

# Japanese Enterprises in the United Kingdom and the Impact on Regional Economy

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## I. Introduction

At the end of 1989, major Japanese manufacturing enterprises embarked upon a policy of rapid Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the European Union (formerly the European Community), particularly in the U.K. They based their policy on the fact that the United Kingdom offered comparative advantages in relation to other European countries. In the U.K., for example, substantial central and local government grants and subsidies were available for foreign companies who were willing to settle in the so called "assisted areas". In addition, these regions had comparatively cheaper labour costs and relaxed labour regulations for foreign enterprises.

Wales, Scotland and Northern England were areas especially favored by Japanese investors, particularly those from the electronics, automobile, and semiconductor sectors. Japanese investment was welcomed for it would reduce the local unemployment problems existing in these regions. Some British economists call this phenomenon "Japanization". Were there, any problems in FDI by Japanese companies as they contributed to the British regional economy? This paper will focus on future issues and implications relating to Japanese Direct Investment in the United Kingdom.

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## II. Present Situations and Issues of Foreign Direct Investment by Japanese Enterprises in the U.K.

### 1. Causes of rapid Foreign Direct Investment

The heaviest Japanese FDI in Europe was concentrated in the U. K.

According to a JETRO (Japanese Economic Trade Organization) survey, there were 728 Japanese firms operating in Europe in 1993: 206 (28.3%) in the U.K., 121 (16.6%) in France and 106 (14.6%) in Germany. FDI in the United Kingdom by Japanese enterprises grew rapidly after 1985.

Three factors accounted for this rise:

#### (1). Unification of the European Union (EU):

To guard against a “strongholdation” and to avoid trade friction in the U.K. unless Japanese enterprises voluntarily changed their policies, imports of Japanese automobiles would be directly regulated to a more 1.23m cars in a 380m scale market.

#### (2). High yen level after the Plaza Accord:

The 1985 G5 Meeting at the Plaza Hotel in New York brought about dramatic results in the yen value from 265 yen=\$1 in 1985 to 130 yen=\$1 in 1988. Since then, Japanese enterprises have had to cross over this hurdle of the high yen.

#### (3). The unique character of the United Kingdom:

The U.K. economy had a strong attraction for Japanese direct investment:

1) Cheap labour costs: The U.K. has much lower manufacturing labour costs: ¥1339 in 1991 per hour as compared to ¥2125 in Japan.

The high yen has continuously widened since then.

2) A sympathetic political climate for business investment:

The political scene in the U.K. was dominated for eighteen years by the Conservative Party under Thatcherite economic principles.

During this period, the power of labour and labour unions in the work place has weakened. For example, in the early 1980's, only 40% of workers were unionized, representing a decline of 10 million from 1979. Also the minimum wage has been fixed. At the same time, gas, water, electric utilities and so on have been privatized. Japanese enterprises have regarded these policies positively.

3) Flexibility regarding European Union policies:

Business regulations make sometimes difficult for Japanese enterprises to act freely in the market economy. For example, the social chapter compels larger enterprises to allow union participation in management. The U.K. has exercised an option not to accept that chapter. At the same time, it has operated the most generous policy of FDI in the entire EU, even though it has been accused by critics of social dumping.

4) Using English for communication:

This does not mean that the Japanese find it easy to operate in English which in many ways has opposite grammatical structures compared to Japanese. However, the Japanese have been studying English far longer than other foreign languages and so most find it familiar.

**2. Some Issues of Japanese Foreign Direct Investment:**

Without doubt, Foreign Direct Investment of Japanese Enterprises (FDIJE) in the U.K. has been generally successful, but there have been some criticisms:

(1). Low Wages

According to comparative statistics, wages of Japanese enterprises in the U.K. are lower than those of other firms. They also show narrow differentials which is probably a function of different wage systems in these countries. Criticism has been muted, because of the contributions that Japanese enterprises have made, in spite of the fact that they have had no unions and are greatly dependent on subsidies.

(2). Response to EU Regulations

The U.K. has protected Japanese enterprises against EU regulations so far, but it is not clear whether this position can be maintained. On 1997, British Government decided to accept this regulation concerning the part of so called the social chapter which provides for corporate participation with labour unions in many large firms. Honda and some Japanese enterprises have already tried to adjust to new management systems under the EU; as a result, the benefits from FDIJE in the U.K. may be disappearing.

(3). Real Industrial Growth

Overall FDIJE in the U.K. has been successful, particularly in the electronics and automobile industries in peripheral locations, such as Wales, Scotland and Northern England. The new growth industries, like the semiconductor industry, have been located under the same conditions. They have made a strong contribution to reducing unemployment in the U.K. Nevertheless, some problems have remained. For example, Japanese investment has not generated truly indigenous industrial growth. Industrial growth, which includes product, marketing and research development, has practiced at the overseas headquarters. However, headquarters of Japanese enterprises have almost still remained in Japan so far.

### III. The Role of Japanese Enterprises in U.K. Regional Development

#### 1. Some Key Features

##### (1). Background Statistics on Regional Economies

Figure 1, Table 1 show the 1993 GDP per person in the U.K. at \$16, 132, which is almost half of Japanese GDP at \$33,799. The U.K. growth rate is also lower. Needless to say, however, this difference could be reduced in terms of the exchange rate between the pound and the yen in purchasing power parity. Regional GDP (Figure 2) greatly varies. The South East, including Greater London, has the highest GDP in the U.K., with a present share of 35.4% and 116.0 per capita index (UK average = 100) in 1992 (Table 2). At the other end, Northern Ireland has the lowest GDP (Figure 2) with a current 2.3% share while Wales has 81.3 per capita, which has lowered the GDP average. Thus, each regional GDP also shows variations compared with a U.K. average 8.6% in December, 1995. Regional GDP rates vary from Northern Ireland at 12.4%, North at 10.8%, Yorks & Humberside at 9.0%, North West at 8.8%, West Midlands at 8.0%, and South West at 7.6% and East Anglia with 6.5%.

They became factors of the most important key for regional income and employment. That is, both of them demonstrate the weakness of the periphery which has led the U.K. to operate a regional policy ever since 1945.

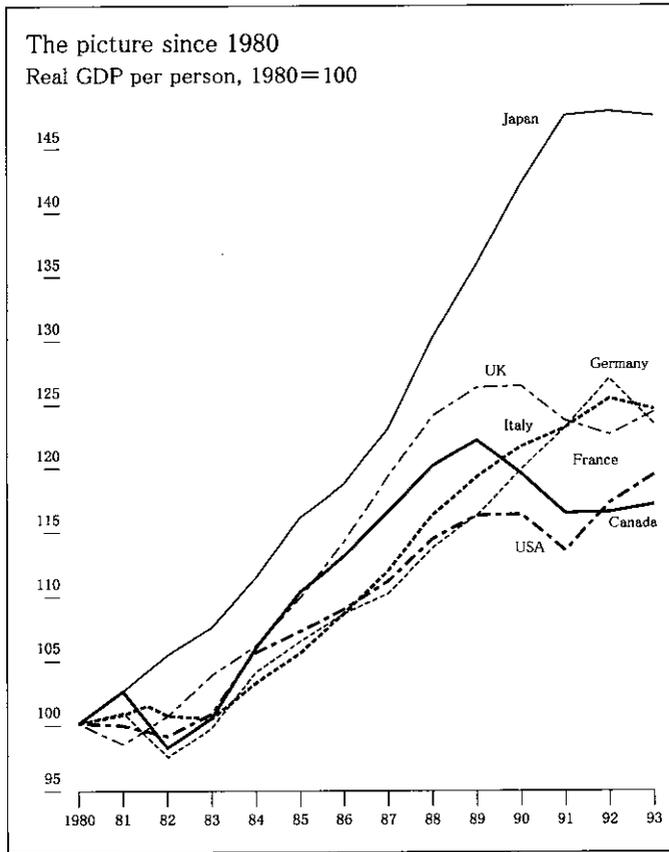
##### (2). High Concentration in London

One of the key characteristics of the U.K. is the high degree of concentration in the South East, including London. Of UK's 58 million people, 15.5% or 6.7 million reside in London, whereas Birmingham, the second largest city has only 0.99 million.

##### 1). The main reasons for this High Concentration

a. High Concentration in London (HCL) of Banks, Securities and

Figure & Table 1

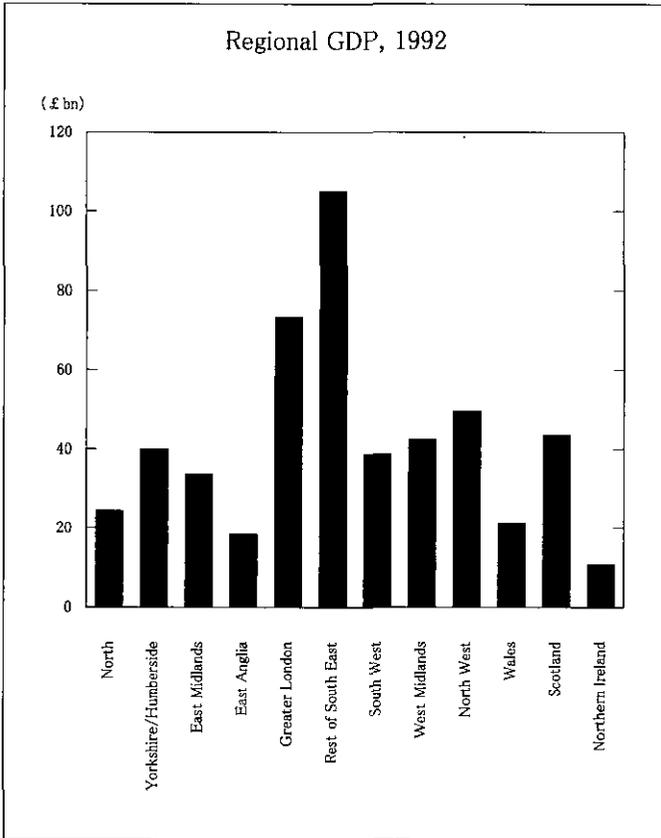


The Economist

GDP per person, current prices ; \$

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1993
Japan	477	1,964	9,069	23,801	33,799
USA	2,849	4,933	11,891	21,866	24,316
France	1,333	2,814	12,335	21,014	21,678
Germany	1,300	3,042	13,154	23,658	21,069
Canada	2,257	3,960	10,934	21,273	18,865
Italy	791	2,003	8,023	18,991	17,406
UK	1,382	2,226	9,540	16,968	16,132

Figure 2



'Economic Trends' No.482 December 1993 © Crown copyright 1993

### Insurance

The headquarters of the four largest banks (National Westminster, Barclay's, Lloyds & Midland) are all located in London. These banks, which have tended toward to the world markets, have been markedly different from ways of Germany or Japan where advanced economies developed later. U.K. monetary power were primarily

Table 2 GDP & GDP per head (UK<sup>1</sup> = 100)

Region	GDP share		GDP per head	
	1982	1992 <sup>2</sup>	1982	1992 <sup>2</sup>
United Kingdom (=100%)	£ 224bn	£ 508bn	£ 3,985	£ 8,766
North	5.2	4.9	94.3	91.4
Yorkshire & Humberside	8.2	8.0	94.0	92.5
East Midlands	6.7	6.7	97.9	95.5
East Anglia	3.3	3.7	98.3	101.8
South East	34.6	35.4	114.5	116.0
Greater London	14.9	14.7	124.3	123.5
Rest of South East	19.7	20.7	108.1	111.2
South West	7.4	7.7	94.9	94.5
West Midlands	8.3	8.4	90.1	92.7
North West	10.9	10.0	95.1	90.4
England	84.6	84.8	101.8	101.6
Wales	4.3	4.3	85.8	85.7
Scotland	9.0	8.7	97.7	98.7
Northern Ireland	2.2	2.3	79.6	81.3

1. Excluding the Continental Shelf

2. Provisional

the first to invest in international infrastructure, such as American and Argentine railways, and this tradition has continued. However, this could be a cause of major problems because banks have not been interested in the U.K. regional development. Even the Bank of Scotland which should have aided Scottish development is guilty of following the same policy. Thus, the gap between the regions and London has progressively grown, as the latter has become a global center.

#### b. The Innovation Gap

There has been a considerable innovation gap between the South

East and other areas. According to H. Armstrong & J. Taylor [Regional economics & policy, 1993], one third of U.K. innovation from 1945-1980 has taken place in the South East. Although it has had only a quarter of total employment, the other regions, such as the North, Scotland, Lard and Wales, have had only a very small share of total innovation. H. Armstrong & J. Taylor points out five main reasons for this:

- i. The strong connection of research and developement (R & D) between private companies, research institutes and government
- ii. The role of London as a magnet for R & D
- iii. The existence of pools of highly skilled workers
- iv. A large-scale market
- v. Ease of generating process innovation

Product innovation has historically occurred in the regions, for example, the steel-industry in Wales or the ship-building industry in Scotland, but these industries have now effectively disappeared.

On the other hand, where human manpower is valued for product development, information technology has been de-emphasized making it harder for innovation to be transferred to local regions, which is different from London which has a concentration of these technologies.

- vi. High Concentration to London of political and administrative governmental authority

The U.K. has separate government offices for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, each represented by a minister. However, these separate offices have not always been effective in countering the power of the Central Government. They have no parliament of their own and the ministers are not directly elected by each region, but appointed from the membership of the national ruling party. So authority remains tightly centralized, in contrast to the U.S.A or Germany. The nominal origin of this centralized power lies in the

Monarchy; however the real political power can be found on the Downing Street and Westminster.

Recently there has been regional movements and reform for more autonomy. Northern Ireland succeeded in creating a separate Assembly (to be effective in summer, 1996), and the other hand Scotland and Wales have been long time in its efforts to establish their own regional parliament. Refrendam in Scotland and Wales in 1997 decided to establish their regional parliament, that as it will implicate to get regional authorities more, might be a little escaped from High Concentration to London.

## 2. Japanese enterprises and U.K. Regional Policies

(1). A questionare survey of the Japanese economy in the U.K. was carried out in 1994. Respondents, such as Appendix, Table (1), page 94, came mainly from the automobile, chemical, and electrical precision engineering industries who were all strong competitors in the UK. By far, the majority of the enterprises were established in the 1980's, Table (2). Capital investment totaling over 100 million reflect the large scale plant and equipment investment of Japanese firms in automobiles, semiconductors, etc, Table (3). However, the turnover figures show a preponderance of small firms of under 10 million, Table (4). Nonetheless there has been a recent 30% increase.

In terms of employment, nearly 60% of the firms had under 500 people, but there is a trend toward increased shares in larger firms, Table (5), page 95. Among these, Japanese workers represent a very small share: 70% are employed in firms with less than 10 employees, Table (6).

(2). The firms are extremely European-oriented:

In Table (7), 70% of the market is within the EU and half of all

firms have over 90% of their market within the EU. Very few were the Japanese market, except for special goods and with the view that it would not lead to the hollowing out of Japanese interests in the future.

In Table (8), local supplies represent 74% of the total input of which half was of Japanese enterprises (JE). Today the use of local supplies has over further.

(3). 52.1% of JE have recorded an average growth rate of over 5% compared to the previous year. This very high growth rate supports the prediction made in the early stages of investment, Table (9).

#### (4). Comments on the Survey Tables (Main Questionnaire)

1) In Table (1), page 96.

Of reasons for FDI in the UK, 31.1% cited the removal of managerial resources, 24.4% avoiding trade conflict, 17.8% cost focus, mainly labour and 8.9% response to customer demand.

From this questionnaire survey, it is conceivable that the factor for investment would not be only accumulative, but also indispensable for FDI in the UK.

At the same time, it also provides theoretical support for FDI in the UK.

2). Table (2), (3), shows the degree of competitiveness exhibited by various organizational orientations of control and autonomy, 20% of respondents indicated a high level of competitiveness and 6.7% of respondents are low level of competitiveness. A break down of organizational orientations revealed almost 30% of corporations welcomed regional control, eg. European zone, business center for globalization in Europe, while 26.7% preferred direct control by the main headquarters in Japan. The remaining 16.7% were given autonomous decision-making powers. In general, there have been

increasing efforts to establish zone enterprises under regional control, which are then tied to the main headquarters. This will promote globalization of enterprises.

The majority or 54.2% have direct connections to headquarters which is further 33.35% who networked. The remaining 12.5% represent loose networking which results in more dependence on local enterprises. On the other hand, in the future, these globalized types will increase to 62.5%, while 20.8% will have direct connections with headquarter of a loose networking type. All of this points to a movement toward greater future globalization.

### 3). On Localization and Transfer of Authority

Only 50% achieved full transfer of authority, while 25% could only report minimal transfers.

4). Location Factors (Table (5), page 97). The most significant findings are that 18.9% received governmental subsidies and 15.1% of the enterprises could avoid trade conflict. However, with 25% indicating not applicable, these figures must be read conservatively. The success of UK investment was much more independent on the final infrastructure, such as governmental subsidies and economic support. In comparison to the U.S., Japanese enterprises had to pay more attention to matters relating to the local environment, such as air and waste pollution. It also appears that the presence of abundant natural resources in the chosen locations is of less concern when compared to investment in underdeveloped countries. On the other hand, this shows that location factors with economic support and subsidies are really supported by local government and local public corporations. Other main factors are fairly diseconomical reasons which affect FDI directly. This might mean that social infrastructure in the U.K. was fairly welcomed for Japanese Enterprises.

5). Length of investment period (Table (1), page 97). Japanese enterprises chose different lengths of stay according to particular economic factors in each region. The table results show that 45.8% generally chose to stay one-two years or less.

6) In Table (2), page 98, 23.5% of the cases, decision-making was carried out by the project team. 20.6% indicated that top management made the decision whereas 14.7% reported decisions by the general staff. Those in top management are the only ones who can implement strategic FDI policy decisions which is characteristic of typical of "bottom up" of Japanese management.

#### 7) Future Directions of Development

Of the total responses, 58.3% reported a desire to expand or enlarge, and 20.8% indicated no change. However, we should recall that these firms are in the early stages of FDI. Furthermore, certain electrical firms plan to reduce FDI after Spring, 1995, but basically FDIJE in the U.K. will continue in the future.

(Table (3))

#### 8) Product Patterns

Of the total number of responses, 41.7% suggested no changes in product expansion, 33.3% had no ideas and 25.0% were rather cautious an even negative, in response to previous answers. This may reflect short term considerations and practical business management.

(Table (4))

#### 9) Japanese Employment

In Table (5), 66.7% answered that they did not plan an increase of Japanese workers.

It is significant that Japanese Enterprises do not like to manage through by their own relations in FDIJE in the UK.

10) Business Priorities

21.6% quoted increased profits, 13.5% quoted enlarging scale, 10.8% quoted regionalization, and 8.1% rise in technology quality, going up skills, and applying to foreign custom.

(Table (6), page 99)

11) Location of JE and Regional Policy in the UK

In Table 8, page 99, 21.6% quoted tax reduction, 13.5% rise subsidy. It shows the importance of strong economic support in relationship to regional policies and also transportation, and pollution policies, which would include promotion and regulation.

British transportation is very efficient, thus, there are no places more than 200kms from the sea in the UK. Thus, conceivably there has been no notable regional differences in transportation infrastructure in the UK.

On the other hand, the infrastructure is somewhat deteriorated and congested at many points.

There have also been considerable of traffic congestion problems.

In contrast, regulation of air, water and noise pollution has expanded, mostly related to pollution controls.

In response, waste material enterprises have established recycling facilities for waste products which may translate to higher costs for JE in the UK and other advanced countries. The other issue for JE concerned union problems which mainly surfaced in early 1980's, but has since vanished in which British policies have been highly effective in labour relations.

#### IV. On the "Japanization" Debate

This section will be concerned with the public issues related to FDIJE in the U.K. Because the UK and Japan have achieved suc-

successful collaboration, JE have become influential members in the economic world, particularly in the regions. For example, Max Munday has written that Japanese investors in Wales have been very conscious of the public perceptions of the activities and of being good corporate citizens. Besides the practical economic impact of JE on UK regional economies, one response to it has been described by economists as the “Japanization Debate (JD).”

According to Oliver & Wilkinson, JD is a story with many subplots and variations, which in the U.S has credited Japanese management with such innovative concepts as “Just In Time (JIT) production”, “Quality Circles (QC)”, “Total Quality Control (TQC)”, Group Working. However, in the UK this has been debated widely. These are pointed out by Oliver & willkinson as including Japanese culture or Japanese value system.

As a result, they have challenged the main assertions of Japanization as follows.

1. There is no such things as “Japanese management.”
2. Describing the process of change as “Japanization” obscures the real process.
3. In fact, the world is more complicated than a theory of Japanization.
4. Nothing has really changed at all by Japanization.
5. Even if change has been occurring indeed, it may not be a shift toward the Japanese model.

Oliver & Wilkinson concur on assertion five. This view does not necessarily follow the views in Marxism or culturism, but it supports good general management theories. Thus, Toyotaism, Fujitsuism, Hondaism are similar to what is known as Fordism in the United States. However, it would be an overgeneralization if only Toyotaism were to be labeled Japanisation. What would be the essence of FDI if it is viewed as Japanisation in the U. K.? FDI could be explained as a theory of corporate internalization where the

transaction costs of the internal corporation would be lower than the costs of foreign market transactions. In that case, any foreign market uncertainties and risks could be avoided as in the case of Japanese enterprises investing in the U. K. The success of JIT depended on the long term trust of particular suppliers, distributors and manufacturers within the Toyota group which yielded lowered costs. Oliver and Willkisonson have used this to justify their “Japanisation in the British Industry,” however, I believe that it is more relevant if seen as a general economic theory. As long as “Japanisation” prospers, there would be few who would debate it’s view.

## V. Conclusion

Research studies on the relationship between the British regional economic policies and Japanese enterprises in the U. K. will need to address the following issues:

- I. Will British regional policies continue to be attractive for Japanese enterprises in the future?
  - a. Will U. K. regional policies maintain “grant or subsidies” for FDI in the assistant areas?
  - b. Can Japanese enterprises depend on a large number of British skilled workers who are comparatively lower wages in the future?
  - c. Will the U. K. Government take measures to adopt EU policies?
- II. How will FDI of Japanese enterprises be affected by changes in the future?
  - a. Can Japanese FDI maintain its present status during periods of severe recession?  
How will FDI be distributed in the U. S. A, Asia and other regions?

- b. Subsidiaries JE in the U. K have been weakened recently by the poor economic situation in the U. K. Can JE in Japan maintain a good relations with their subsidiaries in the future, too?
  - c. Will JE become further decentralized as they move toward globalization, especially with the localization of research and development and marketing in the local U. K. communities?
- III. How long will the warm relationship and cooperation in FDI in the U. K. and Japan be sustained? Will there be obstacles in the future?

Although these possibilities remain unseen at the moment, I believe that the above issues will direct us to the next task.

## Appendix

### A Survey of FDI of Japanese Enterprises in the United Kingdom

1. Method: Questionnaire sent by post
2. Objects: 114 Japan Headquarter 132 Japanese Manufacturing enterprises located in the UK (printed by Tokyo Keizai Shinpo 1994)
3. Record: 24 May 1994-15 June 1994
4. Response: 24. Tabulation of Response 20.5%

\*In relation to above, the second research was carried out in 1997. This was as follows. But results of this research are not contained on this tables.

1. Method and Objects are almost same above (There are included more or less new comers, but they are a few).
2. Record: 15 May 1997-10 June 1997
3. Response: 20

(1) Type of Industry

	Automobile	Chemical	Electronics	Presision
%	25.0	20.8	12.5	12.5
	Semiconductor	Food	Others	Total
%	4.2	4.2	16.7	100.1

\*May not be 100% because of rounding.

(n=24)

(2) Establishment

	before early '70	late '70	early '80	late '80
%	12.5	4.2	16.7	41.7
	'90	N. A.	total	
%	20.8	4.2	100.0	

(n=24)

(3) Capital (:millionpounds)

	under 1	1~3	3~5	5~10	10~100	over 100	N. A.	total
%	16.7	16.7	8.3	12.5	16.7	12.5	16.7	100.1

(n=24)

(4) Salesperyear (:millionpounds)

	under 10	10~30	30~50	50~100	over 100	N. A.	total
%	29.2	12.5	16.7	8.3	25.0	8.3	100.0

(n=24)

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(5) Employees (persons)

	under 500	500~1000	1000~3000	over 3000	N. A.	total
%	58.3	12.5	12.5	4.2	12.5	100.0

(n=24)

(6) Japanese Employees

	under 10	10~30	30~100	over 100	N. A.	total
%	70.8	12.5	4.2	4.2	8.3	100.0

(n=24)

(7) EU Market

	under 30	30~50	50~90	over 90	N. A.	total
%	4.2	8.3	12.5	54.2	20.8	100.0

(n=24)

(8) Local Supply of parts

	under 30	30~50	50~80	over 80	N. A.	total
%	4.2	4.2	16.7	58.3	16.7	100.1

(n=24)

(9) Recent growth rate of Japanese Enterprises in the UK

	minus	stable	5~10	over 10	N. A.	total
%	8.3	12.5	20.8	33.3	25.0	99.9

(n=24)

## 6. Main Questionare

### (1) Investment Factor

	<i>transfer managerial resourses</i>	<i>trade conflict</i>
%	31.1	24.4
	<i>cost problem</i>	<i>avoiding competitiveness</i>
%	17.8	17.8
	<i>user orientation</i>	<i>total</i>
%	8.9	100.0

(n=45)

### (2) Situations of corporation competitiveness and organizational response

	high competitiveness	low competitiveness	regional control
%	20.0	6.7	30.0
	headquarter control	independence from control	total
%	26.7	16.7	100.0

(n=30)

### (3) The degree of globalization

#### 1) present

	rigid network	globalization	loose network	total
%	54.2	33.3	12.5	100.0

(n=24)

#### 2) future

	globalization	rigid network	loose network	total (N. A.=4.2)
%	62.5	20.8	12.5	100.0

(n=24)

(4) Authority of regional Corporation

	in full	a little	N. A.	total
%	50.0	25.0	25.0	100.0

(n=24)

(5) Location Factor

	governmental aids	to avoid trade conflict	distribution to market
%	18.9	15.1	11.3
	low labour cost	good distance to user	communication
%	9.4	9.4	7.5
	labour force	buy out	as subsidiaries
%	5.7	5.7	3.8
	transportation	others	raw materials
%	3.8	3.8	1.9
	urban factors	personal relation	total
%	1.9	1.9	100.0

(n=24)

7. Contents of Location Decision

(1) Term

	under 1 year	1~under 2year	2 year	N. A.	total
%	20.8	25.0	20.8	23.3	99.0

(n=24)

(2) Main decional leader

	project team	top manangement	local personal	general staff
%	23.5	20.6	20.6	14.7
	division staff	UK. government	N. A.	total
%	8.8	2.9	8.8	99.9

(n=34)

(3) Business Prospect

	expansion	maintain	others	N. K.	N. A.	total
%	58.3	20.8	4.2	4.2	12.5	100.0

(n=24)

(4) Product Type

	no change	expansion	N. K.	total
%	41.7	33.3	25.0	100.0

(n=24)

(5) Japanese Employees

	not inclease	incleasing	decleasing	zero	N. A.	total
%	66.7	8.3	4.2	4.2	16.7	100.0

(n=24)

(6) Business Priorities

	increasing profit	enlarging scale	regionalization	application to foreign custom	growing up quality
%	21.6	13.5	10.8	8.1	8.1
	growing up skill	others	N.A.	total	
%	8.1	13.5	16.2	99.9	(=37)

8. Regional Policy

	tax reduction	subsidy	transportation	pollution policies
%	21.6	13.5	10.8	10.8
	communication for communities	communication for workers	training for workforce	union policies
%	8.1	5.4	5.4	5.4
	attendance policy	loan	housing policy	high education
%	4.0	2.7	2.7	2.7
	industrial park	N.A.	total	
%	2.7	8.1	99.9	(n=37)

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