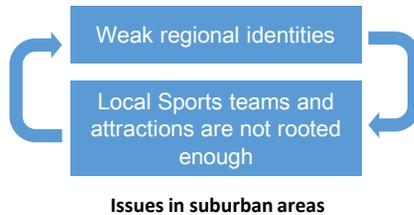




Issues

- **Lack of regional identities in the suburban areas of Japan**, such as Chiba, Saitama. This is also a common concern in many of the developed countries.
- While citizens of such regions “lives” there, their work, shopping or leisure are mostly done in the neighbouring metropolis.
- As they do not focus doing such things in their hometown, the local teams suffers from lack of attendances and loyal fans.



- As seen on the diagram on the left, there’s a bad loop on this issue for suburban cities.
- However, **local sports teams are supported better in provincial cities than in suburbs, and they have stronger regional identities.**
- Some of the efforts to get out of this bad loops are done by local clubs themselves.
- These efforts are local-based, mostly only focusing on the target region

Case Study: Chiba Lotte Marines V.S. English Football Teams

- **Chiba Lotte Marines – NPB (Professional Baseball) Team located in Makuhari, Chiba.**
- Main issues regarding low popularity
 - Nearby clubs in Tokyo taking away fans, **locals doesn’t show much interest**
 - **No area to expand the fan-nation**, unlike Tohoku or Chugoku region
 - **Lack of media coverage**
- We interviewed the board on their efforts, as well as finding issues and discovering effects ourselves.
 - **Marketing** – Setting target areas using **RFM analysis**
 - **Events** – **Teaming up with local government and schools** to promote the club
 - **Social media** – Promote via social media, as mass media rarely covers the club
- We also compared the Marines’ efforts to that of English football league (EFL) teams
- Teams: **Watford, Millwall, Crystal Palace**
 - EFL teams – Rooted better than NPB team (Marines)
 - **Promotes from other aspects rather than the team itself** e.g. Fans, Rivalries, Community Trust
 - **Promotes to inter-regional/international markets**, not only the local market

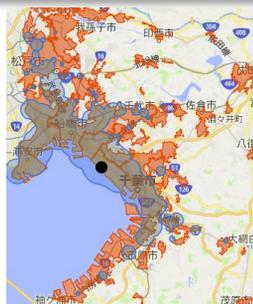


Fig.1 Contour map of Chiba
Red: Populated area of Chiba
Blue: 1-hour range from ZOZO Marine stadium.

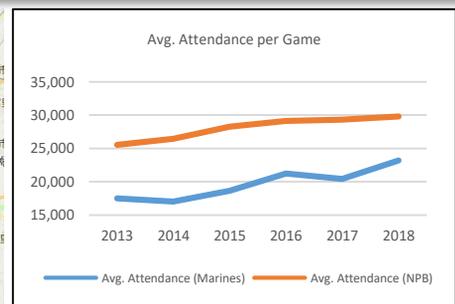


Fig.2 Attendance figures of last 5 years
Data from Yahoo! Sports, Nikkan Sports, NPB



Fig.3 ZOZO Marine Stadium
Marines’ home stadium, located in Makuhari, Chiba.

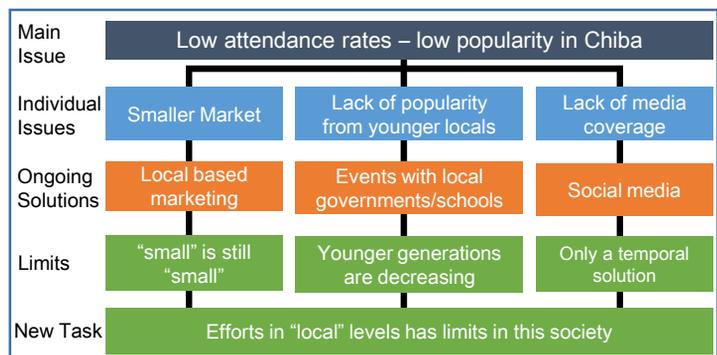


Fig.4 Illustrated diagram of the case study with Marines

Insights

- To a certain extent Chiba Lotte Marines has succeeded in raising attendance in recent years.
- **Suburban-based clubs has limited potential to attract fans compared to bigger cities, or provincial towns.**
- Even if the team gathers younger fan throughout their ongoing solution, **the number of young people are decreasing as a whole**. Therefore, concerns remain for the further future.
- Popularity in **social media tends to be somewhat a transient movement**, if not managed well.

→This could be said for a lot of the suburban cities throughout the world, especially in the developed countries.

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Solutions/Conclusions

- For teams, **clubs can cooperate with teams in similar regions** e.g. Saitama V.S. Chiba series that has taken place before.
- **Local derbies creates stronger bonds for the citizens;** → unity as a region.
- **Promote not only the club itself, but its fanbase and other surrounding aspects**
- Shift to the tourism markets for the visitors, from the current leisure markets for locals, especially in the aging societies
 - **Market fans outside the region and countries**, for Marines, Taiwan or Korea for example.
 - **Loyal fans outside the region creates a stable inbound tourism profits** – Millwall has fans in Russia, for example.

→As local initiatives has limits in this aging and saturated society, it is important to export the viewpoint to overseas and the globalised world.