.e., not only the visitors that travelled on the newly opened Shinkansen but those who used all other transportation modes to visit the prefecture. There may be an argument that the change, if at all seen, may not represent the change as the result of the shortened time distance brought about by the Shinkansen. This indeed is true, however, if we assume that those visitors that used the transport modes other than the new Shinkansen, for example, the highway buses or private cars, their time distance is unchanged during the period of the opening of Shinkansen, therefore it makes sense to assume that their touring attitudes are not affected by the change of time distance by rail travelers. In other words, we can assume that the changes here to a large extent are the result of the Shinkansen users.

Japan Tourism Agency's statistics, the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria shows the number of visitors to Japan's forty-seven prefectures. This survey is conducted and publicized quarterly, and the totaled annual figure is released once a year. In this Statistics, the number vital to this study, namely the number of visits tourists make in each prefecture, is released. The number is acquired by asking a visitor to a prefecture how many tourist spots he/she visited in this trip. This number is shown only in the quarter statistics; not shown in the annual statistics. Table 1 shows the number of visits by visitors to the Prefectures in one year. The figures are the calculated average of the number of visits made by tourists in four quarter figures.

Table 1: Number of visits in Kyushu Prefectures 2010-2015

| Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Average |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Fukuoka | | | 1.53 | | | | |
| Saga | 1.50 | 1.38 | 1.45 | 1.20 | 1.08 | 1.10 | 1.28 |
| Nagasaki | 1.40 | 1.88 | 2.45 | 1.83 | | | |
| Kumamoto | 2.48 | 2.18 | 1.88 | 1.25 | 1.83 | | 1.78 |
| Oita | 2.05 | 2.05 | 2.25 | 2.13 | 1.98 | 1.87 | 2.10 |
| Miyazaki | 1.58 | 1.73 | 1.63 | 1.50 | 1.47 | | 1.58 |
| Kagoshima | 1.53 | 1.65 | 1.75 | 1.70 | 1.63 | 1.50 | 1.68 |

Created from The National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria

The table shows some blank cells. These are the result of slow data compilation at the prefecture. Apart from those prefectures that decide not to cooperate in this national survey, the cells will eventually have figures filled in.

In this table, we can clearly witness the influence of the opening of the Shinkansen. Until the year 2011, the year the Shinkansen started to run, visitors to Kumamoto Prefecture visited more than two tourist spots in the area. This fact is represented in the figure 2.48 in 2010 and 2.18 in 2011. However, after the opening, the number dips below 2.0, showing that most visitors visiting the Prefecture made a visit to only one place. In 2013, visitors to Kumamoto visited an average of 1.25 tourism spots in their trip. This is half of the number of spots visited in 2010. The decrease is significant. Even in the years of 2012 and 2014, the approximately 30% decrease in the number is seen.

In the case of Kagoshima Prefecture, the influence is not as clear. The figure starts to drop from 2014, not immediately after the start of the new Shinkansen. This fact is yet to be verified, however, it makes sense to note that before the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen from Hakata (Fukuoka) to Kagoshima, local sector of Shinkansen had been open from Kagoshima to Shin Yatsushiro. Therefore the impact of the time change may not have been great as in the case of Kumamoto.

We can witness in the line graph of Figure 2, that generally the visits of tourism spots by visitors in all Kyushu prefectures have decreased. In a realistic tourist movement, it shows that people were making less visit spots. Where the number is below two, it shows that more tourists just visited one tourist spot at the destination. This tendency is most clearly seen in Kumamoto Prefecture, where as a result of opening of Kyushu Shinkansen, the time distance from the largest tourist source market in Kyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture,

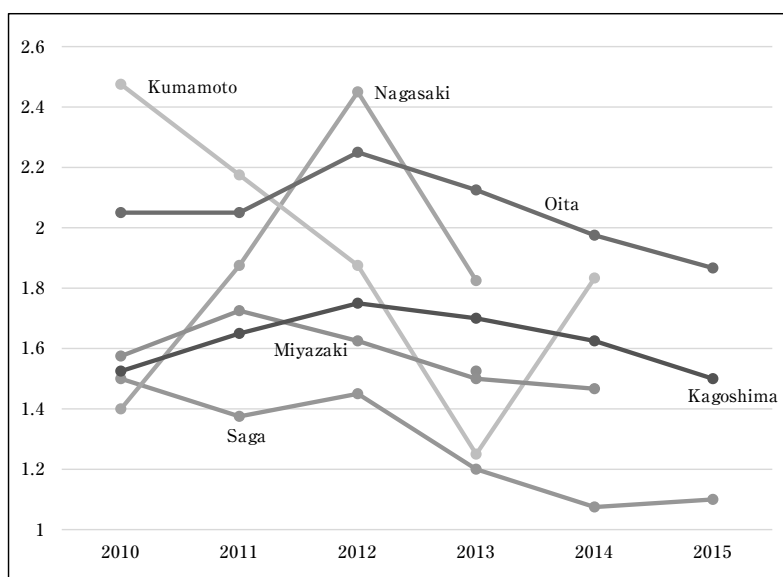


Figure 2: Number of visits in the Kyushu Prefectures 2010-2015

was the most drastically cut. It can be the statistical evidence of the Racket Theory: when the distance of primary transport is short, the tourists can make a visit to just one tourist spot.

To support the credibility of the Theory, another survey in the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria will be analyzed. This survey asks the tourists how many prefectures they are visiting in this trip. If the new Shinkansen is making the visitors' trip more "mono-destination", the number of visited prefecture should also decrease.

Table 2: Number of Destination Prefectures 2010-2015

| Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Average |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Fukuoka | | | | | | | |
| Saga | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.25 | 1.15 | 1.10 | 1.20 | 1.18 |
| Nagasaki | 1.30 | 1.38 | 1.43 | 1.23 | | | 1.33 |
| Kumamoto | 1.10 | 1.23 | 1.20 | 1.10 | 1.13 | | 1.15 |
| Oita | 1.28 | 1.28 | 1.25 | 1.15 | 0.93 | 1.20 | 1.18 |
| Miyazaki | 1.33 | 1.30 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 1.20 | | 1.27 |
| Kagoshima | 1.15 | 1.15 | 1.13 | 1.13 | 1.13 | | 1.14 |

Created from the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria

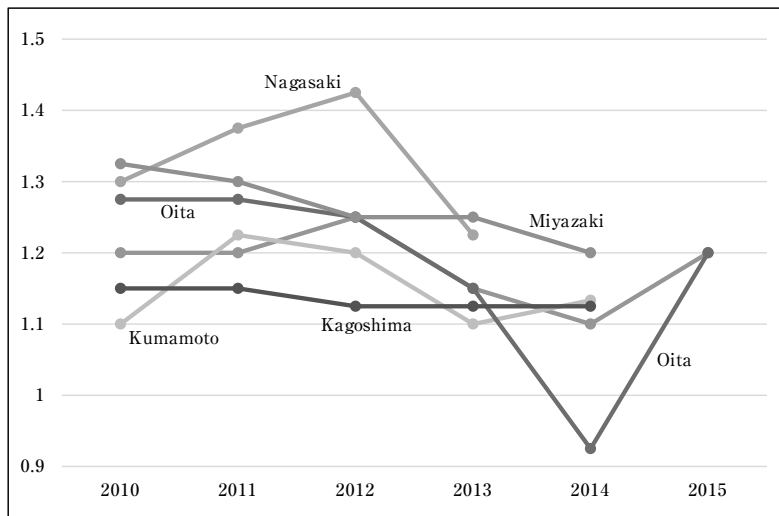


Figure 3: Number of Destination Prefectures 2010-2015

The table shows that in 2011, visitors to Kumamoto Prefecture visited 1.23 prefectures in their respective trip. After the Shinkansen had started the number comes down to 1.1 in 2013 and 1.13 in 2014. The number for 2015 is not available at the time of writing. As for Kagoshima Prefecture, the number was 1.15 in 2011, and later it was slightly smaller at 1.13.

The general trend seen in this table and the graph, Figure 3, is that after the start of the Kyushu Shinkansen, more tourists are visiting one prefecture only, as opposed to those who visit two or more prefectures at one trip. This may be seen as a supporting evidence to the theory that tourist will visit less spots when time distance becomes shorter, but it is not as strong an evidence as Table 1, where we can see a significant decrease in the case of Kumamoto Prefecture.

6. Conclusion

To verify the validity of the Racket Theory's teaching, the shorter the primary transport, the more tourists visit just one tourism spot; or the less number of visits they will make, the study analyzed the figures brought by the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria. The visit number is compared through before and after the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen that drastically shortened the time distance between Fukuoka Prefecture, the most populous prefecture in Kyushu, and the tourism destinations along

the Shinkansen Line of Kumamoto and Kagoshima.

The comparison revealed that during the years of 2010 and 2014, we are able to witness a decrease in the number of visit spots by thirty to fifty percent in Kumamoto Prefecture. What this means is that, before the start of the Shinkansen, visitors to Kumamoto Prefecture visited two or more spots in one trip. But after the Shinkansen started, and tourists in Fukuoka were able to go to Kumamoto in a time as short as a little over half an hour, many of them just visited one tourism spot in Kumamoto Prefecture and returned home. However, in the case of Kagoshima Prefecture, the trend is not as clear. The decrease is about ten percent. This can be the result of smaller impact of the new Shinkansen, as a short track of Shinkansen had been opened before the Grand Opening in 2011.

When we also analyze how many prefectures tourists visited in one trip, in Kumamoto and in Kagoshima, the number generally showed a downward trend after the start of the Shinkansen, which is an indication that more tourists made a trip to one prefecture only. This also serves as a supporting evidence of the impact of Shinkansen.

From these findings, it is reasonable to support the validity of the Racket Theory. When the time distance becomes shorter by advancement of primary transport, more tourists will casually make a trip to visit fewer places, including many who travel to visit just one place of interest.

7. Limitation of this study

As previously discussed, the availability of the statistics of the Japanese tourism is considerably small. The objective statistics featuring the movement of the domestic travel, one of the most basic tourism statistics, is only made available after 2010. Before that, the nation had no statistics of visitors. During these several years where statistics are available, the only significant development in transport was the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen and the Hokuriku Shinkansen.

Because of these limitations, this study was able to take up only one case of influential change of time distance and analyzed whether it would match the teachings of the Racket Theory. Although in this particular case, the theory proved to be correct, the case must be studied in many further situations to solidify the validity of the Theory. Namely, in two years, the visitor statistics of the prefectures connected by the Hokuriku Shinkansen will be publicized. The tourism statistics then should be analyzed to see the

relationship with the Theory.

Naturally, the visitor statistics have some limitations, so the conclusion must be accepted with limitations. The visitor numbers shown in the National Visitor Number Statistics by Common Criteria does not reveal the origin of the visitors. The figure is the sum of visitors from all other prefectures. It includes visitors from a prefecture far enough not to be affected by transport connecting the destination prefecture. We must note here that any changes in the visitor number could be the result of factors other than the change in the time distance of the transport.

8. Application of this study to the tourism promotion activities

Despite the limitation to the conclusion of this study, its implication is noteworthy to the tourism promotion field. As the teachings of the Racket Theory, when the time distance of a primary transport is shortened, visitors will visit fewer tourism spots. More would visit only one spot. This would lead to the next step that, as tourists begin to choose fewer, or sole spot to visit, there will be a greater chance for the tourism spots with less attraction to become the destination. To maximize the economic impact of the destination, the tourism promotion authorities are expected to upgrade the tourism facilities around the destinations to ensure the smooth travel of the tourists, and perhaps more importantly, to take in the spending of the visitors.

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