Urban Regeneration Strategies of local Metropolitan Cities’ Railway Stations and the Surroundings in Japan

Shin, Yekyeong

1 Assistant Professor, Department of Architectural Engineering, Namseoul University 331-707, Seonghwan-eup, Seobuk-gu, Cheonan-si, Chungcheongnam-do, Korea shyekyeong@gmail.com

Abstract. Recently, in the case of Japan’s metropolis in provinces, the phenomenon of people moving to the suburbs is accelerating, simultaneously leading to an issue of the city decline. Based on such fact, railway station centered urban regeneration is revitalizing by reflecting the city’s original characteristics and the redevelopment of the railway station. This study has the goal of analyzing the techniques and characteristics of urban development, which contains the plan of developing an adjacent railway station along with Japan’s suburb railway station construction. Such analysis is made in order to draw the conclusion of its intended meaning and attributes and to further research on finding an applicable urban development method in the domestic railway station development. The object of this study is among metropolis in provinces, which have been redeveloped recently or are in process of redeveloping such as Hakata station, Kumamoto station, Kagoshima central station, Oita station, Toyama station, and Iwamijawa station.

Keywords: Urban Regeneration, Railway Station & Surroundings, Japan

Introduction

Lately, due to Japan’s constant growth of the suburb resident population and aging population, city decline in local cities is rising as an issue. Accordingly, each local city is planning to actualize urban revitalization through increasing the resident population and the floating population, which is consequently leading to urban regeneration of declined cities. In the case of Japan, after the rail privatization, railway stations are gradually becoming the center of the residents’ living by not only having the function of service and traffic, but also developing commerce facilities with high density.1 Thus, based on the railway system, which is one of the primary transportation systems, urban regeneration is actively in progress among Japan’s local cities. This thesis will analyze the recent urban regeneration solution of Japan’s six local cities along

1 Lee, Yong-Sang, A Study of Function in Japan’s Rail Station after the Rail Privatization, Journal of Asia 14(3), 2011, pp.79-99
with the development of the railway station and the railway area, identify its characteristics and examine implications that can be given to Korea.

Research Method

The core of this research is to find the nature of city revitalization scheme on the basis of understanding characteristics of city spaces by looking at different cases. Methods of this research are as follows.

First, develop databases such as geographical map on a case by case basis information, population, transportation system, and railway usage statistics to analyze characteristics of railway station and environmental characteristics. Second, develop databases on current city revitalization planning scheme including the master plan of urban planning, land use plan, park-and-ride system, floor plan of station development and architectural plan. Then, analyze the impact of urban influence of characteristics for each planning strategies. Finally, draw applicable methods for revitalization of local city around railway station in Korea based on derived measures from above analysis results.

Japan’s Railway Construction and Privatization

Railways in Japan were first constructed in 1872 and at present, annually, there is 86.4 hundred million of the passenger transportation population, 182 enterprises of railway business operators. Furthermore, railway is playing the most crucial role among public transportation means since the use of railway is taking the proportion of 35 percent (England 7 percent, Germany 7 percent, France 11 percent, and United States 1 percent, 2007) among Japan’s whole transportation means. 3

Especially, ever since Japan’s railway privatization in 1987, it has been participating in the railway station’s commercial development while playing the role as a public transportation facility and also creating economic profit. This fact is producing the result of railway stations having not only the function of service, but also other complex function and roles based on the railway business operator’s business administration method in order to increase the operating margin through the creation of the railway’s use demand. Accordingly, stations are simultaneously being railway stations and facilities such as department stores or cultural spaces, which ultimately

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2 Japan Railway seen through Numbers, 2011, p12
3 Korea Railway Technology Institute, The History and Development of Japan’s Railway, Book Gallery, 2005
provide shopping, meeting, culture, and relaxing areas besides the function as a station. This kind of station development is bringing the railway station in the center of living and further connection to the development of the railway surrounding area, which is also being considered to become the base of the regional economy’s revitalization.  

The Analysis of Japan’s Local Metropolitan Cities Railway Area Development Characteristics

Case-by-Case Outline of the Railway Station

Figure 1. Example of the Study Object

The subject of this study is redeveloping railway stations and those will be developed in future in Japan which is integrated with city revitalization planning local cities of Japan. It will involve 6 station influence areas including Toyama St. (JR East), Iwamizawa St. (JR Hokkaido), Kumamoto St. (JR Kyushu), Oita St. (JR Kyushu), Kagoshima Chuo St. (JR Kyushu), Hakata St. (JR Kyushu). These railway stations and areas have been chosen since year 2005 as these stations are considered as successful cases of city revitalization plan.

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4 Yong Sang Lee, Research on the Change of Railway Function After Japan’s Railway Privatization, Asia Research 14(3), 2011
The Characteristics of Japan Region’s Railway station and the Railway Area Development

Active Connection with the Tourist Attractions within the Region

Japan has been increasing profit through Hanshin Railway Corporation in the 1920s by developing the railway track and other business such as real estate development and travel business. Additionally, after the privatization, based on the developing experience, business in amusement park, tourist service, leisure and travel are being developed at the same time as subsidiary enterprises. Furthermore, based on the regional tourist attractions, such as active volcano, hot spring, and castle, including nature and history, active connection with regional resources are being made around the railway station. Especially, one of the means of increasing profit is to sell rail-pass tickets to tourists and expand the number of Shinkansen or regular train passengers.

Construction of Transfer System Central to the Railway Station

Each railway stations plays the role of both the starting and ending point of various transportation means such as taxis, downtown area buses, ferries, subways and trams and connect the town. This connection will make easier transfer and closely link tourist sites between the city and the suburb. In addition, by pulling up the railway track from the ground which is combining the ‘continuous and 3-dimentional construction project’ and the adjacent plaza plan, it has maximized the walking convenience with the adjacent plaza from

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each station’s exit and considered to concentrate the transfer section within the plaza central to the railway station.

The Railway Station’s High Density-Complex Commercialization

Recently, while removing the existing station and developing a new one, railway stations has not only increased the convenience and modernization of the station’s traffic function, but also expanded commercial spaces such as department stores, shopping, food and beverage service, and retail stores, along with cultural, relaxing, and entertaining spaces completed the complex planning within the railway station. Especially, in the case of Kumamoto Station, the Integrated Government Buildings were relocated from the existing city center to the near station area and rearranged the district’s base central to the station, leading to create the environment of railway station centered living as the foundation of each city center’s city revitalization plan. In other words, the district base and living base has been reconstructed near the railway station by concentrating the function of the city within the station building and the railway area with high density.

Conclusion

Through this research, Japan’s urban regeneration being actively in progress in local cities was identified based on the railway station. The urban regeneration solution characteristics planned along with Japan’s recent railway station and railway area development in six local cities are the followings. First, in Japan’s local cities, based on the privatization of railway operator’s business administration method, Transit Oriented Development under the foundation of the railway station is in process of planning. Second, while actively connecting tourism factors within the region with the railway station, by building the transfer system central to the railway station, it is increasing the number of railway passengers, thus creating the effect of the district’s revitalization and increase of floating population. Third, through the development of the railway station and the railway area closely connected to each district’s city center revitalization project, it is identified to be re-developed in a complex and integrated manner.

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