

# Utsunomiya City Brand Strategy

- Review after a decade -

Hiroataka KOIKE

## Abstract

Japanese population decline began in 2008, and about 31 million people, or one-quarter of the current population, will disappear from Japan in the next half-century. From now on, we will enter an era of inter-city competition in which prefectures and municipalities throughout Japan try to slow down population decrease and compete to sustain and develop regions and cities. To that end, it is crucial to increase the number of tourists and visitors, and to increase residents and to attract businesses. The critical issue here is the formation of an attractive city image. The spread of international transportation, the global investment environment, and the proliferation of the Internet have intensified competition among cities worldwide. In Japan, many local governments are now promoting city brands to create more favorable city images. Utsunomiya City is pioneering nationwide in the creation of city brands to enhance its image. The project started a decade ago, and the results have begun to appear. This paper reviews the basic concept of the Utsunomiya City brand strategy and its efforts to date and looks at future directions.

## Keywords

City brand, Levels of recognition and attractiveness, Yukai Logo, Inter-city competition

## 1 Introduction

Japan has enjoyed prosperity with economic growth and population increase after World War II. However, due to the rapid progress of declining birthrate and aging, which is unparalleled in the world, the era of population decline began around 2008. According to estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 2018, the population in 2065 will be about 88 million, from the current 128 million, and the percentage of people aged 65 and over will be 38%. The rate of change in population by prefecture varies greatly depending on the region. For example, comparing the rate of change from 2015 to 2019, only eight prefectures showed an increase in population. These were mainly in Tokyo, Osaka, Aichi, and Fukuoka areas, which form large metropolitan areas except for Okinawa. On the other hand,

prefectures whose populations have declined significantly are in Tohoku, Shikoku, Kyushu, Chugoku, and Hokuriku, such as Akita, Aomori, and Kochi Prefectures. Compared to the past five years, the decrease rate has been increasing, and regional disparities have been widening.

Furthermore, the population of the cities varies significantly depending on the size of the city. Looking at the average population change rate by city size for 15 years from 1995 to 2010, the average for municipalities with a population between 100 thousand and 300 thousand was almost flat, while for those less than 100 thousand, the rate of population decline is increasing. According to long-term projections from 2015 to 2045, the smaller the population, the higher the rate of decline. For municipalities with less than 50 thousand people, the population decrease will be more than 40%.

Under such circumstances, many cities planned to merge with neighboring towns through the Great Heisei Merger, and the number of municipalities diminished from 3232 (as of March 31, 1999) to 1718 (as of January 1, 2020). From now on, the competition for survival among regions and cities will intensify throughout Japan. Winning the inter-city competition requires to increase visibility and increase the number of visitors, leading to an increase in the permanent residents and the attraction of companies. This article introduces the initiative of Utsunomiya City using city branding strategy.

## 2 Ranking and Citizen Perceptions of Utsunomiya City

Reflecting on the recent era of inter-city competition, recognition rankings of prefectures and municipalities are attracting extensive attention. What is the recognition level of Utsunomiya City? According to a regional brand survey by Brand Research Institute, Inc., Utsunomiya City was ranked 71st in Japan nationwide in 2008. The same study rated cities' attractiveness, and the top five were Sapporo, Hakodate, Kyoto, Yokohama, and Otaru. The attractiveness of Utsunomiya City ranked 190th, lower than the recognition level. It is far less than the 23rd place of Nikko City in Tochigi Prefecture. Nikko is a world heritage site called "Nikko Shrines and Temples" and has a high level of global recognition.

Utsunomiya, a prefecture capital with a population of half a million, has quite a low level of attractiveness. Perhaps the difference between Utsunomiya's recognition and attractiveness is mainly due to Utsunomiya's reputation as a Gyoza Town. According to a household survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the annual purchase of gyoza per household has been the highest

in Japan for 15 consecutive years until 2010. However, it has been competing for the top position with Hamamatsu City in recent years. There is little argument about Utsunomiya gyoza has been a great success. Still, Utsunomiya is trying to promote a variety of brands other than gyoza, such as jazz, cocktails, fairy, and Oya stone. Recently, professional sports events such as bicycles and basketball have been quite popular. However, according to the Utsunomiya City Tourism Trends Survey in 2018, 82% of people gave gyoza as a number 1 tourist attraction in Utsunomiya, while those who gave jazz or cocktails as a tourist attraction fell to around 4%. Oya stone has been growing in popularity in recent years, but it still accounts for only 18%.

By the way, although not very well known to Utsunomiya citizens, many things in Utsunomiya ranked among the top in Japan. Nikkei Glocal conducted a "Sustainability Survey of Nationwide Cities" in 2009, with 481 municipalities responded, which accounts for 60% of 805 surveyed. Comprehensive index based on the average deviation of environmental conservation (48 indices), social stability (19 indices), and economic richness (4 indices). Large cities near Tokyo ranked No. 1 Mitaka City, No. 2 Musashino City, and No. 3 Toda City. Among them, Utsunomiya City was ranked 12th nationwide and 1st among regional cities. In cities with a population of over half a million, Utsunomiya surpassed Sendai City, which is the second. By sector, the degree of balance in Utsunomiya City was 59.0 for environmental conservation, 50.0 for social stability, and 56.6 for economic richness. Only 29 out of 460 cities scored more than 50 for all three indicators, and only Utsunomiya was a city with a population over half a million.

According to a municipal survey by Nikkei DUAL in 2018, Utsunomiya City was ranked first in Japan along with Shinjuku Ward in the overall ranking of towns that are easy to work for double income households and to raise children. These findings indicate that Utsunomiya is a livable city. Utsunomiya is surrounded by an abundant natural environment and has few natural disasters. On the left bank of the Kinugawa River, including the Kiyohara area, it has one of the largest inland industrial parks in Japan. It is about 100 km from Tokyo and is full of various attractions such as old history and culture and new industries.

The question is whether the citizens in Utsunomiya are aware of the city's livable environment. Furthermore, if they are aware of it, are they appreciate and proud of it? As detailed in the research report of the former Deputy Director Yoshio Shirai of the Utsunomiya Municipal Research Center, "Study on Citizenship in Utsunomiya," the citizen characteristics of Tochigi prefecture is conservative, discreet, and

nonaggressive, less noticeable, or less likely want to be the top. However, if it goes too far, they may hide that they are born in Tochigi prefecture, or they are from Utsunomiya. The possible effects of historical or cultural causes may result in these vigorless characteristics of this region, which is in contrast with people from the other areas who want to brag about where they were born.

### 3 City Branding Strategy Methodology

In the past, Utsunomiya citizens may have lived comfortably in an abundant living environment. However, in the era of population decrease, competition among cities all over Japan to struggle for survival will intensify. If one is content with the current situation, one may be left behind, and end up with the loser. From such a sense of crisis, the word "City Brand" or "City Sales" has become a hot topic in many cities in recent years. To increase the attractiveness of each town and the value of individual regional brands enhances the image of each city. This strategy will result in an increase in the number of visitors and residents compared to other regions.

For two years from 2005, the Utsunomiya Municipal Research Center researched city brands and city sales led by Manabu Haneishi, who was then the team leader. Among them, the relationship between individual town resources and city image, the difference in attractiveness felt by people in and out of the city, and the importance of city brands that can promote the ease of living was clarified. Besides, a policy research team, "Utsunomiya Sales Corps," was set up in the Municipal Research Center, and practical activities aimed at effective and efficient public relations were launched. The results and findings were utilized in the subsequent formulation of the city brand strategy.

Utsunomiya City formulated the "Fifth Utsunomiya City Comprehensive Plan" in 2008. Three main targets for the city to develop were "a town where everyone can live happily," "a town chosen by everyone," and "sustainable development." Three strategic plans have been identified to achieve them; "enhancing happiness," "improving brand power," and "improving fundamental power." Utsunomiya City started to promote its city brand strategy. An advisory committee of ten experts was organized in the fall of 2008, and they develop the "Utsunomiya Brand Strategy Guidelines" half a year later.

Regarding the formulation of guidelines, discussions were held on the background of city brands, the way of thinking about brands, and the correlation between city brands and individual/sectoral brands. Among several regional

resources such as Utsunomiya gyoza, Oya stone, jazz, cocktails, and the city image of Utsunomiya, mutual branding and synergistic effects can interact among individual branding items. It aims to enhance the image of the city by disseminating it among citizens, businesses, and the government. To that end, we conducted a recognition survey of the current state of Utsunomiya City by citizens and people outside the prefecture, and held a SWOT analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Utsunomiya City, and set the direction of the issues and initiatives in the following three steps.

(A) "Recognition" = Utsunomiya is known both inside and outside the city.

(B) "Trust" = Utsunomiya becomes a favorable city.

(C) "Attachment" = Utsunomiya brand established.

The purpose of Utsunomiya's branding, which aims at these three steps, is to enhance the image and appeal of the city, make people in the city continue to live with pride, and actively engage with people outside the city. By publicizing the city, Utsunomiya City becomes a city that attracts attention with a longing, recognition, and attractiveness increase, and it becomes a city where one wants to visit, settle, and start businesses.

Here, let us clarify the relationship between city sales and branding, including community development and tourism. Community development aims to improve the living environment of the city and increase the satisfaction level of citizens. City sales and tourism promotion mainly disseminate the attractiveness of the city image to the outside world. Branding intends to spread both to the inside and outside of the city to raise the recognition level.

Then, how to promote branding specifically? According to the brand strategy guidelines, it calls for storytelling of branding by discovering and re-editing the local resources and charms of Utsunomiya and transmitting them to the citizens and outside world. As a town that attracts attention from outside the city with longing, citizens will continue to live with pride. It aims to promote the mechanism of information circulation through an easy-to-understand brand message. We thought that we could expect to utilize Utsunomiya's unique brand message to change the way individual charms spread, and the higher effect of strategic branding information transmission can be achieved.

## 4 Progress of Utsunomiya Brand Strategy

From April 2009, the Brand Strategy Office opened in the City Hall, and the "Utsunomiya Brand Promotion Council" was established by citizen groups, economic organizations, the media, and government officials. This council aims to make Utsunomiya citizens proud of their towns and to increase their recognition and attractiveness as a town that attracts attention from people outside the city with longing. The brand has the power to make people visit and live in Utsunomiya, and to change to a city where companies want to move in.

The project name "Utsunomiya Pride" was chosen to express the pride of the citizens and the longing of the outsiders. Mayor Eiichi Sato attached the message, "A town that continues to be proud of for 100 years from now". For Utsunomiya Pride to succeed, it is necessary for each citizen to discover or create a new charm that Utsunomiya has, and to be proud of it and actively transmit information to the outside world. It is no exaggeration to say that there is a need to raise the recognition level that changes people's minds.

The Utsunomiya Pride Project recruited creative volunteers from its citizens in its first year and held a kickoff pride cafe at Utsunomiya Kyowa University on June 20, 2009. About a hundred citizen volunteers, including the mayor, participated from inside and outside the city, and lively discussions were held on the appeal of Utsunomiya using a new workshop method called World Cafe. The members of the creative volunteers who participated there performed a total of twelve workshops and other activities in four fields, such as a local study seminar, a delivery pride cafe, and pride reporters, for the next two months, and worked to discover the appealing points of Utsunomiya. The author himself had the opportunity to participate in these activities as a member of the Utsunomiya Brand Promotion Council. Participating in a local study seminar group, he explored Union Street, where he had rarely been to before. Participants were able to make a variety of exciting discoveries, such as a unique Country and Western-style shop that attracts customers from all over the Kanto area through the Internet, although there was no sign outside the store.

Based on the results of these two months of creative volunteer activities, a summary workshop was held on September 13 to gather opinions on the uniqueness of Utsunomiya that they found through various field activities. Professional copywriters proposed five brand messages. Based on the results of the voting by the citizens, the brand message "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" was finally selected at the Brand Promotion Council on October 22. The Japanese word "Yukai" means pleasant,

amusing, delightful, fun, or glorious. Initially, this message was not without criticism of being mediocre or stale, but the majority chose it because it was easy to understand and durable without getting bored. On October 31, at the Orion Square, the mayor and other members of the brand promotion council and creative volunteers participated, and a presentation ceremony of the Utsunomiya brand message was held in front of many citizens. The logo of "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" was introduced as shown below.



Utsunomiya Yukai Logo

"Miya Cafe," the official homepage of the Utsunomiya Pride Project, was launched in March 2009. An antenna shop called "Miya Cafe," which has the same name as the Internet homepage, opened in November after renovating a vacant store in front of Orion Square. The first floor has local vegetables and foods, as well as a market that sells traditional crafts and specialty products of Utsunomiya, snacks, and tourist information. The second floor is a stylish restaurant. In general, antenna shops usually open in big cities such as Tokyo. An antenna shop in the city center has the effect of appealing the value of various local resources of Utsunomiya to many citizens and visitors. It aims to be a focal point for the revitalization of the central city area by making people aware of it. Fortunately, because of the synergistic effect with the homepage "Miya Cafe" on the Internet, it is very popular as a new Utsunomiya tourist attraction, and it has started the revitalization of the central city area on Orion Street.

The next strategy for promoting the city brand was how to appeal the newly determined brand message of "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" inside and outside the city. The first such event, the Utsunomiya Yukai Photo Exhibition, began in January 2010. More than two hundred citizens and local professional sports athletes recruited from the general public posed for a model of the picture with the message of their choice. A total of 117 flags were posted in Hinomachi Street, Orion Street, and Union Street for three months.

Then, the promotion video of "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" was released.

"Wedding gyoza," "Pasta and powdered cheese," and "Jazzy boy," each of which is 15 seconds long and full of esprit, has been broadcast on TV news or published on YouTube on the Internet, and the number of accesses was steadily increasing.

In the following years, the "Utsunomiya Yukai CM Contest" was held. In 2011, among 56 works submitted, the work "Otoshimono" by two female students from Bunsei University of Art received the grand prize. There were 28 entries in the second contest in 2012 and 32 entries in 2013, and the awarded works were on the large-scale display "Bamba Vision" in the central city area.

On March 13, 2010, the "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" promotion event was held in the station square of Shinjuku East Exit. Mayor Sato greeted and advertised Utsunomiya, and in addition to jazz performances and acrobatics of cocktails, three Utsunomiya Yukai PR videos were projected on the large screen (AltaVision) on the wall of the building, attracting the attention of people walking by.

The Yukai Mayor Project began in November 2010. The Yukai Mayor is to appoint resources and specialties that Utsunomiya boasts every month as the "mayor of this month." The first mayor is the Elephant Miyako at the Utsunomiya Zoo, followed by a gyoza statue made of Oya stone wearing Santa costume in December. In January 2011, Akashi Shiganosuke, the first Yokozuna who was active during the Edo period, was selected. Over the next year, the mascot characters of the professional sports teams, "Miyary" the fairy mascot character of Utsunomiya City, Large Ginko Tree, Utsunomiya Tower, Kamagawa River, and Utsunomiya Castle were appointed as Yukai Mayors.

Since there are Yukai Mayors, of course, there are also Yukai Citizens. People who love Utsunomiya and who want to promote "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" are certified as Yukai Citizens and receive Yukai Citizen certification cards and Yukai Logo badges. There are currently more than 8,500 Yukai Citizens, including athletes and celebrities, general citizens, and foreigners, both in and out of the city.

The 25th of every month is called "Utsunomiya Yukai Day" after "Nikkori," meaning smile and numbers 2 and 5, and we appoint Yukai Shops that offer special menus and services on that day. Currently, about 100 shops have registered, and one can access to the homepage of those shops on Utsunomiya Pride's website. Also, FM broadcast stations in the city broadcast Yukai Radio every Friday.

These various initiatives related to the city brand strategy of Utsunomiya City have been featured in many TV, newspapers and magazines. They have the effect of converting the number of mass media exposures in 2009 to ads of 495 million yen. In

2012, the advertising value reached 585 million yen.

In 2011, the Utsunomiya Pride Project was awarded the highest prize in the Corporate Communication category at the Japan Public Relations Association's PR Award Grand Prix. According to Seiya Ikari (Professor Emeritus, Tokyo University of Economics), the chairman of the section judging committee, "Even though the government is taking the lead, it can be evaluated as a strategy involving the whole citizen. It will be an established model as a city brand strategy."

The Wall Street Journal, the largest newspaper in the United States, published about Utsunomiya City in the September 6, 2011 issue as "City in Japan Tries New Tack on Old Problem" with a large photo. In that article, "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya," is described as "A lovely place to live, Utsunomiya."

## 5 Further Developments

As mentioned above, the first five years of the brand strategy were a variety of trial and error efforts. Among them, many of them are continuing, such as Yukai Citizens, Yukai Logos, and Yukai Shops, and their evaluations have been steadily improving. On the other hand, the goals of improvement of "Pride of citizens" and "Intention to visit from outside the city," were not sufficiently advanced. Therefore, we positioned the five years from 2013 to 2017 as the second phase of our brand strategy and decided to consider solutions to these issues.

In 2014, Hiroya Masuda, chairman of the Japan Revitalization Conference at the time, published a book entitled "Local Disappearance - Rapid Population Declined by Overconcentration in Tokyo." According to the so-called Masuda Report, 896 municipalities, which are about half of all cities and towns, may disappear by 2040 as a result of population decline due to low birthrate. Two main reasons for the population decline are the decrease in the number of young women aged 20 to 39 and the outflow of young people from rural areas to Tokyo. In response, the Abe Cabinet announced the "Long-Term Vision for Town, People, and Work Creation," a comprehensive strategy for regional revitalization. After that, various attempts for regional revitalization have begun and are now continuing nationwide. According to an Internet survey conducted by the Cabinet Office, 40% of Tokyo residents want to consider moving to rural areas. Besides, about 30% of those who wish to make a U-turn or live in two areas.

Utsunomiya is close to the Tokyo metropolitan area and comfortable to live with few natural disasters surrounded by full of the natural environment. It is called

"Tokainaka," where urban life and rural life are well-balanced. Utsunomiya decided to launch an epoch-making campaign called "Double Place." A "Double Place" means a new lifestyle that makes people enjoy living by having a relationship between their current place of residence and another place of activity without forcing emigration to the new location. In November 2014, "Sotokoto" magazine published an article on Double Place about young people who are enjoying double-place lives in Utsunomiya.

Another thing to note is about Yukai Logo that began in 2010. To further spread the brand message, "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya" among companies and organizations, one can freely select the color of the logo's background and change the first three letters to "So and so is Yukai in Utsunomiya." The modified Yukai Logo is registered at the Utsunomiya Brand Promotion Council. These logos appear on the Utsunomiya Pride homepage, which links to the websites of individual organizations and companies. A "Good Yukai Logo Design Contest" was held in 2013, and 22 companies and organizations applied. A medical corporation received the highest award, and a construction company and a cleaning shop received the excellence awards. Every year since then, about 100 Yukai Logos have been registered each year on average, and in July 2019, the number reached a target of one thousand logos. On July 25, a ceremony commemorating the achievement of one thousand Utsunomiya Yukai Logos was held at the city hall. Applications have continued to increase, reaching 1074 as of January this year. A breakdown shows that 65% of the logo applications are from companies, from industrial sectors such as construction, food, and agriculture. Citizen groups account for 20%. Then follows the hospital, welfare, and education fields, with close to 50 departments of the city hall, attracting broad public and private interests.

## 6 Effect of Utsunomiya City Brand Strategy

The third phase of the action plan of the city brand strategy, which began in 2018, aims for a developmental stage, compared to the introductory stage and the practitioner stage before. The three steps defined in the Utsunomiya Brand Strategy Guidelines, "Recognition" (an effort to make Utsunomiya attractive), and "Trust" (an effort to get people to like Utsunomiya), and the third "Attachment" (to achieve citizen's pride and longing from outside the city through efforts of recognition and trust), we have expanded various ongoing projects and have started new projects.

Perhaps due to the effect of such information dissemination, Toyo Keizai Shimpō's City Data Pack ranked Utsunomiya as Number one "Livable City" nationwide

for five consecutive years from 2013 to 2017 among 28 cities with a population of more than half a million. "Livability" is a comprehensive evaluation index based on 16 indices from five perspectives: security, convenience, comfort, wealth, and adequacy of housing standards.

To assess the effects of the Utsunomiya City Brand strategy, let us examine the changes in ranking in the regional brand research conducted annually by the Brand Research Institute. The survey started in 2006 and is the 14th this year. For 1,000 municipalities nationwide, 84 items, such as recognition and attractiveness, are quantified as the local brand power by the consumers in each region. The survey was conducted via Internet questionnaires, collecting valid responses from about 30,000 people in their age groups of the 20s to the 70s, and weighting them by age, gender, and place of residence.

Looking at the rankings of Utsunomiya over the four years from 2016 to 2019, the recognition level has increased from 80th in 2016 to 59th, 42nd, and last year to 31st. The attractiveness also had risen from 221 in 2016 to 173, 150, and 112 last year. The reason why both the levels of recognition and attractiveness are rising may be attributable to the information exposure, which is one of the survey items. According to that, Utsunomiya's media exposure ranking in 2016 was 71st, but last year it was 29th. Utsunomiya is more often featured in newspapers and television, as well as in social media such as SNS recently. The city's mascot character, "Miyary," whom the Utsunomiya brand promotion council appointed in 2011, has more than 10,000 official Twitter followers at the end of last year. It seems that such information transmission has led to an increase in Utsunomiya's recognition and attractiveness.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper has discussed the city brand strategy that Utsunomiya has been working for the last ten years. The author was interested in city brands as the director of the Utsunomiya and Municipal Research Center from 2007 to 2011 and has involved since the project's launch in 2008 as the chairman of the Utsunomiya Brand Promotion Council.

In the field of urban transportation, which the author specializes in, he has promoted the use of public transit and bicycles to break away from dependence on cars. He has been involved in the project to introduce LRT to Utsunomiya for a quarter-century. Fortunately, the construction of a new 15km LRT, the first in Japan, will begin in 2018 and will be opened in 2022. The redevelopment of long-standing idle

land at the east side of JR Utsunomiya Station, with the convention center, advanced medical facilities, and hotels, will also open in the same year. Visitors to Utsunomiya through new transportation city development will increase, and the recognition level of Utsunomiya will further increase. The future task is to allow the LRT to extend to the west side of the city area crossing the JR line and to relocate bus routes and cooperate with local traffic so that people can come to the city without using automobiles. As a result, the improvement of mobility and revitalization of the city center will realize, and it becomes possible to change to a town that is much easier and more pleasant to live. The author believes that the realization of the LRT will become a real pride for Utsunomiya citizens and an excellent opportunity for further improvement of city brands.

In December last year, the Abe Cabinet announced the second phase of "The Comprehensive Strategy for Town, People, and Work Creation." As a result of the first phase, the employment rate of local youth, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan, and the export value of agricultural, forestry, fishery and food products have been on the rise, and there has been some success in the creation of work. On the other hand, further efforts to solve the overconcentration in Tokyo, and the promotion of immigration and settlement in rural areas and the development of regional revitalization by the activities of diverse people are required. Under the goal of "powering the flow of the new era," "promoting Society 5.0 in the region" and "sustainable community development such as the realization of SDGs for regional revitalization" is specified as new challenges.

In Utsunomiya City, the U Smart Council was selected as a leading model project of the national smart city model projects last May and is working on tourism promotion and smart mobility services in Oya Area. The motivation for this was the creation of an environment in which anyone could travel comfortably through a newly constructed LRT-based transportation network, and the development of Utsunomiya's version of Maas emerges in the future.

In a nationwide survey on the progress of the SDGs conducted by Nikkei Inc. in 2018, Utsunomiya ranked third in the nation after Kyoto and Kitakyushu. It was selected as a national SDGs future city last July. It is worthy of praise that Utsunomiya is quickly responding to the new era.

The brand message, "It is Yukai to live in Utsunomiya," has already been established. The real challenge is whether the spirit of this brand message can realize to increase recognition and attractiveness of Utsunomiya both inside and outside the

city, rather than just verballity. In other words, a city that is truly friendly to people and the environment will continue as a city that can be proud for the next 100 years, and it requires that all citizens work together. What is of extreme importance is the "hospitality mind" and the "considerate heart," and how to nurture them among Utsunomiya citizens. Utsunomiya City is developing a campaign that aims to be the best hospitality town in Japan, but it is hard to say that its efforts are still sufficient. Changing a city to where people want to visit again and live, it is not enough to provide mere facilities and events, and the welcoming citizens must have a spirit of hospitality. Hospitality is at the heart of compassion for others, and if it spreads among the citizens, it could genuinely turn Utsunomiya into a Yukai city to live.

## References

- Koike, H. (2014) "Utsunomiya's City Brand Strategy," Utsunomiya Kyowa University Review, Vol. 15, pp. 1-17.
- National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2018) "Regional Population Projections for Japan: 2015-2045" .
- Brand Research Institute, Inc. (2009, 2019) "Regional Brand Survey."
- Utsunomiya City (2019) "Utsunomiya City Tourism Trend Survey Report."
- Nikkei Glocal (2009) "Survey on Sustainability of Nationwide Cities," No. 91,92
- Nikkei DUAL (2018) "2018 Ranking of Cities that is easy to work and raise children."
- Shirai, Y. (2010) "Study on Utsunomiya Citizenship," Municipal Research Utsunomiya, Vol. 6, pp.35-44.
- Haneishi, M. (2007) "Study on City Brands and City Sales," Municipal Research Utsunomiya, Vol. 3, pp.39-48.
- Utsunomiya City (2008) "Fifth Utsunomiya City Comprehensive Plan."
- Utsunomiya City (2009) "Utsunomiya Brand Strategy Guidelines."
- Sanchanta, M. (2011) "City in Japan Tries New Tack on Old Problem," Wall Street Journal.
- Hiroya, M. (2014) "Local Disappearance," Chuko Shinsho.
- Cabinet Office (2014) "City, People, and Work Creation: Long-term Vision Reference Materials."
- Cabinet Office (2014) "Survey on intentions of Tokyo residents to move in the future."
- Sotokoto Journal (2014) "Invitation to Start Double Place Life in Utsunomiya," November.

Toyo Keizai Shimpo (2017) "City Data Pack 2017 Edition".

Cabinet Office (2019) "Second Term: City, People, and Work Creation Strategies."

Nikkei Glocal (2019) "Survey on Sustainability of Nationwide Cities" No. 355.

Koike, H. (2020) "Progress of Utsunomiya Brand Strategy," Municipal Research  
Utsunomiya, Vol. 16 (To be published).