Northern Light Impacts on Finnish Airport Passenger Volumes

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As one of only eight countries in the world that lie partially within the Arctic Circle, Finland exhibits very interesting air passenger traffic flows. The three airports with the greatest passenger volumes are Helsinki-Vantaa, Oulu, and Rovaniemi. At the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, domestic passenger flows peak during the cold weather months, while international traffic peaks during the summer months. Both domestic and international travel reach their respective apexes during the Spring and Fall months in Oulu. In Rovaniemi, the coldest destination of the three areas, air passenger flows reach their maxima every year in December. To date, there have been very few formal studies of air travel demand in Finland. Because of unique geographic features, location, and tourism patterns, the three principal destination markets in this country merit additional research. Although the Aurora Borealis draws visitors to, and within, this Nordic economy, Northern Light impacts upon air passenger traffic have not been extensively quantified. Accordingly, this study attempts to partially fill that gap in the regional transport economics literature by analyzing passenger flows for the three largest airports in Finland. A combination of economic and non-economic variables are used as regressors, including a solar particle magnetic index. Empirical results confirm positive linkages between Northern Light intensities and air passenger flows to all three airports.