

## Chapter 6 Revitalization of Industries and Livelihoods

### Section 5 Tourism industry

#### 1. Overview

##### (1) Main efforts during the concentrated reconstruction period

From FY2011 to FY2012, the “Tohoku Tourism Fair,” which considered the entire Tohoku region as a type of exposition venue, was held under the Wide-area Cooperation Tourism Reconstruction Project, and a unified effort was made by the public and private sectors.

From FY2012 to FY2013, support was provided for the continuous efforts of local entities to actively develop public relations, utilize events, disseminate information via the web, and promote human and material exchange under the Project for Travel Demand Creation in the Tohoku Region in order to raise awareness of the Tohoku region's Pacific coast area as a destination and stimulate travel demand to Fukushima Prefecture.

From FY2013 to FY2015, support was provided for the creation of a system and efforts to promote stays and exchanges in the Tohoku region's Pacific coast area in accordance with the reconstruction process in each region in stages under the Tohoku Region Tourism Reconstruction Measures Project, and the creation of stay programs in the region, etc. In addition, support was provided for measures implemented by Fukushima Prefecture to counter damage caused by harmful rumors and tourism-related projects to contribute to reconstruction from the disaster under the Tourism-related Reconstruction Support Project in Fukushima Prefecture.

##### (2) Main efforts during the reconstruction/revitalization period

Due to the damage caused by harmful rumors, Tohoku tourism had lagged far behind the surging inbound tourism trend nationwide. Therefore, the government decided to strengthen its efforts by significantly increasing the budget for tourism reconstruction, including the establishment of a Grant for Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction Measures, while designating the year 2016 as the “First Year of Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction.” The Prime Minister presented the goal to “increase the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the six Tohoku prefectures to 1.5 million nights by 2020” (March 10, 2016).

In addition, based on a mandate by the Minister of Reconstruction, the “Tohoku Tourism Advisory Council” was established on January 22, 2016. A proposal was submitted to the Minister of Reconstruction on April 15, 2016, outlining the future direction of tourism reconstruction in order to strategically and effectively utilize the budget related to tourism reconstruction and promote efforts through cooperation between the public and private sectors.

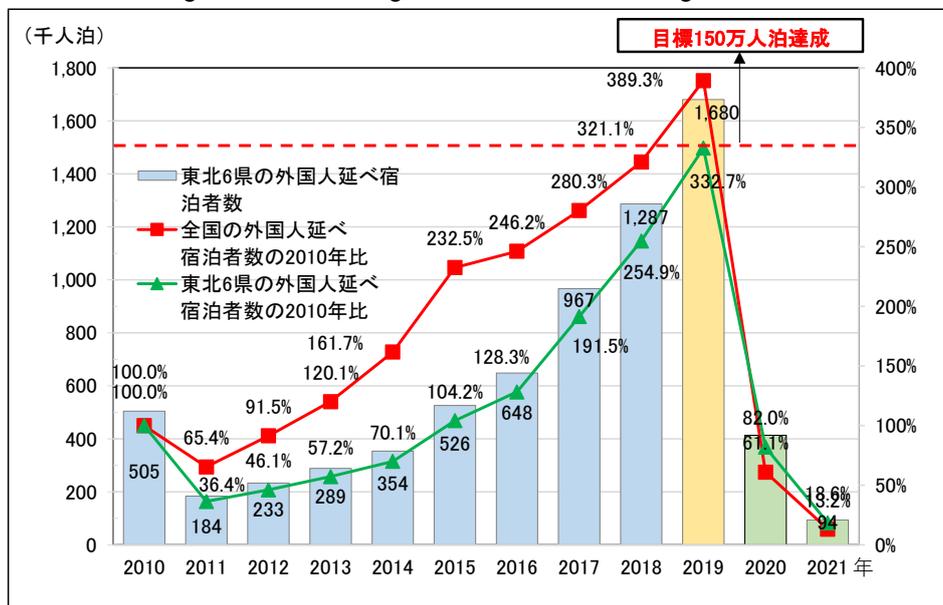
Specific projects included the Grant for Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction Measures, Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction Promotion, Tourism-related Reconstruction Support Project in Fukushima Prefecture, and the “New Tohoku” Exchange Expansion Model Project, and the Tohoku region was to take the initiative in efforts to develop multilingual websites, stay programs, etc. in order to accelerate the reconstruction of tourism in Tohoku. In addition, the public and private sectors worked together to implement top sales promotion and intensive promotion of visits to Japan, which led to an increase in new regular international flights and charter flights, as well as an increase in the number of foreign visitors to Japan.

As a result, the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the six Tohoku prefectures in 2019 was approximately 1.68 million, which was three times the number before the earthquake and exceeded the goal to “increase the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the six Tohoku prefectures to 1.5 million nights by 2020.”

Furthermore, in 2019, the Tohoku region was selected as a recommended travel destination for 2020 in the “Best in Travel 2020” by ‘Lonely Planet’ and “Best Trips” by the ‘National Geographic,’ and Fukushima Prefecture was selected as one of the “20 Places to Visit in 2020” by ‘The Guardian,’ indicating that the Tohoku region and Fukushima Prefecture were highly evaluated as travel destinations by major overseas media.

Note that the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists declined nationwide, including in the disaster-affected areas, in 2020, which was the final year of the reconstruction/revitalization period, due to the spread of COVID-19.

Figure 6-5-1 Change in the number of foreign tourists



Source) Data from Japan Tourism Agency, “Lodging and Travel Statistics”

Note: Limited to facilities with 10 or more employees.

## 2. Efforts to increase the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the six Tohoku prefectures

### (1) Overview of efforts

In order to eliminate the damage caused by harmful rumors in the Tohoku region, recover the number of foreign visitors to Japan, which had fallen sharply due to the effects of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and achieve the goal to “increase the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the six Tohoku prefectures to 1.5 million nights by 2020,” the “Grant for Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction Measures” was established in FY2016 to support the efforts of the local authorities in Tohoku region to attract foreign visitors to Japan, and support was continued until FY2020.

The projects eligible for the grant were those implemented in accordance with the plans for tourism reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake formulated by local authorities in the Tohoku region (implementation plans for tourism reconstruction measures), and a support menu that covered a wide range was established, including tourism reconstruction promotion survey projects, projects for building a regional system for efforts, promotion enhancement projects, welcoming environment improvement projects, and projects for enhancing and strengthening stay content.

### (2) Case studies of main efforts

The support projects in FY 2016 included a wide menu items in efforts for tourism reconstruction, including projects to strengthen promotion such as holding business meetings overseas and inviting overseas travel agents, as well as projects to improve the welcoming environment, such as making transportation hubs multilingual.

In the FY 2017 support projects, regional resources scattered along the North Pacific coast were reorganized from the perspective of foreign visitors to Japan, and training of wide-area storytelling guides, development of multilingual tools, and establishment of capacity to accept school trips were implemented to attract foreign visitors to the Tohoku region and promote excursions within the region.

In the FY2018 support projects, efforts were made to further increase awareness of the Tohoku region, stimulate demand for visits to the region, and guide tourists to a special website by utilizing PR videos of the four seasons, one of the charms of the Tohoku region, and video advertisements of region’s autumn and winter tourism content tailored to the characteristics of each of the 12 target markets, including the U.S. and China. In addition, efforts were made on the development of winter tourism content, such as the creation of destination-based travel products that combine snow activities with traditional culture such as festivals and food unique to the Tohoku region, as well as the development of a welcoming environment for foreign visitors, including the provision of Wi-Fi, multilingual displays, and cashless services.

In the FY2019 support projects, information was effectively transmitted to diverse groups of people by inviting influencers, foreign media, and travel agencies by taking events as an opportunity, as many foreign tourists were expected to visit Japan for the Rugby World Cup 2019, which was being held in Japan, and many more subsequently for international events such as the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In addition, in order to promote the reconstruction of tourism in the Pacific coast region, which still suffered from harmful rumors, people involved in school trips were invited to transmit information on coastal reconstruction tourism, and the media was also invited to transmit safety information to accurately convey the current status of the region.

As for inbound tourism in the Tohoku region, the support projects in FY2020 implemented workshops

to create killer content to convince wealthy visitors that the Tohoku region is worth visiting, FAM trips to have travel agencies that deal with wealthy Europeans and Americans inspect the experience programs that were created, etc., in order to attract visitors to the region after COVID-19 was put under control and increase the number of stay days and the amount of tourism spending in the 10th year after the Great East Japan Earthquake. In addition, as the final part in the final year of the Grant for Tohoku Tourism Reconstruction Measures, support was provided for the posting and sales promotion of travel products developed with this grant on overseas OTA websites, as well as web promotions using big data to further promote visitor attraction to Tohoku region.

Figure 6-5-2 “Digital Content Promotion Project” in cooperation with the six Tohoku prefectures



Source) Japan Tourism Agency “FY 2017 White Paper on Tourism”

### 3. Implementation of Tohoku tourism reconstruction promotion to overseas

#### (1) Overview of efforts

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), in cooperation with the Tohoku District Transport Bureau, Tohoku Tourism Promotion Organization, local authorities in the Tohoku region, and tourism-related parties, conducted a Tohoku tourism reconstruction promotion by JNTO as a destination campaign focusing on the Tohoku region in major overseas markets from FY 2016 to FY 2020. Through intensive inbound promotion focusing on increasing recognition, inviting media and travel agencies, and promoting sending visitors to the Tohoku region, the attractiveness of the region was strongly communicated.

#### (2) Case studies of main efforts

In the project to increase recognition, celebrities from South Korea, etc. were utilized to produce videos promoting the attractiveness of the Tohoku region from the perspectives of “gourmet food, natural scenery, and local experiences,” and they disseminated information through SNS, etc., in order to eliminate harmful rumors. Increase in awareness was also promoted in Europe, the U.S., Australia, and Asian countries by producing videos featuring celebrities for broadcast on BBC World News, TV commercials on CNN, etc., video distribution on websites, digital advertisement, etc.

In the invitation project, efforts were made, including inviting one famous artist or band from each of the six Southeast Asian markets (Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam) to shoot a music video featuring the tourism attractions of the prefectures in the Tohoku region, inviting influencers who have a strong influence in disseminating information to the Southeast Asian market, inviting journalists from major media such as leading overseas newspapers and magazines to disseminate information through their articles, and inviting travel agencies that were focusing on the sales of travel to Japan to promote the creation of tours.

In the project to promote sending visitors to the Tohoku region, joint advertising was conducted in cooperation with airlines and travel agencies to promote sales of airline seats and travel products, including new flights and charter flights using airports in the six Tohoku prefectures. In addition, in cooperation with leading overseas online travel agencies, etc., the creation of special web pages and the conducting of sales promotion campaigns, etc. were implemented.

Other efforts included an event held in Taiwan in cooperation with the Tohoku region over several years to express gratitude to general consumers in Taiwan, who generously supported the restoration and reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Another event was held for general consumers in Thailand in conjunction with top sales by the public and private sectors in Tohoku, and increase in recognition and promotion to send visitors to Tohoku were implemented through the transmission of its attractiveness by the municipalities and private organizations of the Tohoku region and marketing of Tohoku-related travel products by local travel agencies and airlines in Thailand.

Figure 6-5-3 (Yamagata, Dewa Sanzan) British journalists were invited to Fukushima and Yamagata to produce a video on the theme of spiritual and cultural experiences



Source) JNTO "Introduction of JNTO Projects in FY 2018"

## 4. Promotion of tourism reconstruction in Fukushima

### (1) Overview of efforts

Fukushima Prefecture suffered not only tremendous physical damage mainly in coastal areas due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, but also enormous damage to tourism-related industries due to damage caused by harmful rumors associated with the nuclear power station accident, and the number of overnight stays for school trips to the prefecture in particular was affected seriously with a decrease to approximately 20% after the earthquake. It was therefore decided to enhance educational trip programs unique to Fukushima Prefecture and continue to provide powerful information dissemination outside the prefecture to widely publicize the current situation in Fukushima and its attractiveness as an educational trip destination to people involved in school trips throughout Japan. In addition, as a budgetary project to support such efforts, the “Tourism-related Reconstruction Support Project in Fukushima Prefecture” was newly established in FY2013 to provide subsidies for tourism-related projects implemented by Fukushima Prefecture to eliminate damage caused by harmful rumors and contribute to reconstruction from the disaster. This project was designed to attract visitors to Fukushima Prefecture from Japan and abroad, including support for school trips, by providing support for enrichment and enhancement of the content of stays, improvement of the welcoming environment, enhancement of promotions, and surveys to promote tourism reconstruction, which were implemented based on the Tourism-related Reconstruction Support Project in Fukushima Prefecture Implementation Plan established by the prefecture.

### (2) Case studies of main efforts

The efforts implemented under the support projects from FY2013 to FY2015 included domestic promotion through caravans in the Tokyo metropolitan area and events to attract visitors, overseas promotion through invitation of overseas travel agencies and media and exhibitions at travel expos, discovery and training of storytellers who can pass on the disaster experience, and promotion of school trips through invitation of educators and creation of model courses for school trips.

In the support projects for FY2016 and FY2017, efforts were made to create tourism areas by dispatching experts to discover and refine DMOs and tourism materials, and promoting “reconstruction tourism,” which were learning tours to see Fukushima “as is” through meetings and discussions with “people (groups)” who are taking on the challenges of reconstruction and inspection tours of the disaster-affected areas. In addition, efforts that were made included nurturing and utilizing Fukushima Prefecture’s brand-name tourism resources of “sake,” “flowers,” and “hot springs,” to guide visitors on a wide-area excursion within the prefecture.

The efforts under the support project in FY2018 included the development of a bus route that tours tourist spots from and to major train stations, a model project for the development of secondary transportation by strengthening the dissemination of information on secondary transportation to tourists, and an effort for tours to places related to the Boshin War under the themes of “bushido” and “samurai” to attract people who are interested in the history of the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Boshin War.

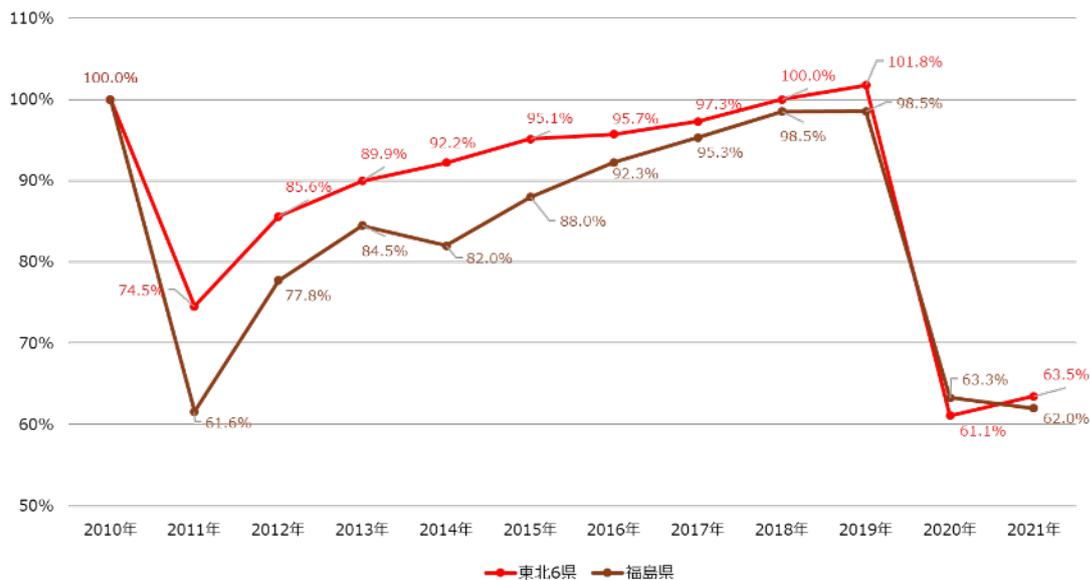
The efforts under the FY2019 support project included a monitoring tour for educators outside of Fukushima Prefecture, and efforts that refined Fukushima’s unique educational programs based on the themes of hope tourism and learning. Furthermore, model content that would serve as successful

examples of the night-time economy was created and promoted to individual travelers as a way of disseminating information before and during travel, efforts to encourage official travel agencies of Olympics and Paralympics to create products and those for in sake brewery tourism, flower tourism, and samurai tourism were implemented.

The efforts under the FY2020 support project included an online caravan to attract visitors, and establishment of a general contact point to support the Hope Tourism program and coordinate with local facilities in a centralized manner, and support for efforts to encourage travel agencies, etc. to promote school trips, even though the monitoring tour for schools and PTAs in the Tokyo metropolitan area was not conducted due to the impact of COVID-19. In addition, the full opening of the Joban Line was taken as an opportunity to create new content to attract more visitors to Hamadori, and development of a welcoming environment in which all regions in the prefecture cooperated in attracting camps to the area was implemented.

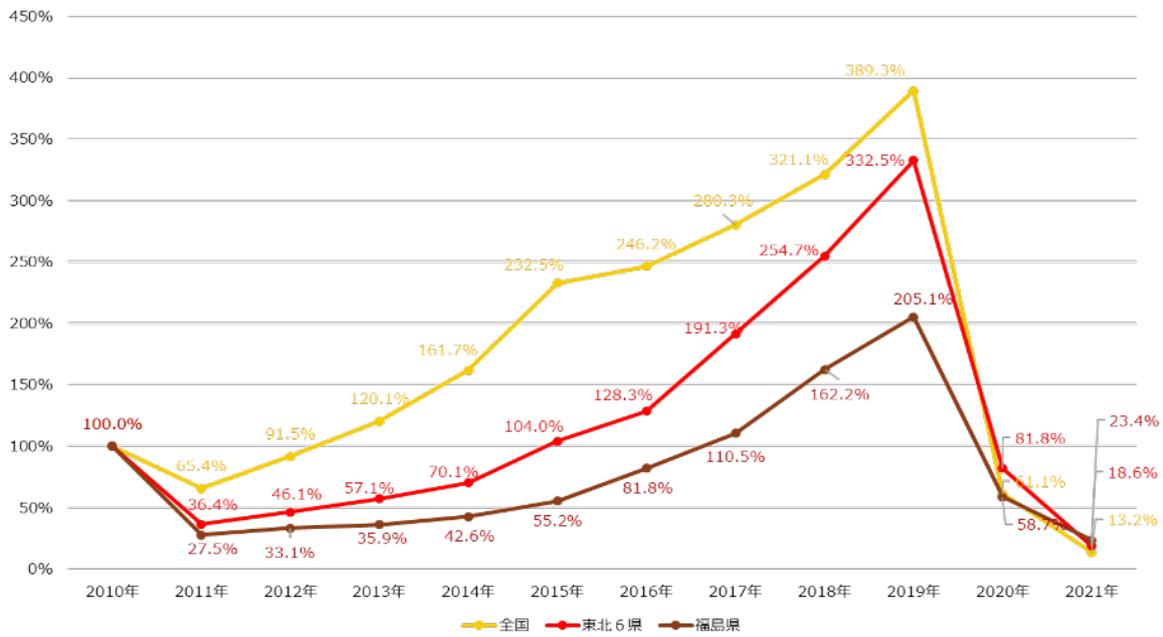
Through such efforts, the number of tourist arrivals in Fukushima Prefecture (in 2019) recovered to the pre-disaster level (2010), although there were regional differences within the prefecture. The result was the total number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the prefecture (in 2019) increased to 205.1% compared to the pre-earthquake level. However, the level was still lower than the national increase rate (389.3%). In addition, the number of arrivals for school trips in the prefecture (FY2019) recovered to 72.8% of the pre-disaster level (FY2010), although there were regional differences within the prefecture.

Figure 6-5-4 Change in the number of tourists entering Fukushima Prefecture



Source) Data from Statistics on Tourists Entering Each Prefecture in the Tohoku Region

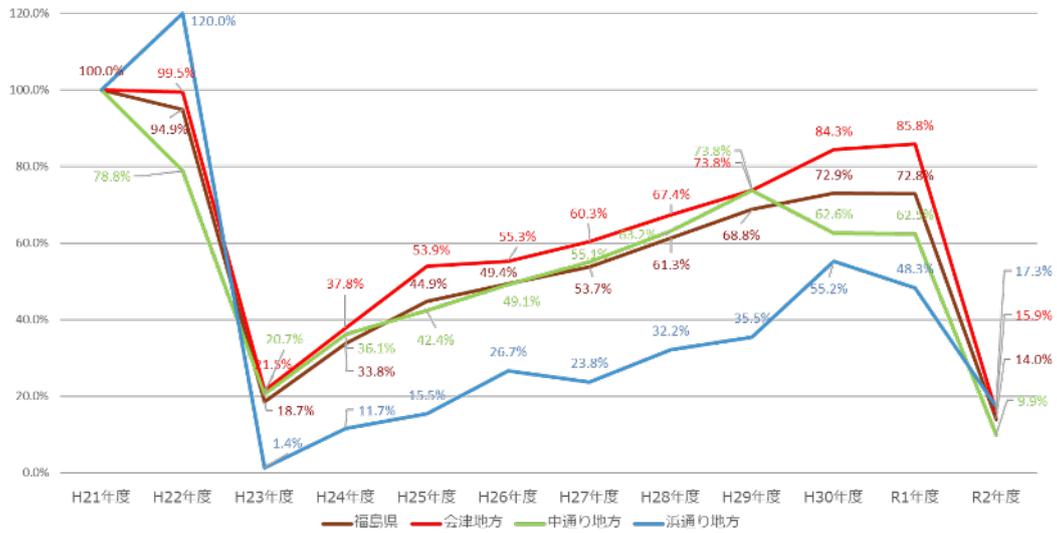
Figure 6-5-5 Change in the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in Fukushima Prefecture



Source) Data from Japan Tourism Agency, "Lodging and Travel Statistics"

Note: Covers accommodations with 10 or more employees.

Figure 6-5-6 Change in the number of arrivals for school trips in each region of Fukushima Prefecture



Source) Data from Report of Survey on School Trips to Fukushima Prefecture

## 5. “New Tohoku” Exchange Expansion Model Project

### (1) Overview of efforts

New business models that would lead to an increase in the exchange population of foreign people in the Tohoku region were publicly solicited and selected from the private sector, and support was provided for the launch of new efforts by the private sector such as the creation and sale of travel products. Specifically, the following projects were undertaken.

- ① Joint creation of travel products targeting foreign tourists by the public and private sectors and demonstration through market evaluation by actually selling them, etc.
- ② Holding of reporting sessions to share the results and issues of these programs, and transmission of information through domestic and international media
- ③ Organization of the results of past years' projects into a form that can be easily utilized by various stakeholders in the Tohoku region and other regions, and domestic and international transmission of information

### (2) Case studies of main efforts

In FY2016, 13 business models were launched to increase the exchange population of foreign people and to improve the welcoming environment, such as the establishment of a unified brand for the Tohoku region with winter as the theme and the introduction of bicycle sharing, and efforts were made through cooperation between the public and private sectors in new attempts to make the region an advanced tourism destination that can serve as a model for the rest of the country, in order to eliminate damage caused by harmful rumors through the dissemination and diffusion of information based on personal experiences.

In FY2017, out of a total of 37 proposals, 11 proposals were selected that would lead to an increase in the exchange population of foreign people, such as the development of travel products for foreign visitors to Japan that incorporate visits to sake breweries throughout the region and the utilization of bus routes to promote round-trip tourism in the region, thereby supporting the launch of new business models in the private sector.

In FY2018, of the proposals from the private sector, nine proposals were selected as wide-area model projects that would lead to an increase in the exchange population of foreign people in the Tohoku region, and as regional model projects led by each Reconstruction Bureau, two were selected by the Iwate Reconstruction Bureau, three by the Miyagi Reconstruction Bureau, and two by the Fukushima Reconstruction Bureau. Efforts were made to launch business models in cooperation between the public and private sectors, such as the development of travel products.

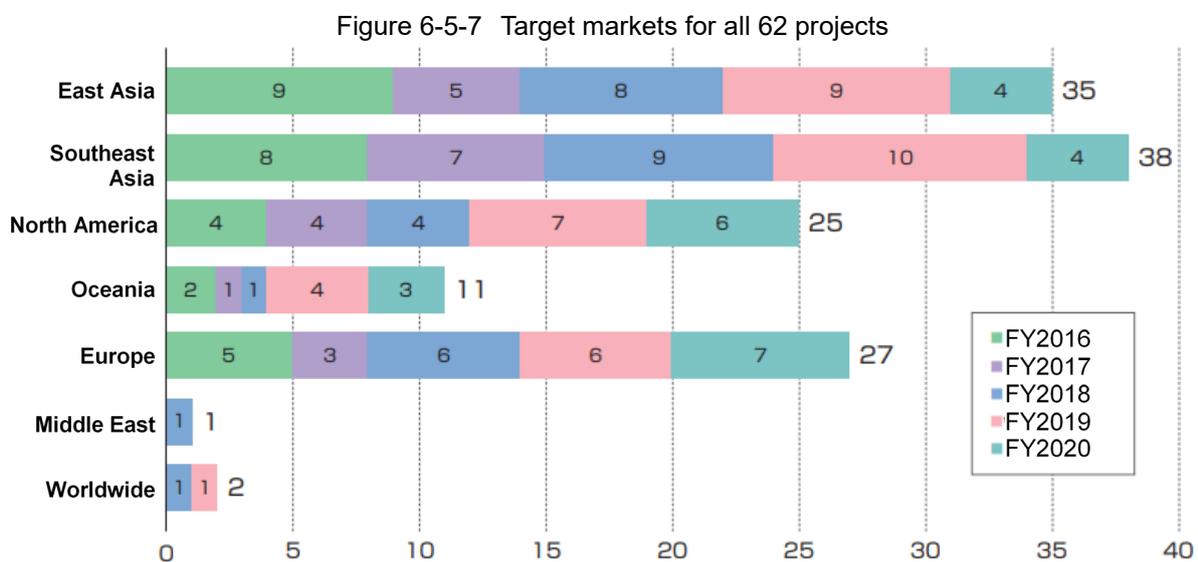
In FY2019, of the proposals from the private sector, eight proposals were selected as dissemination/development-type model projects that would lead to an increase in the exchange population of foreign people in the Tohoku region, and as regional model projects led by each Reconstruction Bureau, two were selected by the Iwate Reconstruction Bureau, three by the Miyagi Reconstruction Bureau, and three by the Fukushima Reconstruction Bureau. Efforts were made to launch business models in cooperation between the public and private sectors on the development, etc. of inbound travel products (programs) with a view to sales.

In FY2020, seven proposals were selected from those made by the private sector as model projects that would lead to an increase in the exchange population of foreign people in the Tohoku region, and efforts

were made to further establish and develop the know-how for inbound product creation and sales under public-private cooperation, and launch a business model with a view to creating a self-supporting structure run by the businesses in the region.

Through these efforts, 62 projects were adopted and a total of 1,063 travel products were created over the five-year period from FY2016 to FY2020. Since the number of local businesses in the Tohoku region participating in the project was limited for the projects conducted from FY2016 to FY2018, activities of the project team, which mainly consisted of businesses in the region, were supported so that local businesses could accumulate successful experiences and know-how and establish a system for creating inbound products in the region under the projects in FY2019 and later.

The results of the projects over the five years were also disseminated through the Tohoku Tourism Promotion Organization's "Travel Tohoku" website, the production of a sales book, and the production of a "Business Model Organization and Dissemination Book."



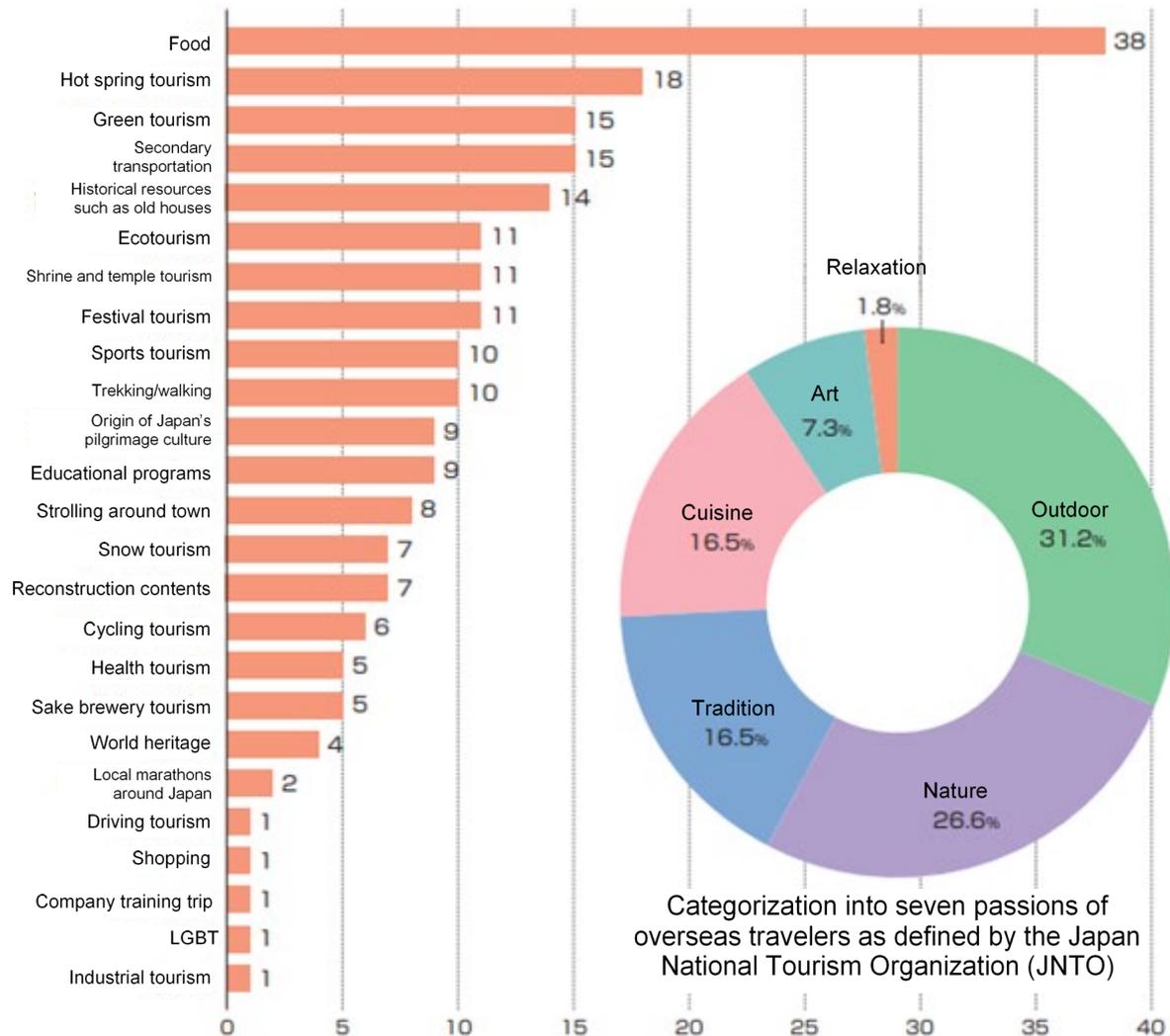
The target markets of all 62 of the "New Tohoku" Exchange Expansion Model Projects implemented from FY2008 to FY2020 include East and Southeast Asia, where interest in Japan has always been high and from where many foreign tourists have visited in the past, followed by English-speaking and European countries as the years progressed.

Source) Reconstruction Agency "Business Organization and Dissemination Book, FY2016 to FY2020 'New Tohoku' Exchange Expansion Model Project," March 2021

[https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat1/sub-cat1-19/20210401\\_businessmodelbook.pdf](https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat1/sub-cat1-19/20210401_businessmodelbook.pdf)

(accessed July 28, 2023)

Figure 6-5-8 Genres addressed by all 62 projects



Many of the themes and genres addressed by all 62 projects in the “New Tohoku” Exchange Expansion Model Projects involved food, hot spring tourism, green tourism, historical resources such as old houses, and other genres that made effective use of Tohoku’s tourism resources. Note that many of the products utilized secondary transportation such as car rentals.

Source) Reconstruction Agency “Business Organization and Dissemination Book, FY2016 to FY2020 ‘New Tohoku’ Exchange Expansion Model Project,” March 2021

[https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat1/sub-cat1-19/20210401\\_businessmodelbook.pdf](https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat1/sub-cat1-19/20210401_businessmodelbook.pdf)

(accessed July 28, 2023)