



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Master's Degree Programme in
Languages, Economics and Institutions
of Asia and North Africa

"Language, economics and
institution to Japan"

Final Thesis

Covid-19 and the Japanese Soft Power

How the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures
affected international students' opinion of Japan

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Hirofumi Utsumi

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Toshio Miyake

Graduand

Tamara Zeni

Matriculation Number 866759

Academic Year

2022 / 2023

Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the effects of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures on the Japanese Soft Power, with a focus on how international student's opinion of Japan has changed with the pandemic. After introducing the topic of Soft Power and explaining what the main sources of the Japanese Soft Power are, I will summarize how the Japanese government handled the spread of the Coronavirus, by applying some of the world's strictest border measures, also known as 水際対策 (*Mizugiwataisaku*) and analyze how these measures have affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of international students.

In pursue of this objective, an online survey inquiring how the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected international students' opinion of Japan has been conducted. The target of the survey were international students who studied in Japanese Universities, Japanese language schools, vocational schools, etc., before March 2020 (before the Covid-19 Border Measures), from March 2020 to February 2022 (during the Covid-19 Border Measures), after February 2022 (after the Covid-19 Border Measures), as well as students who studied at Japanese educational institutions across multiple periods and students who were planning to study in Japan, but were unable to due to the Japanese Covid-19 restrictions. By comparing the answers given by these five groups of individuals, the research concludes that students who were not affected by the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures tend to have a better opinion of the country, while students who were affected still show clear signs of dissatisfaction and resentment towards the Japanese Government. However, a significant portion of students who were not affected by the border measures declared that their opinion of Japan has worsened.

Key Words: Soft Power, Japan, Covid-19, International Students, International Exchange

要旨

2020 年から 2022 年にかけて、日本政府は新型コロナウイルスの感染拡大防止の一環として、国際観光客のみならず、在留資格のある外国人留学生などの新規入国も制限した。現在、文部科学省は、水際対策の影響で減少した外国人留学生の受け入れを 2027 年までにコロナ禍前の水準に回復させるという方針を立てている。しかし、2022 年 1 月に日本への入国を希望している外国人留学生を対象に行われた調査の結果からすると、厳しい入国制限により、留学生は精神的に追い込まれ、日本への印象は大幅に悪化してしまったようだ。そこで、本論文では、留学生の日本のイメージの変化を中心に、日本における水際対策が日本のソフト・パワーにどのように影響したのかを探ることを目的とする。

ソフト・パワーというのは、自分の望むことを相手にも望んでもらうようにする力である。ソフト・パワーの特徴は、経済力や軍事力で無理やり従わせるのではなく、自国の文化や価値観によって相手を魅了し、敬服させるということである。日本政府のソフト・パワーに関する取り組みとして、「クールジャパン戦略」が挙げられる。クールジャパンとは、和食、新幹線、漫画とアニメをはじめ、世界から「クール」と捉えられる日本の魅力であり、日本の伝統や文化などを理解し、日本への愛情を持っている外国人を増やすとともに日本のブランド力を高め、日本のソフト・パワーの強化を目指す戦略である。しかし、多くの外国人の入国を拒否することで、日本はソフト・パワーを強化するどころか、驚くべき速さで魅力を失ってしまった。そこで、水際対策の影響で留学生の日本のイメージがどのように変化したかを明らかにするためにアンケート調査を実施し、2022 年 1 月の調査と比較しながらデータを分析した。水際対策の影響を受けた留学生だけでなく、新型コロナウイルスの感染が拡大する前に日本に留学した学生も、水際対策が緩和されてから留学した学生もアンケート調査の対象となり、それぞれのアンケートの回答を比較した。すると、入国制限の影響を受けていない多くの学生の中でも、日本のイメージが低下したという結果が見られた。

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
要旨	2
Chapter 1. What is Soft Power?	4
1.1 The Limits of the Japanese Hard Power and the Resources of its Soft Power	9
Chapter 2. The Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures	22
2.1 How the Japanese travel ban has affected the lives of international students	34
Chapter 3. How the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected international students' opinion of Japan	44
3.1 Overview of the survey's results	45
3.2 Cross Analysis of the Survey's Data	70
Chapter 4. Conclusions	76
Bibliography and online references	81
List of figures	89
List of tables	91
Acknowledgements	92

Chapter 1. What is Soft Power?

The concept of Soft Power was created by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. in 1990, in his book “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”, and then further developed in his 2004 book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.” The definition and implications of the concept have significantly evolved throughout the years, which will be the main focus of the first, introductory chapter of this thesis. However, to fully comprehend the concept of Soft Power, one must first understand what “power” is.

If we search the term “power” in the Oxford English dictionary, we can find definitions such as “the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way”, or “the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.” Though these definitions may be satisfactory in certain contexts, political scientists and experts have long debated and tried to come up with a more rigorous definition of this notion. Robert Gilpin (1981), who was an American political scientist, as well as a Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, defines power as “the military, economic, and technological capabilities of states.” In his book, “War and Change in World Politics”, he also adds that “the number and variety of definitions of power should be an embarrassment to political scientists”,¹ and numerous other scholars in the field of international relations have also voiced their discontent with the current state of knowledge on the subject of power.

Giulio M. Gallarotti (2011), explains that the Realist vision of power, which gravitates towards a hard concept of power, is a very prevalent one among scholars.² Prominent Realist scholars include John Mearsheimer (2001), according to whom, power is founded on the material, tangible assets that a state possesses, which ultimately constitute a country's “military” power.³ Kenneth Waltz (1979), on the other hand, claims that power is derived by “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence”.⁴ Outside of the Realist vision of power, one of the most well-received and generally accepted definitions is the one formulated by the American political scientist Robert A. Dahl (1957), who explains that the concept of “power” can be summarized as the ability of A to get B to do what they otherwise would not do. In which “A” denotes the actor who is influencing, while “B”, on the other hand, is the one being influenced. To Dahl, having power is essentially influencing others’ behavior, especially in a way that they might not have chosen to do on their own.⁵

¹ Gilpin, Robert, “War and Change in World Politics”, New York: Cambridge University Press (1981): p. 13

² Gallarotti, Giulio M., “Soft Power: What it is, why it’s important, and the conditions under which it can be effectively used”, Division II Faculty Publications, Paper 57 (2011): p. 6

³ Mearsheimer, John J., “The tragedy of Great Power Politics”, New York, Norton (2001): p. 55

⁴ Waltz, Kenneth, “Theory of International Politics”, Reading, Addison Wesley (1979): p. 113-131

⁵ Dahl, Robert A., “The Concept of Power”, Behavioral Science (1957): p. 201

In the book “Soft Power, The Means to Success in World Politics” (2004), Nye introduced the concept of Soft Power by quoting Niccolò Machiavelli’s “Il Principe”, stating that, while in 16th century’s Italy, princes were advised to be feared rather than loved, nowadays it is best to be feared and loved. More specifically, here is Nye’s definition of power:

*“Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants. But there are several ways to affect the behavior of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want.”*⁶

It appears that his definition is inspired by Dahl’s, however, Nye makes a distinction in how others are being influenced, which is, whether they are being coerced or attracted, and this is very the belief that first created the distinction between Hard Power and Soft Power. According to Nye, Hard Power is the power of resources, like a large population, military, and territory, as well as the presence of a strong economy and natural resources. Hard Power is tangible and measurable and therefore, predictable. Consequently, Hard Power becomes an easier guide to follow when it comes to political leaders’ decision-making process. However, despite it being more concrete and predictable, having powerful resources does not always ensure that the desired outcomes will become a reality, as every situation needs to be analyzed according to its own particular context. From Nye’s point of view, the foundation of Hard Power are also incentives and threats, however, there are situations when you may achieve your goals without having to rely on threats or inducements. For example, a country can achieve its desired objectives in international politics without using any Hard Power resources if other nations are fascinated by its culture and traditions, or if they admire its values, they are going to willingly follow and emulate it, seeking to obtain its level of prosperity. Hence, Soft Power is getting others to want your desired outcome. It is attracting, co-opting, and shaping people’s preferences rather than coercing them. Nye summarizes his vision of Power with the following table:⁷

⁶ Nye, Joseph S. Jr., “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”, New York, Public Affairs (2004): p. 1-2

⁷ Ibid, p.3-6

Figure 1: Power (Source: Nye, 2004)

	Hard	Soft
Spectrum of Behaviors	Command ← ● coercion ● inducement ●	● agenda setting ● ● attraction ● → Co-opt
Most Likely Resources	force payments sanctions bribes	institutions values culture policies

As already mentioned above, Power is the ability to influence others' behavior to get the desired results. This definition applies to both Hard Power and Soft Power, however, the distinction between the two lies in the type of resources available (tangible or intangible) what kind of behavior is taken on in order to influence others (which lie on the spectrum between command or co-opt). Hard Power is often associated with the behavior of commanding, while Soft Power is associated with co-opting, but it is not always the case. For example, a country may be attracted by another country's military strength, in which case, a country's Hard Power would lead to co-opting rather than commanding. We can also see that Nye classifies force, payments, sanctions, and bribes as likely sources of Hard Power, while likely sources of Soft Power include culture, values, and policies. Culture can have multiple definitions and interpretations, but it is defined by Nye as "the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society" and it is an essential source of Soft Power because in can create appeal to others. Culture can also be classified as either popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment like, for example, movies, television, music, fashion, sports, etc., and is centered around common people's preferences, and high culture, which consists of art, literature, and even theatre, and tends to appeal to elites. Another source of Soft Power is a country's political values, especially if said country upholds them both at home and abroad. Nye also adds that some analysts believe Soft Power to be simple "popular cultural power", as they erroneously equate Soft Power conduct with the cultural assets that occasionally support it, but the behavior of attraction caused by Soft Power is not to be confused with a country's cultural resources. Also, when a country demonstrates it has universal interests and values and promotes them through its policies, it enhances the likelihood of achieving its desired goals due to the relationships of attraction it creates. In fact, local and foreign policies are an excellent source of Soft Power and can have both short-term and long-term effects. While political leaders have little to no direct impact on culture, they need to be careful when it comes to policies, as the country's Soft Power may be undermined by domestic or

foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, insensitive to the public's opinions, or solely centered on national interests with little regard of the international community.⁸

Giulio M. Gallarotti further categorizes Soft Power sources in Internal and Domestic sources (see *Figure 2*). International sources cover topics such as accountability and compliance with international laws, commitments and treaties, the renouncement of domestic interests in favor of a more international perspective, cohesion, multilateral exchange, and the adherence to liberal economic policies. Countries aiming to expand their Soft Power must show respect towards international laws, and institutions. A country's commitment to international norms, alliances, and its inclination to be opposed to violence radiates trustworthiness, legitimacy, which are the focal point of international sources of Soft Power. On the other hand, if a country is too focused on its own domestic interests without considering other countries' opinions, it increases the likelihood that they will be averse and unwilling to engage and cooperate with it. Gallarotti affirms that it is therefore necessary to sacrifice such interests in the short-term and contribute to multilateral cooperation. Consistent presence in international engagements, open economic policies and fair play will ensure considerable respect, admiration, and exponential growth Soft Power.⁹ Domestic Sources of Soft Power, on the other hand, are broadly classified under Culture and Political Institutions. Domestic Sources are equally significant as International Sources. In fact, Nye claims that "how [a nation] behaves at home can enhance its image and perceived legitimacy, and that in turn can help advance its foreign policy objectives".¹⁰ To achieve this, however, political institutions must convey democracy, liberalism, constitutionalism, and pluralism. Also, the political system needs to operate in a way that allows for the empowerment of society and the reduction of political and social gaps. From a cultural perspective, social cohesiveness, a wide range of opportunities for everyone, a high standard of living, tolerance, and independence are among the factors that contribute to Soft Power.¹¹

⁸ Nye, Joseph S. Jr., "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics", New York, Public Affairs (2004): p. 11-15

⁹ Gallarotti, Giulio M., "Soft Power: What it is, why it's important, and the conditions under which it can be effectively used", Division II Faculty Publications, Paper 57 (2011): p. 19-21

¹⁰ Nye, Joseph S. Jr., "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics", New York, Public Affairs (2004): p. 56-57

¹¹ Gallarotti, Giulio M., "Soft Power: What it is, why it's important, and the conditions under which it can be effectively used", Division II Faculty Publications, Paper 57 (2011): p. 22-23

Figure 2: Foundations of Soft Power (Source: Gallarotti, 2011)

International Sources	Domestic Sources
<p>Respect for international laws, norms, and institutions</p> <p>Fundamental reliance on multilateralism, and disposition against excessive unilateralism</p> <p>Respect international treaties and alliance commitments</p> <p>Willingness to sacrifice short-run national interests in order to contribute toward the collective good</p> <p>Liberal foreign economic policies</p>	<p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Pronounced Social Cohesion --Elevated Quality of Life --Freedom --Sufficient Opportunities --Tolerance --Alluring Lifestyle <p>Political Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Democracy --Constitutionalism --Liberalism/Pluralism --A Well Functioning of Government <p style="text-align: center;">Bureaucracy</p>

Throughout the years, there has been much more literature on the concept written by international relations scholars, some came up with their own theories by reinterpreting the original concept, while others criticized Nye’s ideas and statements. In 2021, Nye published an article on the Journal of Political Power to elaborate the evolution that the idea of Soft Power had undergone during the previous three decades and to address the criticism that his previous works received. In the article, Nye mentions that, when he first developed the concept, he intended it to be an academic notion meant to address the gap in how researchers of international relations perceived power, but it progressively grew to become something that political leaders could use in a practical manner. In fact, despite having developed the concept of Soft Power with regard to the United States of America’s power, it soon gained popularity in various geographical areas, including Europe and Japan. Nye suggests that, as the EU formed, an increasing number of European leaders started referring to their country’s Soft Power, possibly to compensate for a lack of Hard Power resources, like the military. However, when it comes to economic power, by creating regulations and standards for their markets, the EU gained significant hard economic

resources, while the attractiveness created by EU's multilateral cooperation enhanced its Soft Power. The most prominent criticism on Nye's concept of Soft Power is that it is "just cultural power" and that it shouldn't belong with other sources of power like military and economic power, as its resources are, for the most part, unmeasurable and intangible. To battle this criticism, using practical examples such as the EU one mentioned above, Nye explains that Soft Power is only one of the elements of power and that it is not usually sufficient on its own. He also defines the ability to properly combine Hard and Soft Power into an effective strategy as "Smart Power". Some problems may be solved solely by resorting to the reputation and respect generated by the country's attractiveness and its international and domestic image. However, Soft Power is by no means the solution to every issue, and, when facing a hostile situation, a country might need to resort to its Hard Power resources to avoid or to put an end to a conflict. The ability to weigh and evaluate what power to use in a given situation can therefore be the key to a country's success.¹²

1.1 The Limits of the Japanese Hard Power and the Resources of its Soft Power

As Nye often mentioned, Soft Power is often limited and heavily conditioned by a country's specific context, therefore, in purpose of the objective of this research, we will now take a look at the specific case of the Japanese Soft Power resources and how they are being used. In fact, according to David Baldwin (1979), the context determines if power resources result in power behavior, which means that whether having these resources truly results in positive outcomes relies on the situation and the agent's ability to translate said resources into desired behaviors.¹³

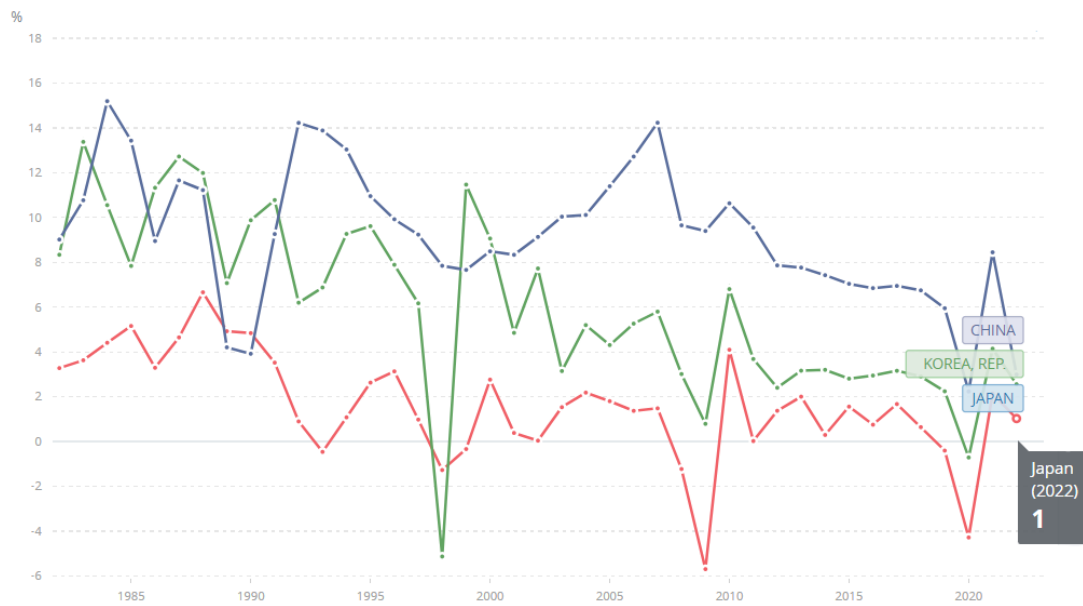
American scholar Craig Hayden dedicated the third chapter of his book "The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts" (2011) to analyzing the Japanese Soft Power, providing numerous insights on how Japan uses its Soft Power resources to promote its cultural diplomacy and achieve its goals in regards of its foreign policy in an increasingly globalized society. He explains that, given the limitations on Japan's ability to wield other forms of power and the intense struggle for regional influence from South Korea and China, Soft Power is not just a viable strategic option for Japan; it is also, in many ways, a necessity. In fact, ever since the burst of the economic bubble, for an extended period Japan has been suffering from economic stagnation, making it more challenging for Japan to use economic leverage, especially in light of the rapid growth of China and, in more recent years, South Korea's economy.¹⁴ By taking a look at *Figure 3*, we will be able to compare the annual percentage of the GDP growth of the above mentioned countries.

¹² Nye, Joseph S., "Soft power: the evolution of a concept", *Journal of Political Power* (2021): p. 1-14

¹³ Baldwin, David, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31, 2 (1979): p. 94.

¹⁴ Hayden, Craig, "The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts", Lanham, Lexington Books, (2011) p. 84-138.

Figure 3: GDP Growth (annual %), Japan, South Korea, China¹⁵



Although Japan is the world’s third largest economy, with the United States of America being the largest, China being the second, while South Korea is the tenth largest economy, data shows that Japan’s GDP grew only 1% in 2022, while South Korea and China’s growth were of 2.6% and 3% respectively. Japan was also the country whose GDP annual growth rate suffered the most in 2020, with a staggering -4.3%, whilst South Korea registered a -0.7%, and China a 2.2% growth.¹⁶ This does not diminish the fact that Japan has a strong and stable economy, but it surely is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration while evaluating the Hard Power resources of the country and the power dynamics in East Asia.

Another fundamental element that hinders Japan’s Hard Power lies in its constitution. The current Constitution was promulgated after World War II, during the Allied occupation of Japan. It officially came in act on May 3rd, 1947, and one of its distinguishing and most debated characteristics lies in its embrace of pacifism. This feature is stated in Article 9. of the Constitution, which reads as follows:

RENUNCIATION OF WAR

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state

¹⁵ World Bank. “GDP Growth (annual %), Japan, South Korea, China” The World Bank Group. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2022&locations=JP-KR-CN&start=1982&view=chart>

¹⁶ Ibid.

*will not be recognized.*¹⁷

In the early stages of the American occupation (1945-1952), General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), to make sure that Japan could no longer become a threat to world peace, determined that the abolition of war as a fundamental principle was to be included in the revision of the Japanese Constitution, revoking the right to form and maintain a Japanese Army, Air Force, or Navy, de facto ceding the right of belligerency.¹⁸ Although Japan has formally renounced war, the government interprets the Constitution in a way that allows the country to have Self Defense Forces (SDF), also known as *Jieitai* (自衛隊). The Japanese Self Defense Forces include a Ground SDF, an Air SDF, and a Maritime SDF, and although they are not officially referred to as Military forces, many argue that the SDF is in fact a military organization and that its operations could be deemed unconstitutional.¹⁹ The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has been the governing party for the majority of the time following World War II, has raised the possibility of amending the Constitution multiple times, which was met with major criticism, especially by the Japanese people. The Japanese Constitution is considered to be one of the world's hardest constitutions to amend, as any revision must gain the approval of at least two-thirds of the legislators from both houses of the Diet and it must also be approved with an affirmative vote in a national referendum.²⁰ Nonetheless, this does not exclude the possibility of a future revision of Article 9., especially considering the current tensions caused by North Korea, which could potentially pose threats to Japan's national security. The *Jieitai* can however participate in UN Peacekeeping Operations and has done so on multiple occasions, starting from 1989, when 27 electoral observers were sent to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia.²¹ As previously mentioned, one of the Hard Power resources pointed out by Nye is *force*, thus, it is easy to understand that Japanese Hard Power is severely limited by a constitution that effectively prevents the use and force, which consequently makes soft strategies necessary in order to gain and maintain relevance, both in Asia and internationally. Hayden also states that the pacifist Constitution of Japan restricts the use of military force and, in fact, reduces the potential Hard Power behavior of "command" that Nye identified. Although, on one hand, the Japanese Hard Power is affected negatively by its

¹⁷ The Constitution of Japan and Criminal Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 9, "RENUNCIATION OF WAR", Ministry of Justice, 1947,

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

¹⁸ Gordon, Andrew, "A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present", Oxford University Press, (2014): 104

¹⁹ Umeda, Sayuri, "Japan: Interpretations of Article 9 of the Constitution", The Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Directorate (2015): p. 3-12

²⁰ The Constitution of Japan and Criminal Statutes, Chapter 9, Article 96, "AMENDMENTS", Ministry of Justice, 1947,

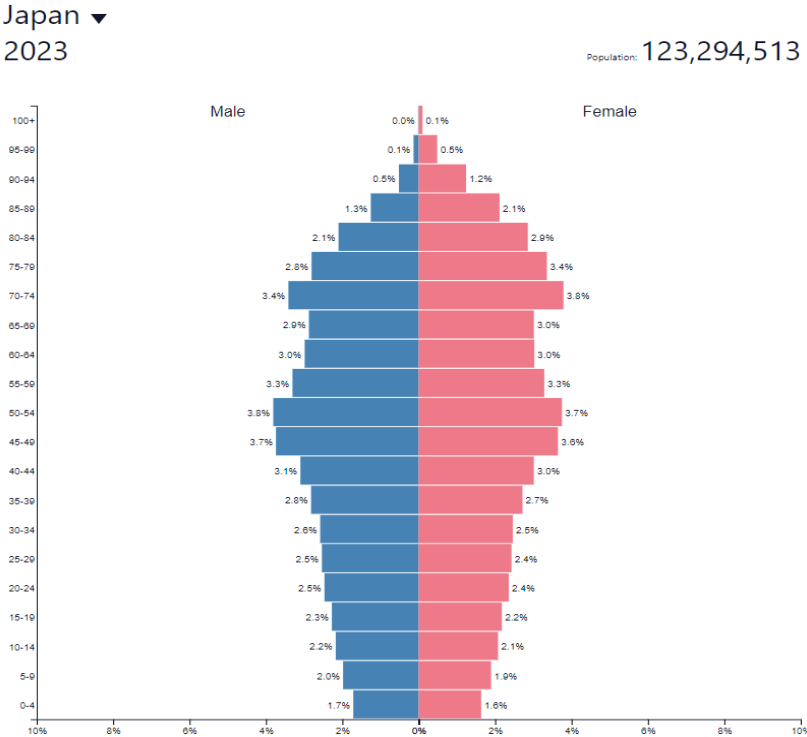
https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

²¹ "Japan's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations", Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pko/pamph2005.html>

Constitution, on the other hand, Article 9. also works symbolically to dispel the idea of an aggressive Japan, allowing for Japan to be perceived as “softer”.²²

One last notable aspect that could diminish Japan’s Hard Power is its population. Population is often mentioned when listing the resources of a country’s Hard Power, and, in 2023, Japan is the 12th country in the world by population, but one of the greatest social issues that the country currently faces is its shrinking population. After World War II, the total population of Japan continued to increase, exceeding 100 million for the first time in 1967, but peaked at 128.08 million in 2008, after which it began to decline. Estimates for 2023 state that the current population of Japan is around 123 million, which means that the population has shrunk by 5 million people in the last 15 years.²³ The pressure on policy makers to address the demographic crisis is further increased by new data that projects that Japan's population will drop to 87 million in 2070. ²⁴ Let us now take a look at Japan’s Population Pyramid of 2023.

Figure 4: Population Pyramid of Japan (2023)²⁵



²² Hayden, Craig, “The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts”, Lanham, Lexington Books, (2011): p. 84-138.
²³ World Bank. “Population, total - Japan” The World Bank Group. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?contextual=default&end=2022&locations=JP&start=1960&view=chart>.
²⁴ “Japan's shrinking population defies efforts to stave off decline”, Nikkei Asia, 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Society/Japan-s-shrinking-population-defies-efforts-to-stave-off-decline>.
²⁵ Population Pyramid of Japan, 2023, <https://www.populationpyramid.net/japan/2023/>.

A population pyramid is a visual representation of the distribution of a specific population by gender and age groups. If the diagram has a wide base, it means that a sizable fraction of the population is in the youngest age group (aged from 0 to 14 years old). In this case, the diagram takes a pyramidal shape, which indicates that the population is increasing, and it also signifies that the country's fertility rate is high and above the level of replacement of the population. On the contrary, if a country's population is declining, its base will become narrower and narrower, while the middle and top section will become relatively wide, creating an increasingly unsustainable system in terms of healthcare and pension spending. In fiscal 2020, for the first time, healthcare spending reached 8% of Japan's GDP. Workers' health insurance rates continue to climb, mainly as a result of the increasing needs of those who are 75 years old and above. By looking at *Figure 4*, it is easy to notice the disparity between older and younger generations. This imbalance is also having an impact on Japan's pension system, as an increasingly heavy burden on the shoulders of those of working age may deter them from having children, further worsening the nation's demographic challenges.²⁶ In addition to this, Japan boasts one of the highest life expectancy rates of the planet, with women's life expectancy being 87.09 years in 2022, the highest in the world, while men's figure ranked fourth, at 81.05 years. Thus, not only are Japanese people having fewer and fewer children, but the elderly are enjoying progressively longer lives. Data shows that Japanese life expectancy has actually fallen in both 2021 and 2022 for both genders, however, this break in the trend is vastly due to Covid-19 related deaths and, according to a Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare official, although the future state of infection is unknown, the long-term trend of rising life expectancy is anticipated to continue.²⁷ The government hopes to maintain a population of 100 million people throughout the 2060s, which will need a total fertility rate of 1.8 births per woman on average, but Japan's fertility rate as of 2023 is of 1.3, which is much lower than the 2.1 children per woman required to maintain the replacement rate of the population, and while the government has been boosting support for childcare and other initiatives designed to benefit larger families, without a practical strategy to face the above-mentioned structural issues of the Japanese demography, it is expected that Japan's population will continue to decrease.²⁸ In early 2023, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stated that the low birthrate puts Japan "on the brink of being unable to maintain social functions".²⁹ Thus, to counter its demographic crisis, Japan needs to attract foreign talent, in order for them to contribute to the Japanese

²⁶ "Japan's shrinking population defies efforts to stave off decline", Nikkei Asia, (2023), <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Society/Japan-s-shrinking-population-defies-efforts-to-stave-off-decline>.

²⁷ Sekine, Shinichi, "Japanese life expectancy falls for the 2nd year in a row", Asahi Shimbun, 2023, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14968992>.

²⁸ "Japan's shrinking population defies efforts to stave off decline", Nikkei Asia, 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Society/Japan-s-shrinking-population-defies-efforts-to-stave-off-decline>,

²⁹ Iwamoto, Kentaro. "Kishida says Japan on 'brink' of social dysfunction as births fall", 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Kishida-says-Japan-on-brink-of-social-dysfunction-as-births-fall>

workforce, and not exclusively short-term. Attracting foreigners and having them stay long-term, though, might be a difficult task, as Japan has long been averse to immigration. Moreover, adding the fact that Japan's English language proficiency is among the lowest, not only in Asia, but even among developed nations (according to an EF survey of 2022, Japan ranked 80th out of 111 countries)³⁰, and the fact that the Japanese language is not commonly spoken abroad, makes it exceptionally challenging to attract international talent.

Japan does however attract millions of tourists, as well as numerous foreign students and workers each year, therefore, let us now investigate what exactly enables Japan to do so by analyzing the Japanese Soft Power and its sources. The concept of Soft Power began to gradually penetrate Japan beginning in the 1990s, when Nye first coined and popularized the term. However, it was through the work of journalist Douglas McGray, who, in 2002, published an article entitled "Japan's Gross National Cool" in the magazine *Foreign Policy*, that the concept first captured the attention of Japanese policy makers. In his article McGray provides a detailed yet concise overview of the events that led to the rise of Japanese Soft Power. In the 1980s, McGray explains, "Japan pioneered a new kind of superpower": its powerful economy was driven by Japanese management methods of their businesses, which had left its competitors, especially those in the United States, stunned and completely powerless. In the early 1990s, however, when the economic bubble burst, began a period of economic regression known as the "Lost Decade" (1991-2001). In 2001, although high life expectancy, high wages, and a high standard of living were still in Japan's favor, according to McGray, the country had lost the momentum that distinguished it from others. The yen and the gross domestic product had plummeted as a result of the recession. The Nikkei index hit a record low and the unemployment rate was skyrocketing. However, despite its economic and political setbacks, globally, Japan's cultural influence, whether it be of its food, entertainment industry, fashion, or art, had only increased.³¹

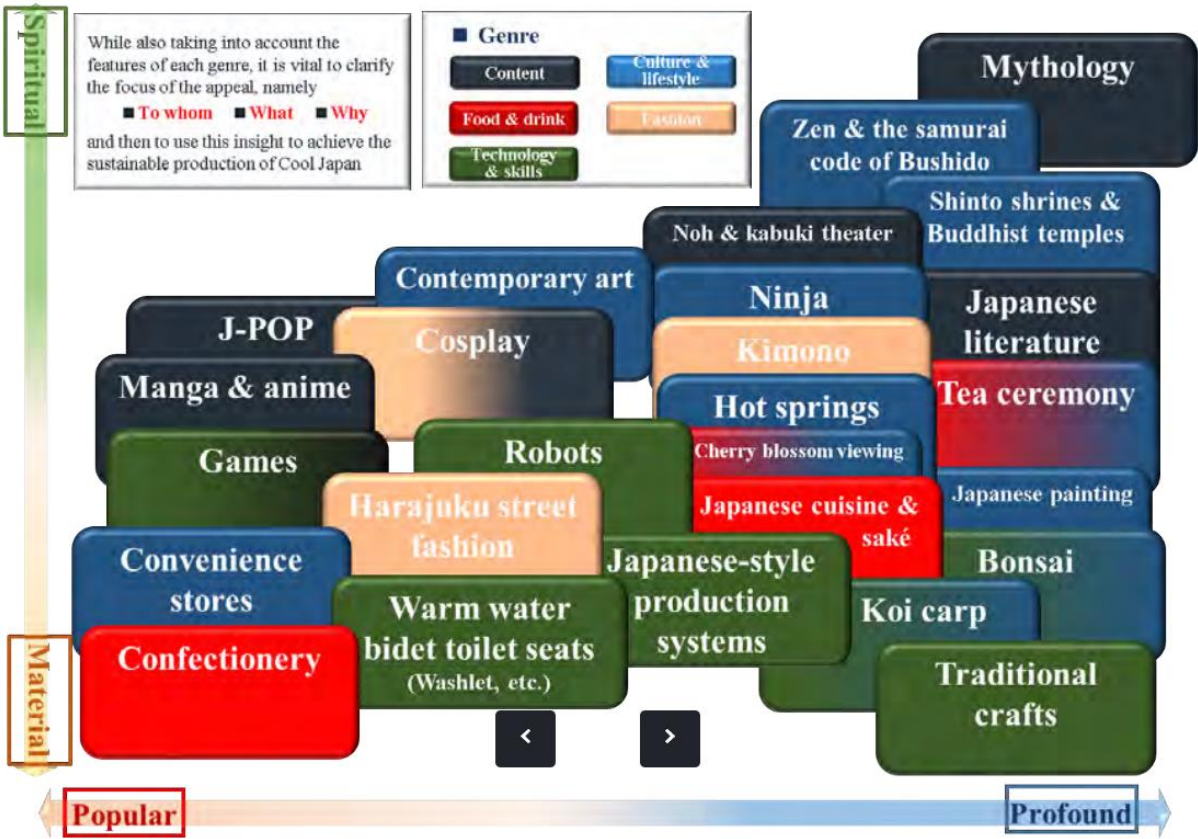
McGray's article also inspired The Cabinet Office to implement "Cool Japan" as the name for its Soft Power strategy. The term "Cool Japan" describes the features that make Japan appear "cool" (or that have the potential to do so) to the rest of the world. It englobes not only elements that Japanese people would consider attractive, such as anime and manga, Japanese pop culture, Japanese cuisine, or famous tourist destinations, but also things Japanese citizens would typically consider "normal" and not particularly appealing, such as rice fields, back-alley streetscapes and even bento boxes and Japanese toilets. Cool Japan related efforts began in 2010 with initiatives taken by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. In cooperation with the relevant agencies and ministries, the most recent Cool Japan strategy was formulated in 2019, which coincides with the beginning of the new Japanese era "Reiwa".

³⁰ EF English Proficiency Index, "The world's largest ranking of countries and regions by English skills", (2022), <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/>.

³¹ McGray, Douglas, "Japan's Gross National Cool", *Foreign Policy*, (2002): p. 1-8

The new strategy has been formulated by surveying foreign nationals with extensive knowledge of Japan about what they believed to be attractive about the country. Japan offers a wide variety of attractions, ranging from the “popular” (pop culture) to the “profound” (high culture), and from the “material” to the “spiritual”. These act as gateways for foreigners to cultivate their interest in Japan, essentially becoming some of the country’s greatest assets. By exchanging opinions with the so-called “Japan fans”, The Cabinet Office was able to assess the changes in Cool Japan’s surrounding environment, and therefore was able to draft the following diagram using the parameters mentioned above as the horizontal and vertical axis.

Figure 5: Examples of Japan's Attractions³²



Five different categories of attractions were identified: Content (e.g., Manga & anime, Japanese literature, Noh & Kabuki theater, etc.); Food & Drinks (e.g., Japanese cuisine and Sake); Technology and Skills (e.g., Games, Robots, Traditional crafts, etc.); Culture & Lifestyle (e.g., Shinto Shrines & Buddhist temples, *Onsen*, and even Convenient stores); and, lastly, Fashion (e.g., Kimono and Harajuku Street fashion). Some of the attractions mentioned in the diagram were rightfully placed not in a single category, but in two, like for example, Cosplay belonging both to the “Content” and “Fashion” genre,

³² “Cool Japan Strategy”, The Cabinet Office, Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, (2019): p. 13, https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/about/about.html

while the Tea Ceremony and *Hanami* (Cherry blossom viewing) belong to the “Food & Drinks” and “Culture & Lifestyle” category. Obviously, these are not the only Soft Power resources of Japan, but this diagram creates a good overview of some of the main attractive features and allows for a good starting point in their promotion. In fact, the goal of the Cool Japan strategy is ultimately to build worldwide empathy as a foundation for strengthening Japan’s Soft Power and creating opportunities for its wider spread, and to do so, there is the need to create a framework where all the relevant agents (agencies, ministries, local governments, etc.,) can cooperate and function to achieve this goal. The 2019 strategy also mentions that the 2019 Rugby World Cup, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the World Expo 2025 in Osaka are just a few of the significant international events that Japan plans to host until 2025. In the last few years, Japan has been and will keep being in the spotlight of international attention, which is why the Strategy mentions that there is the need to create an environment where diversity is embraced and where the people who are fascinated by Japan can actively contribute to Cool Japan initiatives. In fact, the so-called “Japan fans”, which are described as individuals who “have a profound knowledge of Japan and awareness of its issues” and especially who “feel affection toward Japan and voluntarily spread the word about it” are deemed as full-fledged “Collaborative Partners” within the Cool Japan Strategy. As a matter of fact, to ensure the sustainability of the Strategy, it is essential to “incorporate global perspectives” by collaborating with foreign nationals who have profound interest in Japan in order to identify new resources and gateways and having Japan fans spread the word about them overseas.³³

While analyzing the country's efforts to achieve this goal, and thus the programs adopted to make itself visible to and appreciated by the largest number of people, it is worth introducing the concept of *public diplomacy*, which is the key to understanding the various measures taken by the Japanese government. Although the definition of public diplomacy has evolved throughout the years, it is often defined as the transparent approach by which a sovereign state interacts with audiences abroad, with the aim to inform and persuade them in order to advance its foreign policy objectives and promote the national interest.³⁴ Another possible definition is the one of the U.S. Department of State’s Dictionary of International Relations Terms, which states that:

*“Public Diplomacy refers to government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television.”*³⁵

³³ “Cool Japan Strategy”, The Cabinet Office, Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, (2019): p. 1- 41, https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/about/about.html

³⁴ “Defining Public Diplomacy”, Center on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California, 2022, <https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-is-pd#:~:text=In%20the%20past%20few%20decades,advancing%20its%20foreign%20policy%20goals.>

³⁵ “Definition of Public Diplomacy”, U.S. Department of State, Dictionary of International Relations Terms, (1987): p. 85

An effective public diplomacy is thus critical to achieving foreign policy objectives. A vehicle through which a country can engage in public diplomacy are Japanese embassy officials abroad, who represent the government in their host country, and whose primary role is to maintain relations with host government officials. Other vehicles, such as movies, television, music, sports, video games and other social and cultural activities, which are key elements by which foreign nationals become attracted to a particular country, allow for interaction among various nongovernmental elements of a society. The tools just listed make it possible not only to shape the image of itself that a country wishes to spread abroad, but also to analyze and understand the ways in which that image is interpreted by different societies, making public diplomacy a fundamental source of Soft Power.

According to Craig Hayden (2011), Japanese public diplomacy after World War II is mainly conveyed through the following three vehicles. The first concerns development aid and investment, operated by the Office of Public Development Assistance or ODA (*Seifu kaihatsu enjō*, 政府開発援). The second activity concerns cultural diplomacy programs, that is, all those activities such as language courses or cultural exchange programs organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) or by other semi-governmental or even nongovernmental organizations. Lastly, the third public diplomacy activity recognized by Hayden consists of the work of the international broadcasting service directed by the *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai* (日本放送協会), better known as NHK.³⁶ Of these three, cultural diplomacy programs, consisting of cultural exchanges, language courses and specific programs aimed at introducing a growing audience to Japan's language, culture and strengths is the most closely related activity to the main topic of this research, and therefore will be analyzed in-depth here forth.

One of the most well-known and successful cultural diplomacy programs initiated by the Japanese government would be the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, which was established in 1987 in an effort to promote greater understanding between the people of Japan and of other countries. Around 2,000 new JET participants are recruited annually to work in Japan as either Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), who assist foreign language education in elementary, junior, and senior high schools; as Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs), who organize and coordinate a variety of international exchange activities in local communities; or as Sports Exchange Advisors (SEAs), who encourage international exchange through sports.³⁷ By assisting in the development of international exchange and enhancing foreign language education, the JET Program (which, in 2023, can boast a staggering 5,831 participants from 50 different countries) seeks to encourage internationalization in Japan's local communities.³⁸ In the second chapter of the book "Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States", David L. McConnell analyzes the JET Program as a

³⁶ Hayden, Craig, "The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts", Lanham, Lexington Books, (2011) p. 84-138.

³⁷ "Aspiring JETs", The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, 2023, <https://jetprogramme.org/en/aspiring/>

³⁸ "History", The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, 2023, <https://jetprogramme.org/en/history/>.

means of cultural diplomacy. This initiative came to be in a period when Japan was desperately trying to eradicate its image of an “insular” country, so the government decided to essentially import the diversity it needed to introduce foreigners to its citizens. Withstanding substantial costs, the Japanese government began recruiting language teaching assistants from the USA and other countries that have English as its official language, such as the UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc., in order to welcome global perspectives by encouraging intercultural and bilingual engagements. After almost 40 years since its initiation, the JET Program continues to be an essential component of the government’s top-down initiatives to foster widespread internationalization and cultural diplomacy. The JET Program has undoubtedly attracted a great deal of young foreign nationals, who then return to their home countries enriched by the experience and with deep, newly acquired knowledge of Japan. Japanese government officials often proclaim the JET Program to be one of the country’s most successful cultural diplomacy initiatives, and it appears that many Japanese policy makers yearn for former JET Program participants to eventually rise to influential positions in their home countries and continue to have close ties to Japan. Although it may be improbable for a JET alumnus to become the President or Prime Minister of their nation, data from the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) show that a significant portion of former participants maintained “Japan-related” jobs in their post-JET careers, which include diplomatic positions at Japanese consulates, Japanese language teachers, jobs at Japanese companies’ overseas branches, or even recruiters for the JET Program itself. However, for many other former JET teaching assistants, their relationship with Japan is not maintained through their job, but through the meaningful human relationships and memories that they made during their time in the country. Although the prospect of them becoming Soft Power vehicles is much lower compared to the alumni who occupy Japan-related positions, they also have a subtle yet significant impact on the Japanese Soft Power simply by sharing their experience in Japan with their loved ones and acquaintances.³⁹

Another type of cultural diplomacy program would be international educational exchange programs, which, in Nye's (2004) opinion, are a great way to strengthen a country’s Soft Power and represent one the foundations of public diplomacy, as their purpose is ultimately to “develop lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences and access to media channels”, which consequently enhances a nation's ability to project a favorable image of itself and increases the odds of achieving its goals.⁴⁰ These programs include only a great variety of exchange programs initiated by governmental, semi-governmental or even nongovernmental institutions. An example of such initiative taken by the government would be the Japanese Government *Monbukagakusho* (MEXT) Scholarship, initiatives organized by semi-governmental organizations

³⁹ McConnell, David L., “Japan’s Image Problem and the Soft Power Solution The JET Program as Cultural Diplomacy”, *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., (2008): p. 18-31

⁴⁰ Nye, Joseph S. Jr., “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”, New York, Public Affairs (2004): p. 109

include exchange programs of public universities, while an example of a cultural diplomacy activity of nongovernmental institutions would be study abroad programs of Japanese Language Schools and private universities' exchange programs.

Since 1954, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) has sponsored foreign students and researchers and aspiring teachers to pursue their academic goals at Japanese institutions. Candidates can start the application process at either Japanese embassies, consulates, or even directly at the hosting institution they are interested in.⁴¹ There are 6 categories of MEXT Scholarship recipients, which are Research Students (Graduate Students), Undergraduate Students, Teacher Training Students, Japanese Studies Students, College of Technology Students, and Special Training Students. Each category has its own criteria of eligibility, which usually include restrictions in regard to the applicant's age and how many years of education they have completed. On the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's website, it is stated that the MEXT Scholarship aims to contribute to the development of Japan and the world by accepting academically outstanding international students, thereby contributing to the promotion of international exchange and friendship, to the development of human resources abroad, as well as to the advancement of the internationalization of Japanese universities and of Japanese society at large.⁴² Although the MEXT Scholarship is a great resource of Soft Power, its recipients represent a small fraction of the total number of international students in Japan. In fact, according to the data shown in a 2022 survey conducted by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), they only accounted for 3.8% (8,924 out of 231,146), while students sponsored by foreign governments represent 1.3% (3,008), and the vast majority were privately financed students (which, in this survey, refers to all students who did not receive a grant from a governmental institution, such as foreign exchange students and Japanese language schools' students), who accounted for almost 95% of the total number of international students in Japan in 2022. The survey also indicates that around 79% of foreign students were studying at higher education institutions, while the remaining 21% were enrolled in Japanese language institutions.⁴³ The following graph shows how the number of international students in Japan has shifted throughout the years and to what type of educational institution they belonged.

⁴¹

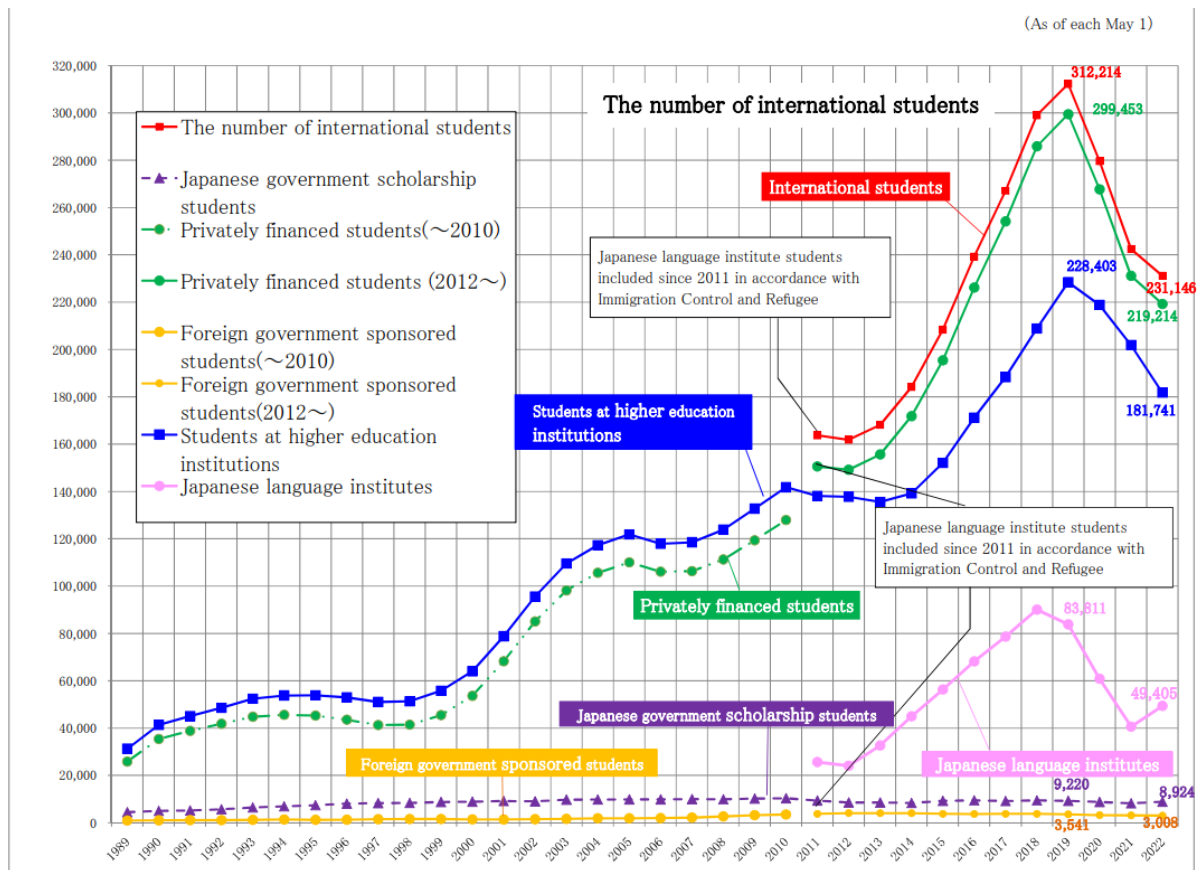
文部科学省、『国費外国人留学生の手続きについて』、2013、https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/ryugaku/boshu/1330944.htm

⁴²

文部科学省、『国費外国人留学生制度について』、2013、https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/ryugaku/06032818.htm

⁴³ “Result of International Student Survey in Japan, 2022”, Japan Student Services Organization, (2023): p.4

Figure 6: Trends in Number of International Students by Source of Funds (As of each May 1)⁴⁴



Even at first glance, it is easy to notice the sudden break in the trend after the year 2019, which was caused by the outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). It is also worth mentioning that the data of this survey also include the students who, due to the immigration restriction caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, had not entered the country by May 1st of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Apparently, international students have been added to this data as long as they had successfully concluded the enrollment procedures at their institutions and had obtained a Certificate of Eligibility (a document needed to request a Japanese visa for stays that exceed 3 months).⁴⁵ However, it is safe to assume that many international students who had already obtained their Certificate of Eligibility were not actually able to enter Japan due to the country's strict border measures to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Thus, the real number of international students in Japan from 2020 to 2022 might have plummeted even lower than this data shows.

This first chapter provides an overview of the concept of Soft Power, as well as of the limits of the Japanese Hard Power and the main resources of its Soft Power. As previously mentioned, international

⁴⁴ “Result of International Student Survey in Japan, 2022”, Japan Student Services Organization, (2023): p.3

⁴⁵ “Result of International Student Survey in Japan, 2022”, Japan Student Services Organization, (2023): p.2

educational exchange programs are a great way to strengthen a country's Soft Power. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures had on the Japanese Soft Power, focusing on how international student's opinion of Japan has changed because of the pandemic. Therefore, in the next chapters, I will analyze the border measures taken by the Japanese Government from the year 2020 to 2022, also known as *Mizugiwataisaku*, and the impact they had on international students.

Chapter 2. The Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures

“*Sakoku*” (鎖国) is the term usually used to describe the period in Japanese history between 1603 and 1867. It can be loosely translated with “closed country” and it indicates a policy of national isolation from foreign powers, who, with a few exceptions, were banned from having any sort of commercial or diplomatic tie with Japan.⁴⁶ It is a term that is usually only found in Japanese history textbooks, however, in recent times, many media outlets and newspapers such as the NHK, the *Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Asahi Shimbun* used the term to describe the period when Japan kept its borders closed to the majority of foreigners almost uninterruptedly during the Coronavirus pandemic (2020-2022), calling it “Corona Sakoku” (コロナ鎖国)⁴⁷ or “Sakoku of the Reiwa Era” (令和の鎖国)⁴⁸.

The spread of the Coronavirus in Japan started on January 14, when a pneumonia patient with a history of stay in Wuhan, a city in People's Republic of China's Hubei Province where the virus was first detected, was reported to the competent public health center by a medical institution in Kanagawa Prefecture. The patient was then tested at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases and, on January 15, a positive result for newly-identified Coronavirus was obtained, becoming the first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Japan.⁴⁹ On January 23, the Chinese government, due to the massive spread of the virus throughout China, imposed a blockade on many cities in Hubei Province and, as a result of the blockade, many foreign nationals, including Japanese people, were unable to go back to their home countries. From January 29 to February 17, the Japanese government organized 5 charter flights in order to evacuate a total of 829 Japanese residents out of the Hubei province.⁵⁰ On January 31, when another 2 Covid-19 cases had been confirmed in Japan, at a meeting of the government's task force to prevent the spread of the virus, Prime Minister Abe instructed that all measures to be taken, including thorough border measures, be implemented without hesitation. He also added that Japan needs to strengthen its immigration control in light of the fact that there are people who have tested positive for the virus even though they displayed no symptoms. The next day, on February 1, it was determined that all foreigner

⁴⁶ Munez, E., "Sakoku." Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sakoku>.

⁴⁷ 池田伸壹、『「コロナ鎖国」は何だったのか 訪日望む人を足止め、透けた日本社会』、朝日新聞、2022、<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASQ4634DMQ44UPQJ017.html>

⁴⁸ 『「令和の鎖国」で失ったもの “開国”にみいだす希望』、毎日新聞、2022、<https://mainichi.jp/articles/20221105/k00/00m/030/301000c>

⁴⁹

厚生労働省、『新型コロナウイルスに関連した肺炎の患者の発生について（1例目）』、2020、https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/newpage_08906.html

⁵⁰ Hayakawa, Kayoko et al., “SARS-CoV-2 infection among returnees on charter flights to Japan from Hubei, China: a report from National Center for Global Health and Medicine”, *Global Health and Medicine*, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7731067/>

nationals who had stayed in China's Hubei Province within 14 days prior to the application for landing were going to be denied entry into the country. This decision was also communicated on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, in the newly created page called "Border enforcement measures to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)". During the following months, Japan kept updating its measures, which, throughout the first wave of Covid-19 (January-May 2020), were differentiated into 5 different sections:

1. Denial of permission to entry; 2. Quarantine measures; 3. Suspension of visa validity; 4. Suspension of visa exemption measures; and 5. Restrictions on airport/ports for arrival.

The first section, as the name suggests, dictated that foreigners who had stayed in any of the listed countries or regions within 14 days prior to the application for landing would be denied entry into Japan unless they proved to have "exceptional circumstances". The second section settled that all nationals arriving from the mentioned countries would have to quarantine for 14 days at a location designated by the quarantine station chief and refrain from using public transportation. With the third section, Japan suspended the validity of certain visa categories, while the fourth interrupted the visa exemption measures between Japan and the listed countries. Lastly, the fifth section limited which airport airplanes arriving from abroad could land in and requested ships transporting passengers to stop operating.⁵¹

As mentioned above, the Japanese government started by denying entry to foreign nationals who had stayed in China's Hubei province, however, the border measures got progressively stricter as the spread of the Coronavirus widened. On February 13, the denial of entry was extended to China's Zhejiang province, while from February 25 to May 27, a total of 111 countries were added to the list, starting with the Republic of Korea and Iran, as well as Italy, Switzerland, and Iceland. In the meantime, numerous countries were added to section 2. of the border measures, starting with applying a mandatory quarantine to all nationals arriving from China and South Korea on March 9, to having every country and region on the planet added to the list by April 3, 2020.⁵² When it comes to section 3., the validity of single and multiple-entry visas issued by March 8th, 2020 by Japanese embassies or consulates in China (including Hong Kong and Macau) and Republic of Korea was suspended, as well as the validity of visas issued by March 20th, 2020 in all European countries, Egypt and Iran. Visas issued by March 27th, 2020, by Japanese embassies and consulates of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Bahrain, Israel, Qatar and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were later also suspended, while visas issued by April 2 in most other countries were later also added to the list.

⁵¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Border enforcement measures to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)", 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page4e_001053.html. Note: a Web Archive was used to examine previous version of the webpage.

⁵² Shimizu K, Negita M., "Lessons Learned from Japan's Response to the First Wave of COVID-19: A Content Analysis", Healthcare (Basel), 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7711542/>

Additionally, with the measures settled in section 4., by suspending visa exemption agreements with more and more countries, Japan essentially put a stop to foreign tourism. In regards of section 5., the government restricted arrival airports for passenger flights from China or Republic of Korea to Narita International Airport and Kansai International Airport, suspended passenger transportation by vessels departing from China or Republic of Korea, and, in order to guarantee the proper execution of quarantine measures, airlines were requested to reduce the number of passengers to Japan by taking steps such lowering the number of flights. In fact, the U.S. Embassy in Japan reported that as of April 3, 2020, only 11% of the pre-COVID-19 flying capacity between Japan and the United States was still operating.⁵³

In the above paragraph, we analyzed the Japanese government's external response to Covid-19 throughout the first wave of the virus (January-May 2020). During this time, Japan's internal policies to contain the spread of the disease started to become known as "the Japanese model". While most other countries applied strict social distancing rules and large-scale testing, beginning in late February, Japan implemented a cluster-based approach, in which efforts were focused on locating and identifying clusters and determining their common traits to eliminate their root causes, which frequently turned out to be crowded, social spaces like pubs, karaoke rooms, gyms and other similar locations. Both the national and local governments of Japan lack the authority to enforce lockdowns, so they resorted to recommending people to refrain from going out, requested businesses to implement remote work, and asked pubs and restaurants to shorten business hours or limit service to takeout. Businesses and people generally complied, creating a "quasi-lockdown effect" without actually implementing a lockdown. Getting people to wear masks was also not nearly as difficult as in Western countries, as it was already part of most people's habits and masks were significantly more available. On April 7, Japan did however declare a COVID-19 state of emergency in 7 major prefectures, which gradually got extended to the entire country on April 16, but with the implementation of the above-mentioned measures, the healthcare system was able to cope with the spread of the Coronavirus. Unlike many other countries, where contact tracing, isolating, and testing became the priority, Japan never prioritized testing and only performed 2.2 tests for every 1000 individuals on average, while South Korea did 16, and the USA did 43. Nevertheless, due to the declining number of new cases, the government began to withdraw the state of emergency in 39 prefectures on May 14, and by May 25 (when only 21 new cases had been recorded), the state of emergency was withdrawn from the entire country. The strict border measures, however, remained fully in force.⁵⁴

The Japanese government first discussed relaxing its border measures in mid-June of 2020, when it was decided to create a policy to allow businesspeople from countries and regions where the Covid-19

⁵³ U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Japan, "Health Alert – U.S. Embassy Tokyo", 2020, <https://jp.usembassy.gov/health-alert-us-embassy-tokyo-april3-2020/>

⁵⁴ Normile, Dennis, "Japan ends its COVID-19 state of emergency - The country's COVID-19 countermeasures relied on voluntary social distancing and limited testing", Science.org, 2020, <https://www.science.org/content/article/japan-ends-its-covid-19-state-emergency>

spread was stabilized to enter Japan. This measure was referred to as the “Business Track” of the relaxation of the border measures, and to have their entry requests approved, applicants would need to:

1. Provide a negative PCR test before arrival;
2. Be tested at the time of entry into Japan;
3. Submit an “activity plan” describing the activities during their stay;
4. Have their location data be stored on their smartphone (or other device) for the entirety of the two-week quarantine period; and
5. Refrain from using public transportation.

In order for this policy to come into effect, Japan started discussing with Vietnam about the possibility of reciprocally allowing businesspeople in each other’s countries, which Vietnam agreed to.⁵⁵ Although this marks the first effort by the Japanese government to ease of foreigners’ entry restrictions since the outbreak of the disease, it is also worth mentioning that, throughout Summer 2020, while many countries were significantly relaxing their border control policies, Japan kept updating its “Denial of permission to entry” list, reaching 129 countries in June, 146 countries in July, and 159 countries in August.⁵⁶ Although we can see a clear tendency of further closure of the borders, in late July, the government announced that, on August 5, it would start the “Residence Track” of the relaxation of the border measures, allowing foreign nationals with status of residence of “Permanent Resident”, “Spouse or Child of Japanese National”, “Spouse or Child of Permanent Resident” or “Long-Term Resident” (which includes such foreign students and workers) who had temporarily returned to their home countries, to re-enter Japan. This only applied to people that had left Japan before their home countries had been added to the “Denial of permission to entry” list or that received a re-entry permission and that would comply with Japan’s quarantine and PCR testing procedures. At this time, with the exception of short-term business visa requests from a handful of countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore, Japan was still not accepting new visa requests.⁵⁷ Later that month, on August 22, the government announced that it would begin accepting new visa requests in order to allow government-sponsored international students (MEXT Scholarship students) to enter the country. *Asahi Shimbun* reported that a government official revealed that allowing new foreign students into the country was intended as the “second phase” of the “Residence Track” relaxation of the border measures (with the first phase being allowing the re-entry of foreign residents), and that they would begin with government-sponsored students, as they received recommendations by Japanese embassies or universities and their tuition and living expenses

⁵⁵ 『日本とベトナム 相互に入国制限緩和で合意 感染拡大以降で初』、NHKニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20200619/k10012476581000.html>

⁵⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Border enforcement measures to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)”, 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page4e_001053.html. Note: a Web Archive was used to examine previous version of the webpage.

⁵⁷ 『外国人留学生ら 検査など条件に再入国認める 来月5日から 政府』、NHKニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20200730/k10012540231000.html>

are paid by the Japanese government. The article also mentioned that, according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, approximately 35,000 new international students entered Japan in the fall of 2018 and about 54,000 in the spring of 2019, while in 2020 only a very limited number of students managed to enter the country before the border measures were implemented, and the vast majority of them were still unable to come to Japan, as government-sponsored students only make up a small percentage of international students.⁵⁸

At the very end of August, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that he would step down from the position, mentioning health issues as the main reason. His successor, Yoshihide Suga, who took office on September 20, had received 377 out of the 534 votes in the Liberal Democratic Party internal election held in order to determine the new head of the Party and, upon election, he announced that his main objectives as Prime Minister would be to deal with the urgent needs caused by Covid and to revitalize the Japanese economy, which, because of the pandemic, had recorded a severe slump.⁵⁹ On October 1, less than two weeks after Suga became Prime Minister, it was announced that the entry restrictions would be eased to further boost the Japanese economy, allowing new arrivals to Japan from all over the world. This measure included all foreign nationals who could obtain a medium to long-term residency status, which means that foreign tourists were excluded from this relaxation policy. Additionally, since many were concerned that easing the entry restrictions would lead to a spike in Covid-19 cases in Japan, the government decided to limit the number of people per day who could enter Japan, and to only allow people whose hosting institution (companies, schools, etc.) could overlook their 14-day quarantine period and other measures to limit the spread of the disease. On the other hand, the government promised to expand the PCR inspection system at airports in order to gradually increase the number of people that could enter Japan each day.⁶⁰ On October 30, the government decided to exempt Japanese nationals and foreigners residing in Japan who have made short-term business trips abroad from the 14-day quarantine period after re-entry under certain conditions, which include submitting an “activity plan” and not using public transportation for 14 days after re-entry.⁶¹

Thanks to these measures, many foreign students, workers, businesspeople, etc., finally became able to enter Japan, however, the situation was still very far from what it used to be like before the pandemic. According to data from the Immigration Services Agency (ISA, 出入国在留管理庁), in 2019, over 2.2

⁵⁸ 二階堂友紀、『外国人留学生の入国、月内にも緩和 再入国は全面解禁へ』、朝日新聞、2020、<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASN8P7648N8PUTFK008.html>

⁵⁹ “Yoshihide Suga picked by Japan's governing party to succeed Shinzo Abe”, BBC News, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54070281>

⁶⁰ 『入国制限措置 10月1日から全世界対象に緩和 限定的な範囲で』、NHKニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201001/k10012642691000.html>

⁶¹ 『海外に短期出張日本人など 再入国時14日間の待機免除決定 政府』、NHKニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201030/k10012689181000.html>

million foreign nationals entered Japan in September, 2.4 million in October, and 2.3 million in November. On the other hand, in 2020, around 18,000 people were able to enter the country in September, 35,000 in October, and 66,000 in November.⁶² Although the numbers are nowhere near the values of the previous year, thanks to the government's efforts to gradually reopen the borders, we can see a clear growing trend in the number of foreign entries during the Fall of 2020. However, this positive trend soon came to an end due to a new, highly infectious Covid-19 variant detected in December 2020.

The new variant was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the authorities of the United Kingdom on December 14, 2020, and by December 21, the new variant had already been detected in 6 different countries. Therefore, the government decided to stop allowing new entries from 5 out of the 6 countries where the new variant had spread (the United Kingdom, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Denmark), while Japanese nationals and foreign with status of residence would still be allowed into Japan if they submitted a negative test result, quarantined upon arrival, etc.⁶³ Just a few days later, the government announced the suspension of all non-Japanese entries into Japan from the United Kingdom, beginning from December 24.⁶⁴ As the new variant kept spreading in more and more countries, and a few cases had already been confirmed in Japan, starting from December 28, Japan decided to temporarily stop all new foreign entries from all countries and regions, but it continued accepting businesspeople from the countries and regions that agreed to the "Business Track". Japanese nationals and foreign residents who left Japan for business trips also lost their quarantine exemption benefits.⁶⁵ These measures were initially only meant to be temporary and last until late January, but, due to the new year's holidays, Japan kept reaching record high numbers of newly infected people, many with severe symptoms,⁶⁶ and thus, on January 8, the government decided to re-declare the Covid-19 state of emergency in Tokyo and a few other major prefectures, while many others were in a "quasi state of emergency".⁶⁷ The government also announced that they had agreed to contracts with three U.S. and European pharmaceutical companies, as they deemed the Covid vaccine to be "a decisive factor in combating the disease", and that they would hasten the establishment of a system to begin vaccinations, prioritizing medical professionals, as early as mid-late February, about two months later than in the

⁶² 『出入国管理統計表』、出入国在留管理庁、2023、
https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/policies/statistics/toukei_ichiran_nyukan.html

⁶³ 『変異したコロナウイルス確認された国からの水際対策は』、NHKニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201222/k10012777301000.html>

⁶⁴ 『日本政府 24日以降 日本人以外イギリスからの入国停止へ』、NHKニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201222/k10012778761000.html>

⁶⁵ 『全世界からの外国人の新規入国 28日から1月末まで停止 政府』、NHKニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201226/k10012785521000.html>

⁶⁶ 『東京都 新型コロナ 2447人感染確認 2日連続で過去最多更新』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210107/k10012801261000.html>

⁶⁷ 『緊急事態宣言期間は1月8日から2月7日までで最終調整』、NHKニュース、2021、
https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/special/coronavirus/emergency_2021/detail/detail_17.html

EU.⁶⁸ On January 14, it was also decided to strengthen the entry restrictions even further by halting the “Business Track” as well, leaving only Japanese nationals, foreigners with residence status and foreign individuals with “exceptional circumstances” being able to enter the country.⁶⁹ Exceptional circumstances included spouses and children of Japanese nationals, permanent residents or long-term residents and individuals who could obtain the “Medical Services” (医療) residence status, or who obtained the “Education” or “Professor” (教育・教師) residence status if their hosting institution had vacancies it needed to fill.⁷⁰

Even after the second state of emergency had been lifted, on March 21, 2021, the government decided to continue denying all new foreign entries of the “Residence Track” and not to resume the “Business Track” either.⁷¹ On April 12 priority vaccinations began for the elderly (65 years and above), who make up around 30% of the Japanese population.⁷² On April 24, the number of newly infected people in Tokyo was the highest since the second state of emergency had been lifted, while the number of infections in Osaka exceeded 1,000 for the fifth consecutive day, and the number of newly infected people in Hyogo and Kyoto reached record highs. Therefore, starting from April 25, the state of emergency was declared for the third time in these four prefectures, while the quasi state of emergency was declared in 5 other prefectures. In addition, the government kept urging people to avoid unnecessary outings and kept people to work from home, with the goal of reducing the number of in-person workers by 70%.⁷³ The next day, it was announced that another new variant had been discovered in India, where the number of new cases of Coronavirus has been exceeding 300,000 every day. Since 21 cases of this extremely infectious variant, which will be later called “Delta” variant, had been confirmed in Japan, the government decided to strengthen its border measures for returnees from three countries, India and neighboring Pakistan and Nepal, having them quarantine for 14 days, 6 out of which had to be spent at

⁶⁸ 『新型コロナワクチン 来月下旬にも接種開始へ体制整備急ぐ』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210102/k10012793561000.html>

⁶⁹ 『ビジネス関係者らの往来停止
原則外国人の入国を全面的に制限』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201226/k10012785521000.html>

⁷⁰

『新型コロナウイルス感染症の拡大防止に係る上陸拒否について』、出入国在留管理庁、2021、<http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/930006078.pdf>

⁷¹ 『政府 緊急事態宣言解除後も入国制限措置
当分の間継続』、NHKニュース、2021、https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/special/coronavirus/emergency_2021/detail/detail_111.html

⁷² 『高齢者へのワクチン優先接種始まる
初日は約120か所予定』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210412/k10012969491000.html>

⁷³ 『新型コロナ きょうから3回目の“緊急事態宣言”
4都府県が対象』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210425/k10012996281000.html>

facility designated by the government. Returnees would also need to be tested every three days, and only if the result was negative, they would be able to continue their quarantine period at home. Those from the other 35 countries and regions where the new variant had spread, would instead need to quarantine at government facilities for only 3 days.⁷⁴ The news of the new variant hit Japan right before one of its major holidays, Golden Week (usually around 29 April - 5 May), and although people were being urged to refrain from traveling across prefectures, data revealed that, during the holidays, the number of people who left large cities such as Tokyo and Osaka increased by approximately 40% to 50% compared to the previous year, and in particular, the number of people headed for Okinawa more than doubled, which led to the number of new Covid-19 cases to exceed 7,000 nationwide on May 8, the highest number since January 16, and the additional prefectures declared a state of emergency or of quasi emergency.⁷⁵ As the Delta variant's spread kept getting more severe, starting from May 14, the government decided to deny entry to foreigners who had stayed in India, Pakistan, and Nepal, even those with resident status, such as permanent residents or spouses of Japanese nationals, unless there were special circumstances.⁷⁶

During the following months, the focus shifted into creating a situation in which it was feasible to host the Tokyo Olympics, which were supposed to be held in 2020, but got postponed due to the pandemic. A year later, not only had the pandemic not settled down, on the contrary, because of the mutation of the virus into new variants, the situation was much worse than the previous year. However, Japan decided not to cancel the event, despite the occurrence of demonstrations and protests against the Olympics⁷⁷, and despite a nationwide Kyodo News survey indicating that 86% of respondents feared that the event would cause a spike in Covid-19 cases in Japan.⁷⁸ A late-May estimate by Nomura Research Institute had shown that canceling the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics games could potentially result in Japan losing around ¥1.81 trillion (approximately \$17 billion), however, the institute also warned that declaring yet another state of emergency to deal with a spike in infected people after

74

『インドなど3か国からの入国者に対する水際対策を強化へ』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210507/k10013016371000.html>

75 『連休初日 東京都から出た人は去年比4割余増

沖縄へは2倍以上に』、NHKニュース、2021、

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210430/k10013006081000.html>

76 『入国前14日以内 インドなど3国滞在は原則入国拒否 14日から』、NHKニュース、2021、

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210512/k10013026731000.html>

77 『都内で東京五輪中止求めるデモ

組織委入るビル周辺など行進』、NHKニュース、2021、

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210717/k10013143971000.html>

78 “86% in Japan fear COVID rebound if Tokyo Olympics held: Kyodo poll”, Kyodo News, 2021,

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/06/1e508739dd9c-urgent-86-in-japan-fear-covid-rebound-if-tokyo-olympics-held-kyodo-poll.html>

the Olympic and Paralympic Games might cause even greater losses.⁷⁹ In actuality, on July 12, the government had declared its fourth state of emergency in Tokyo Prefecture before the Olympics even started in response to the continuous spread of the disease (the third state of emergency had only been lifted in late June),⁸⁰ but how were the Olympic and Paralympic games held during a state of emergency? First of all, all foreign athletes, which exceeded 15,000 individuals, had to be tested twice before arriving in Japan, where they would be tested every day for the entirety of their stay. However, to ensure that athletes would be able to practice, they did not enforce any quarantine period on them upon arrival, but they were not able to leave the Olympic village five days before and two days after their competitions and were not allowed to use public transportation. Coaches and other staff members had similar restrictions, and spectators were generally not allowed inside the venues, leaving many fans disappointed.⁸¹ Despite all of the precautions taken to create a “bubble” in order to contain infections related to the Olympics, a total of 878 Covid-19 infections were recorded in relations the Olympic and Paralympic games, and it was reported that there had been people, both athletes and staff members, who had violated the rules to go sightseeing. Regardless of Prime Minister Suga's repeated denials that the Olympics were not the cause, COVID-19 has spread explosively across the nation as the Games unfolded.⁸² Because of the decisions to hold the Olympics despite the spread of very virulent variants and despite the slow vaccine rollout (by the time the Olympics had started, only medical workers and the elderly were able to get vaccinated), in late August, Prime Minister Suga's rate of approval fell to an all-time low (26%, according to a Mainichi Shimbun poll), making the government consider holding a Liberal Democratic Party leadership election, as well as a general election in October.⁸³

The LDP leadership election was held on September 29, where Fumio Kishida won over three opponents to take the position of head of the party and becoming Japan's 100th Prime Minister. Only a few days later, Kishida decided to dissolve the lower house of the diet and to hold a general election on October 31,⁸⁴ in which the LDP managed to obtain enough votes to rule without Komeito, its coalition

⁷⁹ “Tokyo Games cancellation would cost Japan \$17 billion, Nomura says”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/05/25/business/economy-business/nomura-olympics-cancellation-cost/>

⁸⁰ 『東京に4回目の緊急事態宣言へ 期限来月22日まで 政府方針』、NHKニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210707/k10013125451000.html>

⁸¹ Takahashi, Ryusei, “How the 2020 Tokyo Olympics is being held during the pandemic: What we know”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/06/10/national/tokyo-olympics-covid-19-japan/>

⁸² “Virus infections related to Tokyo Games totaled 878”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/09/08/national/science-health/athletes-village-total/>

⁸³ Slodkowski, Antoni, “Japan considers Oct. 17 election as PM ratings hit record lows”, Reuters, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-pm-sugas-ratings-hit-record-lows-party-leader-race-looms-2021-08-30/>

⁸⁴ “Fumio Kishida becomes Japan's 100th prime minister”, Nikkei Asia, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-election/Fumio-Kishida-becomes-Japan-s-100th-prime-minister>

partner.⁸⁵ With a change to the Japanese head of government, many started hoping that Japan's border measures would also soon change, as the number of daily new infections had significantly lowered with the beginning of the Fall season, and vaccine rollouts had sped up enough for around 70% of the population to have received both doses as of late October, 2021.⁸⁶ Consequently, the government decided to reopen its borders for new foreign entries starting from November 8. Things looked promising for the Business Track, as businesspeople who entered Japan would only be required to quarantine for 3 days if they had proof of vaccination and a negative test result. On the other hand, when it comes to the Residence Track, it was estimated that over 370,000 people (with approximately 150,000 international students) were still waiting to enter Japan, and since the maximum number of daily entries was only 3,500, including Japanese nationals and businesspeople, it was decided to gradually allow people to apply for a visa according to the issuance date of their Certificate of Eligibility (CoE), a document requested by university, businesses, etc., that certifies that the applicant is eligible to obtain a visa.⁸⁷ In fact, it was reported that out of the 900 international students waiting to enter Japan to study at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, one of Japan's most international universities, only 200 could start the visa request process.⁸⁸ Because of this decision, the majority of foreigners waiting to enter the country were still not able to apply for a visa, and with no clear prospects of when they would be able to, some decided to give up on going to Japan entirely. Soon after, on November 24, the World Health Organization declared that a new, high-risk variant called "Omicron", had been detected in Botswana and South Africa, and less than a week later, on November 30, once again, Japan banned all foreigners without status of residence from entering the country.⁸⁹ Data published by the Immigration Services Agency reveals that the number of people (new entries) who were able to enter the country during the three weeks (November 8-29) when Japan "eased" its border restrictions, were only 228, out of which 132 people were short-term visitors for business purposes, 13 were technical interns, and only 3 were international students.⁹⁰ While Japan started welcoming MEXT Scholarship students throughout the

⁸⁵ "Japan election: PM Fumio Kishida declares victory for ruling LDP", BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59110828>

⁸⁶ "Pandemic concerns dominate Lower House election campaign", NHK World, 2021, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/1803/>

⁸⁷ 『入国時の待機 きょうから3日間に短縮 外国人の入国も一部再開』、NHKニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20211108/k10013338331000.html>

⁸⁸ "Universities in Japan welcome open borders but face long entry backlog", Nikkei Asia, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Education/Universities-in-Japan-welcome-open-borders-but-face-long-entry-backlog>

⁸⁹ "Japan to suspend entry of overseas travelers due to omicron", Nikkei Asia, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Japan-to-suspend-entry-of-overseas-travelers-due-to-omicron>

⁹⁰ 『11月入国者、10月比7%増の8万人 水際緩和は228人利用』、日本経済新聞、2021、<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQQUA151A60V11C21A2000000/>

months of January and February of 2022,⁹¹ Japan's borders remained closed to most international students and other new foreign entries until March 1, 2022. Consequently to these new measures, the maximum limit of daily entries was rise from 3,500 to 5,000 people, and in order to obtain a visa, hosting institutions, such as universities and businesses, had to submit an online application in advance, which would then be reviewed by the competent authorities. Once this screening process had been completed, applicants would receive a "Certificate of Acceptance", which had to be submitted when applying for a visa at Japanese consulates or embassies.⁹² International tourists were, once again, excluded in these relaxed border measures. The first attempt to re-start international tourism happened in June 2022, when the government decided to allow a limited number of foreign tourists into the country, at the condition that they participated in group tours, which initially were highly-monitored, with tourist having to be chaperoned by a tour guide throughout their stay and to wear a mask even outdoors.⁹³ While most other developed countries had long gotten rid of quarantine, PCR testing before arrival and mask mandates, Japan still hadn't fully accepted foreign tourists. Only starting from September 7, PCR testing requirements for fully vaccinated (with 3 doses) travelers had been waived, while organized tours would no longer require a tour guide, and the maximum number of entries was raised from 20, 000 to 50,000 a day.⁹⁴ Finally, on October 11, 2022, Japan restored the visa exemption agreements that were in force before the pandemic, allowing foreign tourists who submitted either proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test result to visit the country freely for the first time in over two and a half years.⁹⁵

⁹¹ 『政府、留学生入国300人を追加許可』、日本経済新聞、2022、<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA012GY0R00C22A2000000/>

⁹² 『外国人の新規入国 段階的に緩和へ オンライン申請手続き始まる』、NHKニュース、2022、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20220225/k10013501761000.html>

⁹³ "Japan to open to tourists after COVID, with masks, insurance and chaperones required", Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-open-tourists-after-two-years-only-with-masks-insurance-guides-2022-06-07/>

⁹⁴ "Japan to waive PCR-test rule for triple-vaccinated travelers", Asahi Shimbun, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14702058>

⁹⁵ 『水際対策きょうから大幅緩和 入国上限撤廃 個人旅行も解禁』、NHKニュース、2022、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20221011/k10013854251000.html>

To summarize, here is a timeline of the most significant events mentioned in this chapter:

Table 1: Timeline of Japan's Covid-19 Border Measures

January 31, 2020	Japan bans foreigners arriving from China's Hubei Province to enter Japan. After this, the government started to gradually add countries and regions to its "Denial of permission to entry" list, reaching 24 countries by the end of March.
April 1, 2020	Foreign nationals (including foreign residents of Japan) from who have stayed in an additional 49 countries are prohibited from entering Japan, for a total of 73 countries.
May 14, 2020	Japan broadens the scope of its border measures to include a total of 100 countries and regions.
August 5, 2020	Japan starts allowing the re-entry of foreign with residence status.
August 22, 2020	The government starts accepting new visa applications of MEXT Scholarship students.
August 28, 2020	Non-resident foreign individuals from/who have stayed in any of the designated 159 countries and regions will be denied permission to entry.
October 1, 2020	Japan starts allowing new arrivals to Japan of foreign nationals from all over the world (except tourists).
December 28, 2020	Japan stops allowing new arrivals of the "Residence Track" from all countries and regions.
January 14, 2021	The government puts a halt to the "Business Track".
November 8, 2021	Japan began gradually re-allowing entries from both the "Business" and "Residence" track (according to the issuance date of the applicants' CoE's).
November 30, 2021	Japan, once again, closes its borders to all new entries due to the spread of the new "Omicron" variant.
January - February, 2022	Japan starts accepting entry requests of foreign students with "exceptional circumstances" (mostly MEXT Scholarship students).
March 1, 2022	The government opens its borders for foreign nationals arriving in Japan for purposes other than tourism.
June 10, 2022	Japan starts allowing entry of foreign tourists on guided tours.
September 7, 2022	The government stopped requiring a negative PCR test to enter the country if fully vaccinated.
October 11, 2022	Japan fully reopens its borders to international tourism.

2.1 How the Japanese travel ban has affected the lives of international students

For most of the duration of the pandemic, Japan was able to keep both infection and death rates relatively low. Trying to find the source of Japan's "success", some have named its population's custom of wearing masks or of minimal physical contact, while others attributed it to Japan's low rates of obesity and diabetes, and its familiarity with dealing with natural calamities. However, data shows that compared to many other countries, Japan conducted exceptionally low numbers of Covid-19 tests, which many debate is the main reason for Japan's low infection numbers.⁹⁶ Although Japan did not suffer the same levels of spread of the disease and deaths as Europe or the United States, other issues still linger. For example, throughout the pandemic, Japan maintained one of the world's strictest border measures, and the way Japan handled its entry restrictions has been heavily criticized both internally and externally. Internal criticism mainly came from business lobbies, like the Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*), whose chairman, Masakazu Tokura prompted the government to reconsider the ban on new entries and to simplify immigration procedures in February 2022, as "Business doesn't function on a purely domestic basis".⁹⁷ On November 12, 2021, The Keidanren, alongside the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ), the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ), the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ), the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (CCI France Japon), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (AHK Japan), the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ICCJ), and the European Business Council in Japan (EBC) issued a joint statement to urge the Japanese government to adapt its border measures to the ones of other G7 countries, as Japan was the only one still not allowing non-resident foreigners and it had the strictest and lengthiest entry procedures.⁹⁸ In January 2022, former chair of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, Christopher LaFleur, also stated that the entry restrictions of all non-resident foreigners were deterring international businesses from keeping a presence in Japan.⁹⁹ It is apparent that the government received external pressure to relax its border restrictions, as in early May 2022, Prime Minister Fumio

⁹⁶ Vogt, Gabriele, et. Qin, Sian, "Sanitizing the national body: COVID-19 and the revival of Japan's "Closed Country" strategy", National Library of Medicine, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9482887/>

⁹⁷ "Japan's top business lobby calls for further easing of border controls", The Japan Times, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/02/22/business/keidanren-border-controls-further-easing/>

⁹⁸ "Joint Statement on the Entry Restrictions in Japan", German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (AHK Japan), 2021, <https://japan.ahk.de/en/infothek/newsroom/news-details/joint-statement-on-the-entry-restrictions-in-japan>

⁹⁹ Sugiura, Eri, "Japan's tight border rules threaten foreign investment, business groups", Financial Times, 2022, [sayhttps://www.ft.com/content/6a007e4a-2398-4ff2-8b79-ed7190a0e504](https://www.ft.com/content/6a007e4a-2398-4ff2-8b79-ed7190a0e504)

Kishida, announced that the government would further loosen its border control measures against the Coronavirus “in order to be in line with other G7 countries”.¹⁰⁰

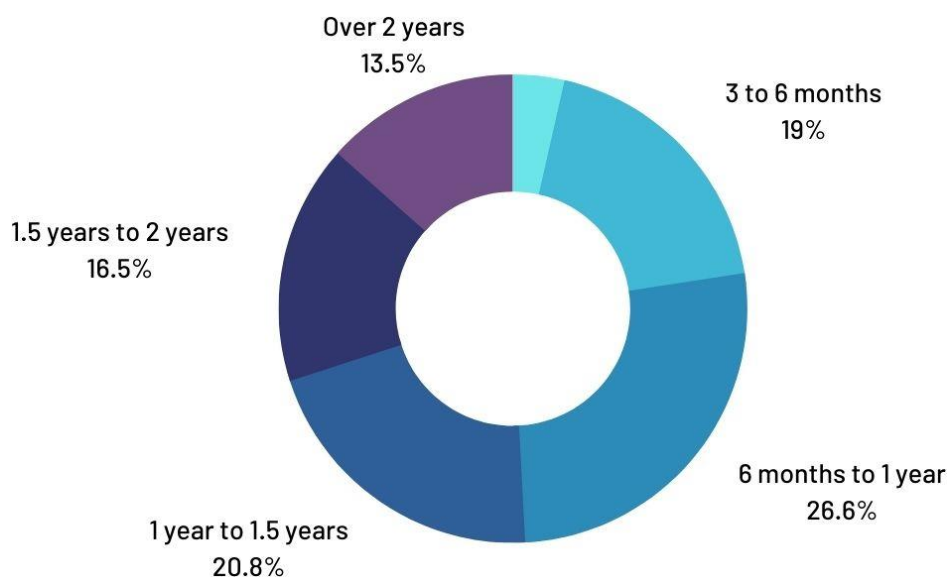
Many Japanese and especially foreign businesses fought for the relaxation of the borders to fully maintain their business operations in Japan and to welcome their international employees. However, when it comes to international students, a figure who, throughout the pandemic, focused their efforts into urging the Japanese government to reopen its borders would be Davide Rossi. Rossi is the co-founder, and CEO of Go! Go! Nihon, a company whose mission is to aid people who want to study in Japan with their application processes and support communication with Japanese institutions. With the help of many contributors, Rossi started the “Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association” whose purpose was to “provide public relations support activities to ensure fair and uniform rules concerning the immigration of international students”. The association also launched a website called “Education is not tourism”, where they published stories of international students stranded outside of Japan, which they would share with government officials in order to encourage communication about the safe entry of students. In order to map and highlight the experiences and struggles of international students, Davide Rossi also conducted a survey called “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, which ran from January 14 to January 23, 2022. The survey collected 3,115 respondents, out of which almost 84% were under 30 years of age, and nationality ranged between 101 different countries. When asked how long they had been waiting to enter Japan to pursue their studies, 13.5% replied that they had been waiting for over 2 years, 16.5% selected “between 1 year and a half to 2 years”, 20.8% chose “between 1 year to 1 year and a half”, while 26.6% had been waiting for 6 months to 1 year, 19% for 3 to 6 months, and only 3.6% had been waiting for less than 3 months.¹⁰¹ The fact that over 50% of students replied that they had been waiting for over one year functions as a confirmation that a significant portion of students were not actually able to enter the country when the borders had temporarily opened in the Fall of 2020 and 2021, which, as Rossi mentioned, was most likely due to the government’s poor communication about the border measures’ relaxation timeline and about the bureaucratic procedures required to obtain a visa, which were usually communicated with very little notice.

¹⁰⁰ 『首相、水際対策「6月にG7諸国並みに緩和」

新型コロナ』、日本経済新聞、2022、<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA051HA0V00C22A5000000/>

¹⁰¹ Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Figure 7: How long have you been waiting to enter Japan?



This prolonged, unstable situation severely impacted the lives of international students. When asked how exactly it affected them, over half of the respondents have “experienced serious mental issues” and many have experienced serious financial struggles, such as being unable to support themselves (38.1%), and having lost their job (21.5%), as many people reported to have left their jobs to pursue their education in Japan, but were unfortunately unable to enter the country to do so. A significant portion of students have also stated that they lost the opportunity to do an exchange semester (26.5%), while 22.3% reported not being able to complete the required university credits for them to graduate. In addition, over 80% stated that, due to Japan’s border restrictions, they felt “stressed” and “hopeless”, while over 70% experienced “anxiety” and “depression”, over 50% struggled with “lack of sleep”, and around 30% with “loss of appetite”.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Figure 9: Because of the Japan Travel Ban I have...

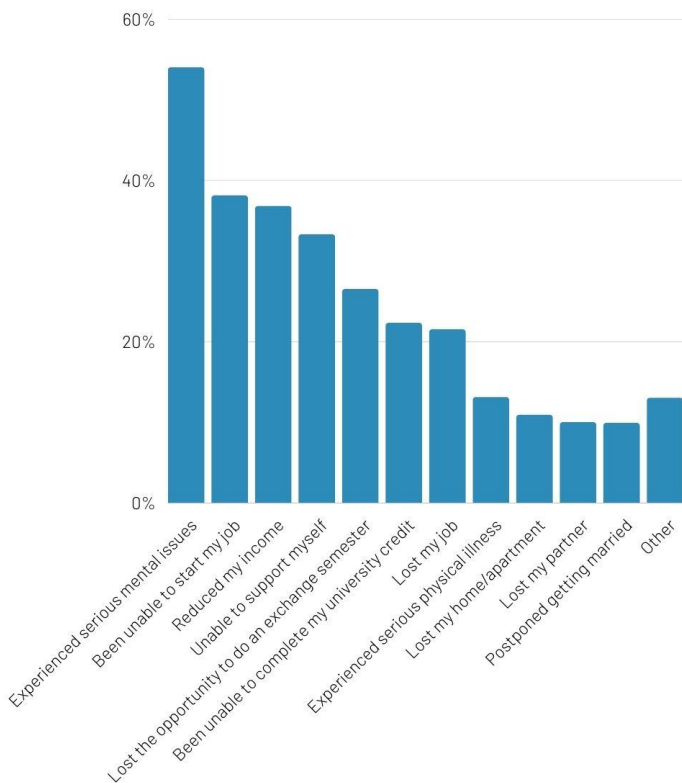
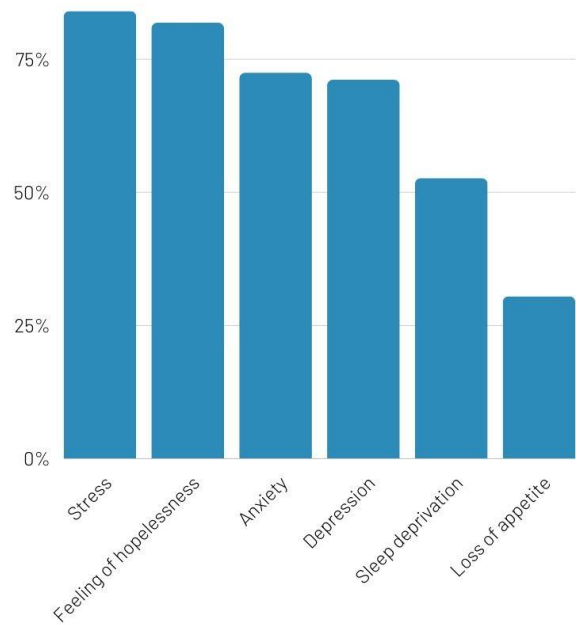
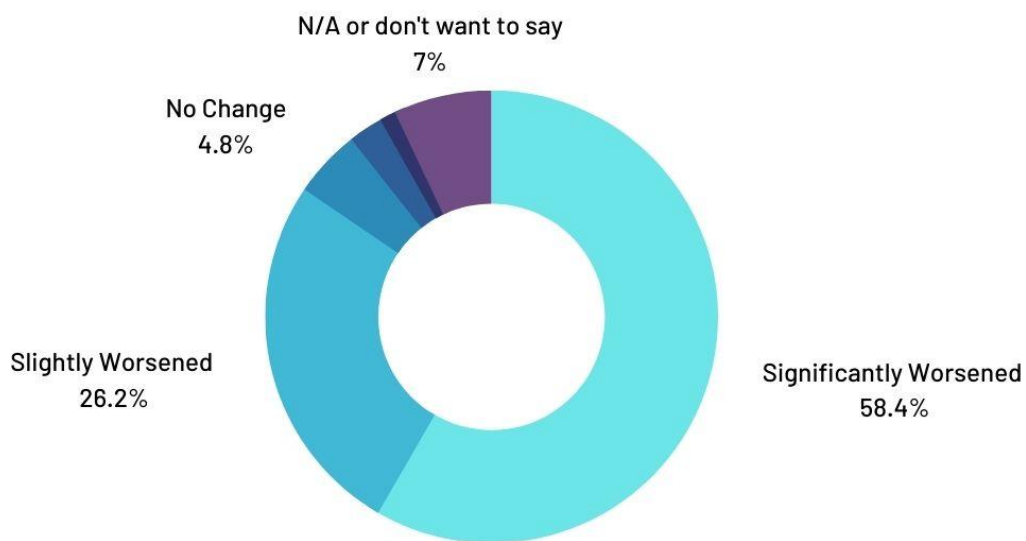


Figure 8: Over the past month I've experienced...



When asked specifically about their mental health, over 58% of students replied that, due to not being able to go to Japan, it had significantly worsened, over 26% claimed their mental health had slightly worsened, while less than 5% reported no change in their mental health.¹⁰³

Figure 10: Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my mental health has...



¹⁰³ Rossi, Davide, "How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students", Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Here are some of the respondents' comments on their mental health:

"It got so bad that I contemplated suicide many times. If I could go back to 18-year-old me I would've told her to do Korean instead because all my friends who chose that are enjoying their life and not feeling suicidal every day over waking up at 4am and making no progress in my life."

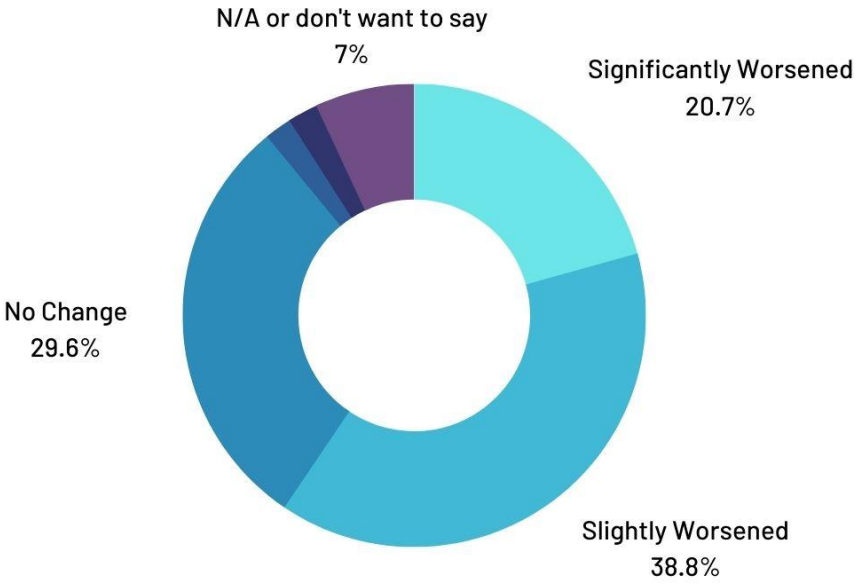
"The Japanese Government always gives us a little hope and then breaks our hearts. We cannot bear it. While continuing our studies online, we are thinking about when the government will open the borders. It's not only myself. My family is also in depression because I am stuck in my home more than one year without any hope."

"It has put me in a situation where I am unable to make any plans for my future that are more than 6 months in the future."

"I have lost all of my motivation to even study Japanese language on my own, I feel disgusted and nauseous by the way we are being treated by the Japanese Government."

Another question of the survey was to have respondents describe how the border measures has affected their physical health, which, although not to the same extent as the question about mental health, also shows concerning results.¹⁰⁴

Figure 11: Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my physical health has...



¹⁰⁴ Rossi, Davide, "How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students", Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

In fact, in comparison to the respondents' mental health, only 20% reported it having significantly worsened due to not being able to Japan, while around 40% described it as "slightly worsened", and nearly 30% reported no change. Below are a few additional statements made by international students about how Japan's entry restrictions affected their physical health:

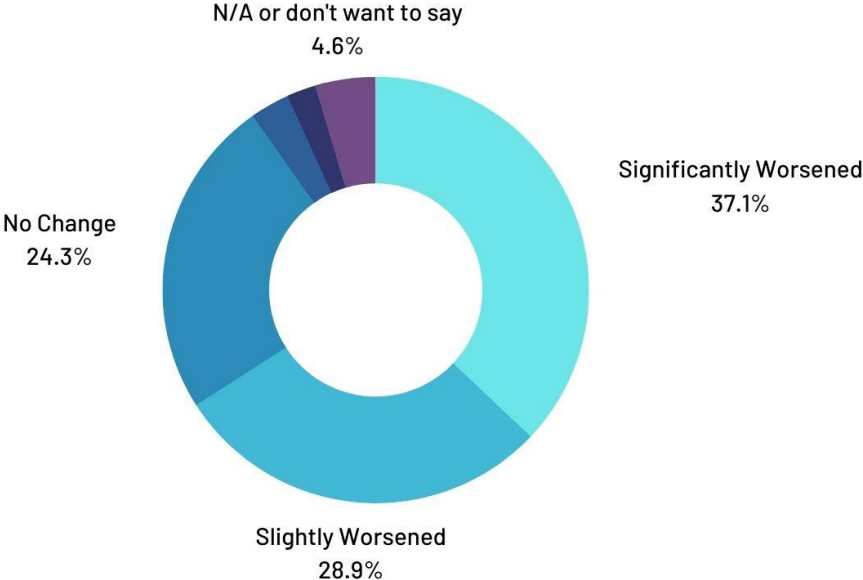
"I can't sleep and I feel restless."

"Because I have to follow online classes with the time difference, I feel tired all day, and even fainted at some point due to the accumulation of stress and tiredness."

"I have not had great sleep due to the stress keeping me awake, but finally I was able to go to sleep around 12am. I now attend online classes that run from 10:45pm to 2:45am, which has messed up my sleep once again."

The survey also highlights how the prolonged closure of the Japanese borders caused remarkable financial issues to many international students, the majority of respondents (37%) selected the "significantly worsened" option, whereas almost 30% chose "slightly worsened", and almost a quarter claimed that their financial condition has not changed.¹⁰⁵

Figure 12: Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my financial condition has...



¹⁰⁵ Rossi, Davide, "How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students", Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Many of the comments also below highlight how the lack of communication from the Japan government about a clear timeline of the easing of the border measures left many students in a limbo, unable to make meaningful decisions about their future.

“It's impossible to get a job while honestly telling potential employers you don't know how long you can work for them before Japan opens up. No one wants to hire a possibly 3-month, possibly 6-month, possibly 9-month employee.”

“I've paid the tuition, about 900,000 yen only to be put on hold outside of the border.”

“I quit my job in March 2021 to come to study in Japan in April. Because of the Japanese travel ban I was unable to enter for studies. Since March, my income decreased from 2200€/month to 0€. I wasn't able to pay for my apartment and was forced to come back to my parents' home. I'm still waiting for 11 months now, I am hopeless and think to give up...”

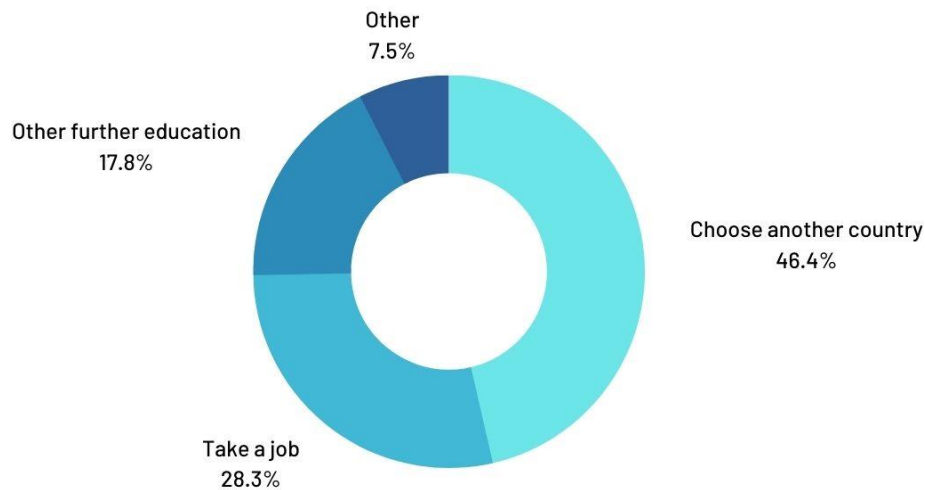
“I couldn't receive my JASSO Scholarship and I had to pay to move to Korea to avoid nighttime online classes.”

“I spent a lot of money for the school that I am attending and I need to increase my income for the next years of studying that I want to do. Currently I can't work because I don't know when I will fly to Japan and where I live there are not so many opportunities.”

With another question, Davide Rossi asked students if they were considering canceling their plans to study in Japan, to which, 6.7% affirmed that they were planning to or that they had already canceled, almost 40% stated that they would cancel if they would not be able to enter Japan by the beginning of the Spring semester, and another 22.5% replied that they may consider canceling their study abroad experience in Japan. On the other hand, a little over 11% said that they were still unsure about canceling, whereas 21.3% stated that they would not give up on studying in Japan.¹⁰⁶ This question, however, fails to take into consideration that many universities in Japan, due to the continuous border closure, made a one-sided decision to cancel their exchange programs. Rossi also questioned what students would do instead of studying in Japan if they had canceled their plans or if they were not able to enter the country soon. A staggering 46.4% replied that they would choose to study abroad in another country, whereas about 30% said that they would look for a job instead of pursuing further education.

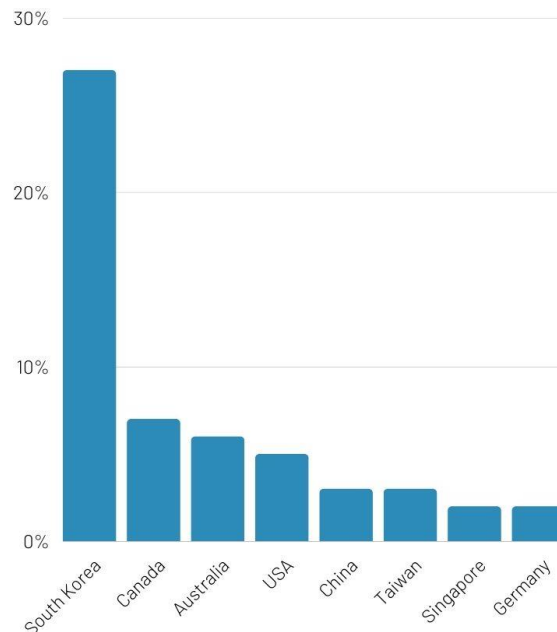
¹⁰⁶ Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Figure 13: What will you do instead of coming to Japan to study?



Additionally, out of the people who replied that they would choose to study in a different country, over a fourth (27%) stated that they would be studying in South Korea instead. The other top choices, which were Canada, Australia, and the United States of America, were only selected by 7 to 5% of students.¹⁰⁷

Figure 14: If you selected “Choose another country” please specify in which country

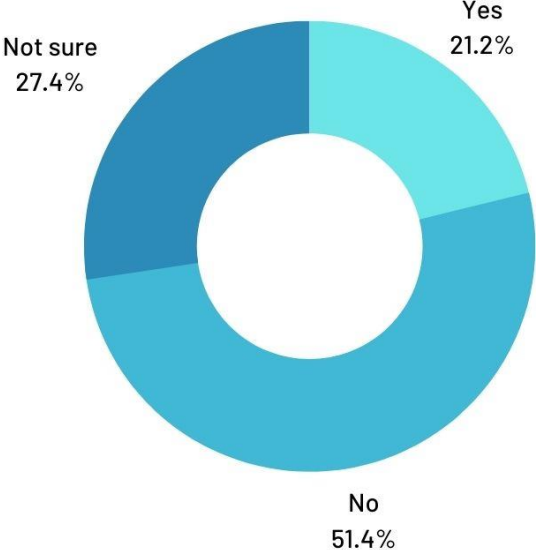


Thinking about Japan’s Soft Power and its image abroad, the most concerning data gathered in this survey comes from two questions in particular: “Would you recommend Japan as a study or travel destination to your family and friends?” and “As a result of the ongoing travel ban has your opinion on Japan changed?”. The replies to the first question show that, while around 27.4% of respondents were

¹⁰⁷ Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

not sure, over half of international students replied that, in light of how they were being treated by the Japanese government, they would not recommend Japan as a travel or study abroad destination, whereas over 20% replied that they would.

Figure 15: Would you recommend Japan as a study or travel destination to your family and friends?



Some criticism to this question would be not splitting it into two separate questions, asking whether they would recommend Japan as a travel destination and study abroad destination separately. In fact, it is safe to assume that many of these students were feeling a lot of resentment towards the government and, sometimes, towards their educational hosting institutions, but not necessarily towards the country itself viewed as a travel destination, which could explain why over 20% of people replied positively. When it comes to the “As a result of the ongoing travel ban has your opinion on Japan changed?”, international students’ opinions were all but positive. Data shows that almost half of respondents (47%) stated that their opinion of Japan had significantly worsened, almost 30% selected “slightly worsened” as their answer, whereas 13.5% of students reported no change in their opinion on Japan, leaving a very small percentage left to positive (slightly improved: 2.6%; significantly improved 3.3%) and neutral replies (N/A or don't want to say: 4.7%).¹⁰⁸ When asked to further elaborate, some students left the following comments:

“The majority of countries have continued to accept international students throughout the pandemic, provided that students follow designated COVID testing, quarantine, and masking procedures. Looking at other countries similar to Japan, such as South Korea, it is clear that students who follow these procedures do not significantly contribute to the spread of COVID in these settings. Therefore, one can only determine that the Japanese government does not consider the reality of the situation, and makes its decisions about the entry of foreigners based on optics and virtue-signaling conservatism rather than

¹⁰⁸ Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

a genuine examination of the facts surrounding international students. The needs of students are blatantly ignored, and the government's refusal to give any sort of timeline for change or provide any shred of resources to students who have incurred damages as a result of the ban is nothing short of a piercing insult.”

“The unfair and excessive border restrictions made lots of foreign talent consider other countries.”

“Still love the country and people, strong decline in opinion of the government and Prime Minister.”

“As a foreign student, I feel like we are expendable to the Japanese government although we technically are or should be the future of Japan together with domestic students. Personally, I feel unwelcome and unwanted by Japan and my plans of settling down (studying, working, starting a family) in Japan have been compromised.”

“I feel betrayed by the Japanese government.”¹⁰⁹

Davide Rossi’s survey (January 2022) was conducted only around a month before Japan announced it would re-open its borders for purposes other than tourism, which was arguably when the international students’ dissatisfaction and resentment towards the Japanese government peaked, as most people had been waiting to enter the country for over one year. The data clearly shows that a concerning number of foreign students would no longer recommend Japan as a study abroad destination, nor as a travel destination, and that students’ opinion of Japan had generally plummeted. However, is this data still relevant nowadays, after over one and a half years since international students have been able to enter the country with little to no restrictions caused by Covid-19? To answer this question, I have conducted a survey, the methodology and results of which I will present in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>

Chapter 3. How the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected international students' opinion of Japan

For the purpose of determining how the Japanese Covid-19 border measures affected international students' opinion of Japan, from September 5 to September 15, 2023, I conducted an online survey, which received a total of 170 responses, in order to gain recent quantitative and qualitative data on the topic. The survey was created and administered through *Google Forms*, which I selected as it is a widely known platform, and the familiarity with the survey modality and interface surely contributed to gaining a higher number of respondents. In order to gain a wide array of perspectives, I decided to set the following five different groups of individuals as the targets of my survey:

1. Foreign nationals who studied in Japan before March 2020 (Before the Covid-19 border measures had been implemented);
2. Foreign nationals who studied at Japanese educational institutions from March 2020 to February 2022 (During the time the Covid-19 border measures were in force);
3. Foreign nationals who studied in Japan after February 2022 (After the Covid-19 border measures had been relaxed);
4. Foreign nationals who studied in Japan across multiple periods;
5. Foreign nationals who were planning to study in Japan, but were not able to because of the Covid-19 border measures.

The survey, which has been shared on social media platforms such as *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *WhatsApp* in order to receive answers from as many different nationalities as possible, consists of 18 questions and is structured in 4 sections. In section 1 (questions 1-7), respondents answered demographic questions such as their nationality and age, as well as question about their knowledge of the Japanese language and culture. In section 2 (questions 8-12), international students were asked questions about their study abroad experience in Japan, namely, when they had studied in Japan, what kind of educational institution they attended, and if they had been affected by the Japanese Covid-19 border measures or not. Depending on their answers to that question, they would or would not have to answer questions in section 3 (questions 13-15), in which I investigated how international students' mental and physical health, as well as finances, education and career opportunities were affected by the Japanese Covid-19 border measures. Lastly, in section 4 (questions 16-18), I asked about their opinion of Japan and if it had changed as a result of the border restrictions that the Japanese government enforced during the pandemic. With the exception of the last one, all questions were close-ended. I made this choice not only to be able to analyze the data numerically, but also to make sure that respondents could complete the survey quickly, as surveys that take too long to fill in usually have to deal with a significant number of invalid answers.

3.1 Overview of the survey’s results

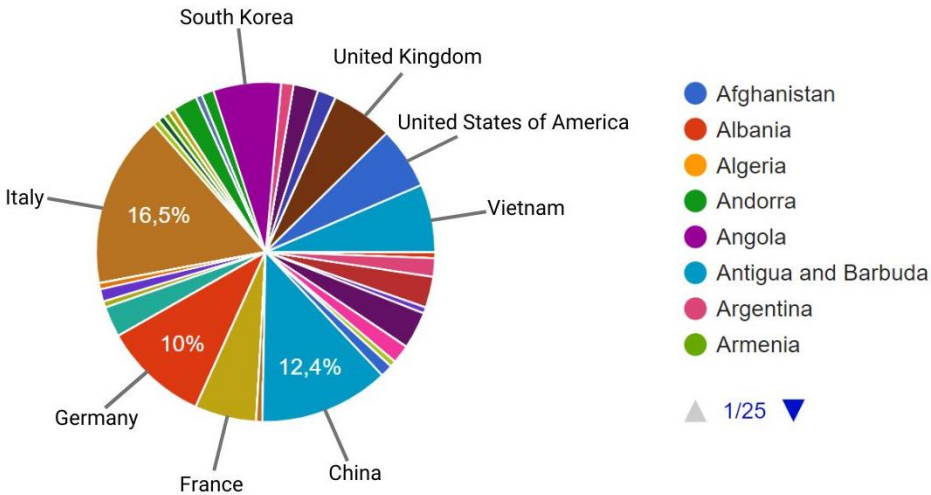
Through Davide Rossi’s survey, we were able to get a clear image of the struggles that international students had to face due to the border restrictions and how, for the most part, their opinion of Japan had worsened because of them. However, now that one and a half years have passed since Japan opened its borders to international students, has their opinion of Japan improved? If that is the case, is it due to the fact that they were eventually able to enter Japan to pursue their studies? In addition, I question whether international students who were not affected by the Covid-19 border measures, who studied abroad in Japan before or after the pandemic, also experienced a shift in their opinion of the country due to the entry restrictions, and if so, to what extent. However, before conducting a cross analysis of the collected data to discover the answers to such questions, I will briefly go over the survey’s results.

Starting with the first question of the survey, where respondents had to select their nationality. Although the majority of respondents came from Italy (16.5%), China (12.4%), Germany (10%), South Korea (6.5%), Vietnam (6.5%), the United Kingdom (5.9%) and from the United States of America (5.9%), international students from Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, and Thailand have also contributed to this survey, for a total of 31 different nationalities.

Figure 16: Nationality

1. Nationality

170 risposte

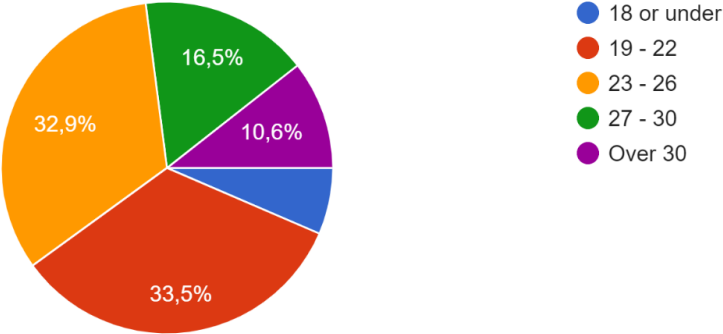


In question number 2, respondents were required to choose the age range they belonged to. From the following graph, we can see that 6.5% of students were aged 18 years old or younger, while students aged from 19 to 22 years old, and students aged from 23 to 26 years old each occupied around one third

of respondents. Students between the ages of 27 to 30 represented 16.5%, and lastly, participants over the age of 30 were 10.6% of the total.

Figure 17: Age

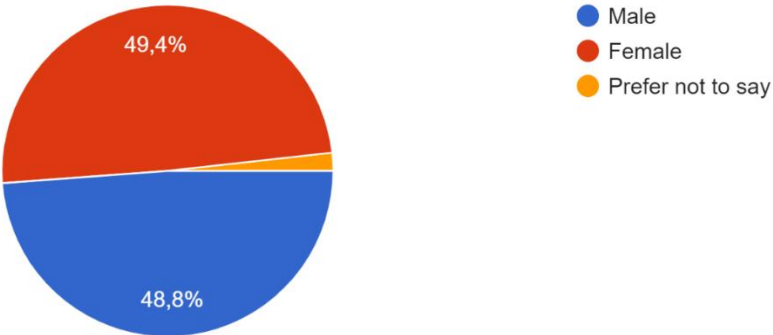
2. Age
170 risposte



Moving forward to question 3, as can be observed in the pie chart below, the gender of the respondents is almost perfectly balanced, as 49.4% were female, 48.8% were male, while 1.8% preferred not to specify.

Figure 18: Gender

3. Gender
170 risposte

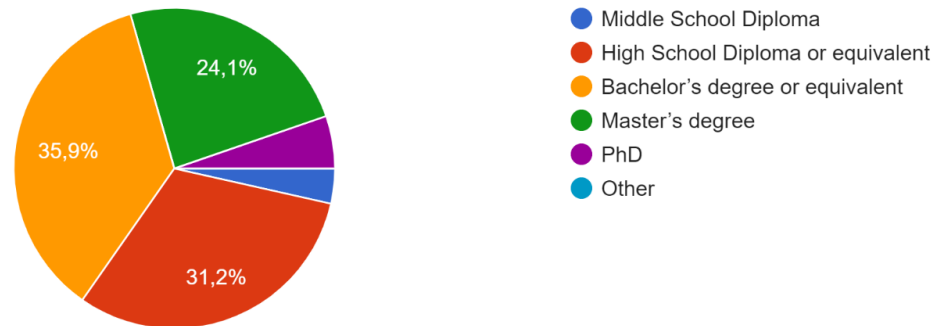


Through question 4 we get an overview of the level of education of the respondents, and we can see that almost 36% have completed a Bachelor’s degree program or equivalent, around 31% received a High School diploma or equivalent, almost one fourth (24%) of respondents earned a Master’s degree, whilst 5.3% got awarded a PhD, and only 3.5% claimed that their highest level of education they had completed was a Middle School diploma.

Figure 19: Highest level of education you have completed

4. Highest level of education you have completed

170 risposte

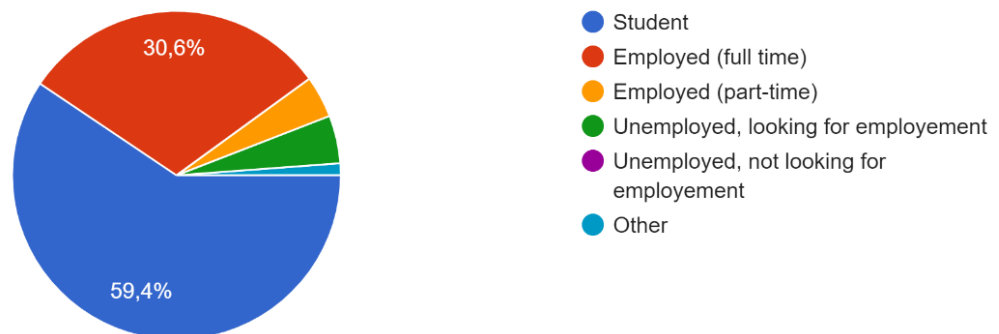


As for their employment status, we can see that around 60% of respondent's are currently still pursuing their education, while over 30% have reached full-time employment. The remaining 10% consists of individuals who either selected "Employed (part-time)", "Unemployed, looking for employment", or "Other".

Figure 20: Employment status

5. Employment status

170 risposte



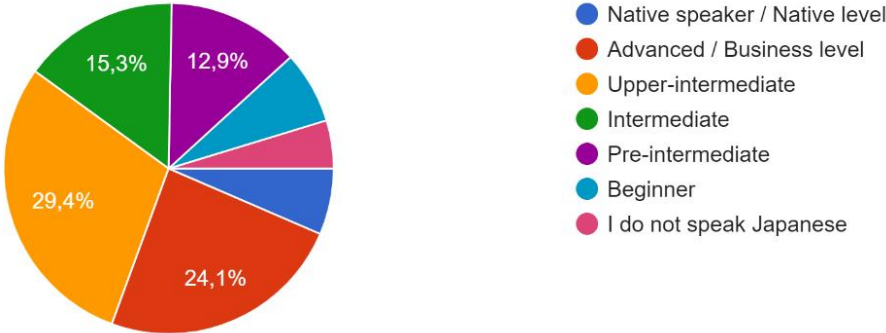
In the last two questions of section 1, I asked respondents to rate their Japanese language proficiency level and their knowledge of Japanese culture. The main aim of asking such questions was to determine if a higher or lower perceived language ability and cultural knowledge would have influenced international students' opinion of Japan, which I will further analyze later in this chapter. From the pie chart below, we can observe that the respondents had very different Japanese language proficiency levels, with the majority rating themselves as "upper-intermediate" (29.4%), followed by "Advanced/Business level" (24.1%), and "Intermediate" (15.3%), which, if added, make up for about two thirds of replies.

Out of the remaining third of respondents, 12.9% selected “Pre-intermediate”, 7.1% chose “Beginner”, 6.5% answered with “Native / Native level”, while only 4.7% of respondents do not speak any Japanese.

Figure 21: Highest level of education you have completed

6. Japanese language proficiency level

170 risposte

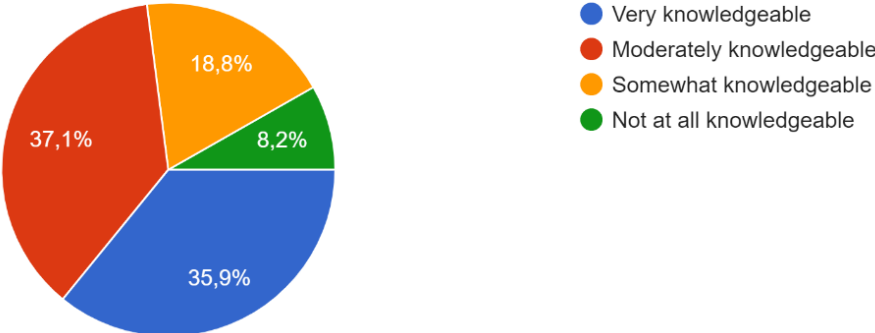


When asked to rate their knowledge of the Japanese culture, over 37% described themselves as “Moderately knowledgeable”, almost 36% of people perceived themselves as being “very knowledgeable”, about 19% of respondents selected “Somewhat knowledgeable”, and just over 8% consider themselves to be “Not at all knowledgeable”.

Figure 22: Rate your knowledge of the Japanese culture

7. Rate your knowledge of the Japanese culture

170 risposte



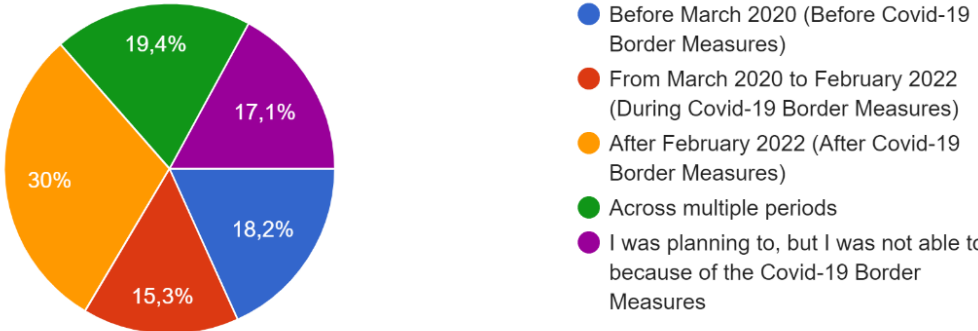
Moving forward to section 2 of the survey, which revolves around international students’ study abroad experiences in Japan, I firstly needed to determine when they had studied in Japan and if they actually managed to go. The results state that the majority of respondents, which account for 30% of the total, have studied in Japan after February 2022, which means. after the Covid-19 border measures had been

lifted. The second largest category is occupied by individuals who studied in Japan across multiple periods (19.4%), while the people who attended educational institutions in Japan before the pandemic comprise 18.2% of the total. Over 17% of international students were planning to study in Japan, but were unable to due to the border restrictions, while the respondents who studied in Japan during the pandemic account for 15.3% of the survey’s population. Although, through this question, we can observe a significant disparity between the respondents who studied in Japan after the pandemic and other categories, by extracting a random sample of answers from this subpopulation in order to match the others in size, it will be possible to compare the data fairly.

Figure 23: When have you studied in a Japanese educational institution? (onsite/online)

8. When have you studied in a Japanese educational institution? (onsite/online)

170 risposte

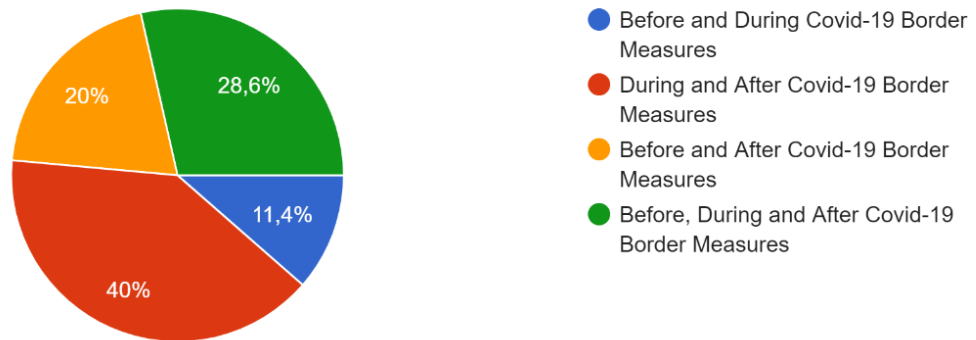


Only people who selected “Across multiple periods” in question 8 were required to answer question 9, in which the 35 students had to specify exactly across what periods they had attended Japanese educational institutions. To which, exactly 40% selected “During and after the Covid-19 border measures”, 28.6% stated that they had studied in Japan across all three periods, while 20% chose “Before and after the Covid-19 border measures”, and only 11.4% answered with “Before and during the Covid-19 border measures”.

Figure 24: If you have answered "Across multiple periods" in the previous question, please select which periods

9. If you have answered "Across multiple periods" in the previous question, please select which periods

35 risposte

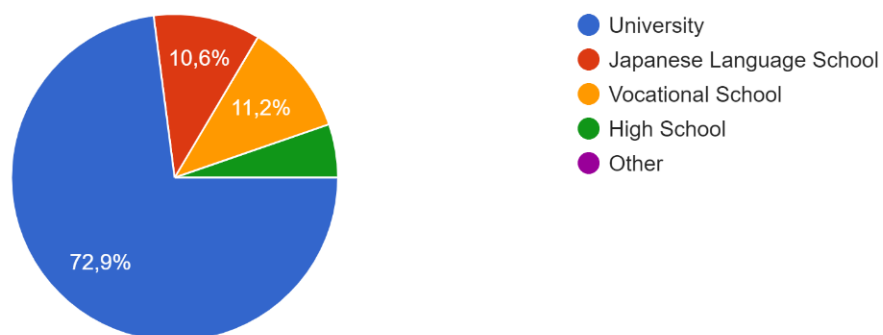


In terms of what kind of educational institution international students attended in Japan, by observing the graph below we can tell that a staggering 72.9% attended Japanese universities, 11.6% were enrolled in Vocational Schools, 10.6% attended a Japanese Language School, and people who studied at Japanese high school made up 5.3% of respondents.

Figure 25: What type of Japanese educational institution have you attended/were you supposed to attend?

10. What type of Japanese educational institution have you attended / were you supposed to attend?

170 risposte

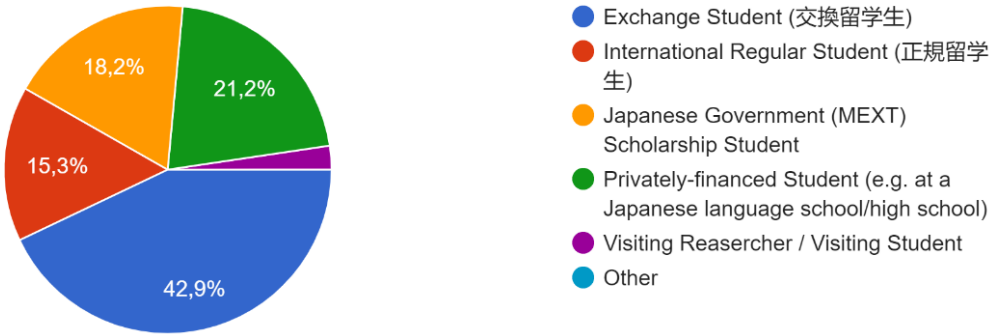


On the other hand, with question 11, we can discover what category of international student best describes respondents. The majority, which amounts to almost 43% of the total, were exchange students, who are students that are enrolled in universities in their home country which have formulated bilateral exchange agreements with Japanese universities. Privately-financed students, which in this context refers to international students who have enrolled in and have privately paid tuition for a program at a

Japanese educational institution (usually a Japanese language school, or high school), represent 21.2% of respondents. The third most numerous category, which was selected by 18.2% of respondents, is Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship students. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1.1, MEXT scholarship students represent only a small fraction of the total number of international students who go to Japan every year, which means that, in this survey they are over-represented. However, having a relatively high number of replies from MEXT Scholarship recipients will allow me to properly compare their answers to non-Government sponsored students to determine the MEXT Scholarship’s effectiveness as a tool for Soft Power. The fourth category I identified is “International regular students”, who account for 15.3% and, as the name suggests, are foreign students regularly enrolled in Japanese educational institutions (mostly universities) and are expected to complete the required curricula to obtain a degree or diploma. Lastly, the fifth category, “Visiting researcher/visiting student” which represents only 2.4% of the total, can be described as students from a foreign institution who visit a Japanese host institution in order to conduct research and take courses. The difference between exchange students and visiting students is that, while exchange students pay their normal tuition and fees to their home institution, visiting students ought to pay tuition and fees to their host institution.

Figure 26: Which of the following best describes you?

11. Which of the following best describes you?
170 response

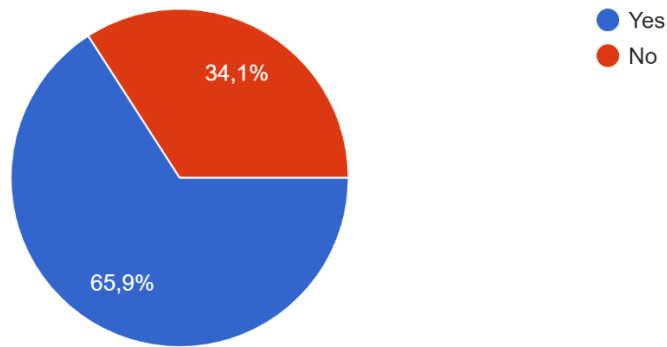


Question number 12 consists of a simple “Yes or No” question, in which I inquire whether participants have or have not been affected by the Covid-19 border measures taken by the Japanese government during the pandemic. Almost two thirds of students (65.9%) claimed to have been affected by Japan’s entry restrictions, whilst the remaining third (34.1%) stated that they were unaffected. Once again, since the proportion of the two groups is not balanced, I will extract a sample of random answers from the “Yes” group to fairly compare it to the “No” group.

Figure 27: Have you been affected by the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures?

12. Have you been affected by the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures?

170 risposte

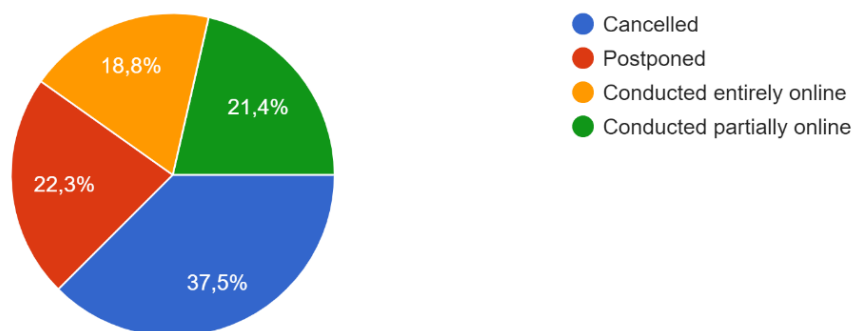


Having now progressed to Section 4 of the survey, which was only accessible to students who had selected “Yes” in question 12, we are going to explore how exactly international students were affected by the Covid-19 border measures. The graph below shows how over one third of the participants (37.5%) who were affected by the entry restrictions (112 students) stated that their study abroad in Japan period had been canceled, while 22.3% claimed it was postponed. In addition, 21.4% of students partially spent their study abroad in Japan period online, and 18.8% conducted it entirely online.

Figure 28: Due to the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures, my study abroad in Japan period has been...

13. Due to the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures, my study abroad in Japan period has been...

112 risposte

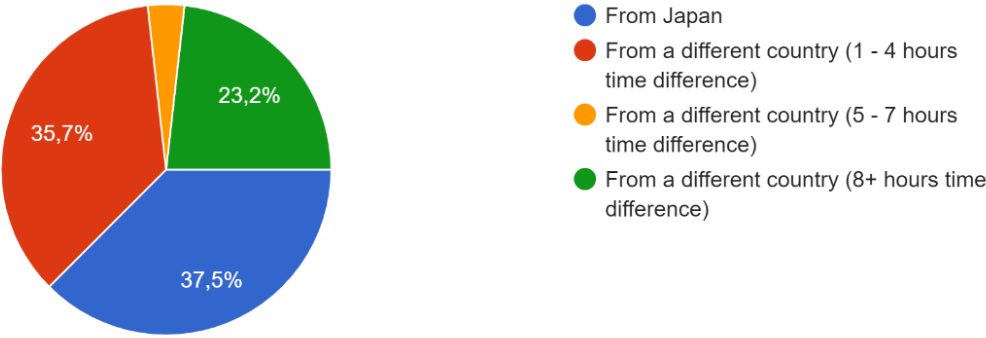


Then I proceeded to ask students who had to take their Japanese educational institution’s classes online (56 students) whether they had attended them from Japan or from a different country, and, in case of the latter, to specify with how many hours of time difference they had to take them. To which, 37.5% replied with “from Japan” (in fact, many institutions still held their classes online even after Japan

opened its borders, during the Spring semester of 2022), 35.7% took their online classes from a country with a time difference of 1 to 4 hours, while only 3.6% selected “From a different country (5 - 7 hours’ time difference)”, and 23.2% of respondents claimed to have attended online classes from a country with 8 or more hours’ time difference with Japan.

Figure 29: If you had to take online classes due to the Japanese Covid-19 Measures, did you take them...

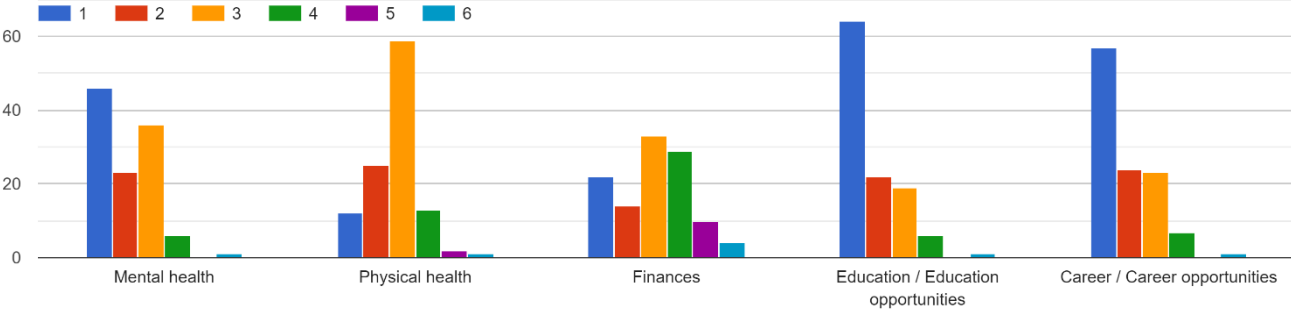
14. If you had to take online classes due to the Japanese Covid-19 Measures, did you take them...
56 risposte



The format of the next two questions (15-16) is different from the one utilized in previous questions. In fact, to get a wider overview of how the Japanese border measures have affected international students, I asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 to 6, how much their mental health, physical health, finances, education/education opportunities, and career/career opportunities have been affected by the border restrictions. In particular, the scale ought to be read as follows: 1 = Very negatively; 2 = Negatively; 3 = Somewhat negatively; 4 = Somewhat positively; 5 = Positively; 6 = Very positively.

Figure 30: How have the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected your...

15. How have the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected your... Scale: 1 = Very negatively; 2 = Negatively; 3 = Somewhat negatively; 4 = Somewhat positively; 5 = Positively; 6 = Very positively.



To improve readability and comprehension, I will summarize the data depicted in Figure 30 in the following tables.

Table 2: Mental Health

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Very negatively)	41% (46)
2 (Negatively)	20.5% (23)
3 (Somewhat negatively)	32.1% (36)
4 (Somewhat positively)	3.5% (6)
5 (Positively)	0% (0)
6 (Very positively)	0.9% (1)
Average Score: 2	Total: 100% (112)

Similarly to the results of Davide Rossi's survey, the majority of international students who were affected by Japanese Covid-19 border measures suffered mentally. A staggering 41% stated that their mental health was affected very negatively by the entry restrictions, over 20% selected "negatively" and people whose mental health was affected "somewhat negatively" accounted for 32.1%, which leaves only 4.4% of respondents stating that they were affected positively.

Table 3: Physical Health

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Very negatively)	10.7% (12)
2 (Negatively)	22.3% (25)
3 (Somewhat negatively)	52.7% (59)
4 (Somewhat positively)	11.6% (13)
5 (Positively)	1.8% (2)
6 (Very positively)	0.9% (1)
Average Score: 2.7	Total: 100% (112)

When it comes to respondents' physical health, combining the individuals who selected "1", "2" and "3", we can see that a staggering 85.7% of students were affected negatively, with over half of respondents choosing "somewhat negatively" as their answer. On the other hand, the individuals whose physical health was affected positively. for the most part (11.6%), selected "somewhat positively".

Table 4: Finances

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Very negatively)	19.7% (22)
2 (Negatively)	12.5% (14)
3 (Somewhat negatively)	29.5% (33)
4 (Somewhat positively)	25.9% (29)
5 (Positively)	8.9% (10)
6 (Very positively)	0.9% (4)
Average Score: 3	Total: 100% (112)

By looking at the data regarding how the border measures affected international students' finances, we can see that the majority of people gravitated towards the middle. In fact, while some people might have lost their tuition fees or scholarship, for other people, not studying abroad in Japan or residing there for a shorter period of time might have been the most financially conscious outcome.

Table 5: Education / Education opportunities

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Very negatively)	57.1% (64)
2 (Negatively)	19.6% (22)
3 (Somewhat negatively)	17% (19)
4 (Somewhat positively)	5.4% (6)
5 (Positively)	0% (0)
6 (Very positively)	0.9% (1)
Average Score: 1.7	Total: 100% (112)

Education and education opportunities is the factor where international students claimed to have affected the most negatively, with over 57% of respondents selecting "very negatively", almost 20% choosing "negatively" and 17% replying with "somewhat negatively", Only 7 (6.3%) students out of 112 claimed their education to have been affected positively by the Japanese entry restrictions.

Table 6: Career / Career opportunities

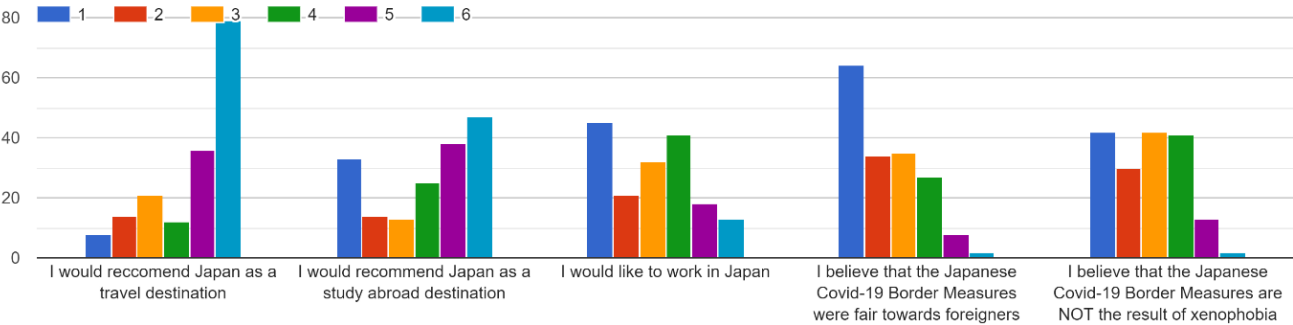
Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Very negatively)	50.9% (57)
2 (Negatively)	21.4% (24)
3 (Somewhat negatively)	20.5% (23)
4 (Somewhat positively)	6.3% (7)
5 (Positively)	0% (0)
6 (Very positively)	0.9% (1)
Average Score: 1.9	Total: 100% (112)

Lastly, in regard to their career / career opportunities, respondents, for the most part, selected scores ranging from 1 to 3 and account for a staggering 92.8%. In fact, around half of participants who were affected by the border measures selected that their career has been affected very negatively as a result of the entry restrictions. Only 7.2% claimed that their career and related opportunities have been affected positively.

Question 15 concludes Section 3 of the survey, which only individuals who were personally affected by the Border Measures enforced by the Japanese government had to fill in. With question 16, in which I investigate all participants’ opinion on various Japan-related and border measures-related topics, begins the fourth and last section of the survey. I asked participants (both groups on international students who have and have not been affected by the Japanese border measures) whether they agreed or disagreed (and to what extent) to the following statements: I would recommend Japan as a travel destination; I would recommend Japan as a study abroad destination; I would like to work in Japan; I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures were fair towards foreigners; I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures are NOT the result of xenophobia.

Figure 31: Please share your opinion on the following

16. Please share your opinion on the following: Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Somewhat agree; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly agree.



As I mentioned at the end of Chapter 2.1, I believe that recommending a country for study abroad purposes or for tourism involves a completely different set of criteria and considerations, and therefore, in contrast to Davide Rossi’s survey, I decided to ask two separate questions. In addition to this, I also added the statement “I would like to work in Japan” to determine whether exchange students could see themselves living in Japan for the medium to long term, which, for the most part, would require finding employment in Japan.

Table 7: I would recommend Japan as a travel destination

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Strongly disagree)	4.8% (8)
2 (Disagree)	8.2% (14)
3 (Somewhat disagree)	12.5% (21)
4 (Somewhat agree)	7% (12)
5 (Agree)	21.1% (36)
6 (Strongly agree)	46.4% (79)
Average Score: 4.7	Total: 100% (170)

By looking at Table 7, we can see that the majority of participants, which makes up for 46.4% of the total, strongly agrees with the statement “I would recommend Japan as a travel destination”, while over 20% selected “agree”, 7% selected “somewhat agree”. On the other hand, participants who would not recommend Japan for tourism, who chose “1”, “2”, or “3”, make up for just over one fourth of respondents if combined (25.5%).

Table 8: I would recommend Japan as a study abroad destination

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Strongly disagree)	19.5% (33)
2 (Disagree)	8.2% (14)
3 (Somewhat disagree)	7.6% (13)
4 (Somewhat agree)	14.7% (25)
5 (Agree)	22.4% (38)
6 (Strongly agree)	27.6% (47)
Average Score: 4.0	Total: 100% (170)

When it comes to international student’s opinion of Japan as a study abroad destination, we can observe that it received a slightly harsher evaluation. In fact, over one third of foreign students (35.3%) would not recommend studying in Japan. Although it is a considerably large portion, the majority of participants would recommend studying in Japan, with 27.6% strongly agreeing with the statement.

Table 9: I would like to work in Japan

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Strongly disagree)	26.5% (45)
2 (Disagree)	12.5% (21)
3 (Somewhat disagree)	18.9% (32)
4 (Somewhat agree)	24% (41)
5 (Agree)	10.5% (18)
6 (Strongly agree)	7.6% (13)
Average Score: 3	Total: 100% (170)

With this question, we can observe the fact that the majority of international students would not like to work in Japan, with scores from 1 to 3 accounting for almost 58% of respondents. In particular, over one fourth of students strongly agreed with the statement. Even within students who agreed with the statement, the vast majority selected “4” (somewhat agree).

The above mentioned three statements offer us a clear overview of how international students perceive life in Japan, and the results also show that, as one becomes more integrated in Japanese society (from tourist, to student, to worker), the average score given by international students becomes lower and lower (4.7, 3.9 and 3, respectively). The last two statements, on the other hand, do not involve life in Japan but international students’ opinion on the border measures that the Japanese government implemented during the pandemic. I first ask if they deemed the measures to be fair towards foreigners, and then if they believed that the border measures were the result of xenophobia.

Table 10. I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures were fair towards foreigners

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Strongly disagree)	37.6% (64)
2 (Disagree)	20% (34)
3 (Somewhat disagree)	20.6% (35)
4 (Somewhat agree)	15.9% (27)
5 (Agree)	4.7% (8)
6 (Strongly agree)	1.2% (2)
Average Score: 2.3	Total: 100% (170)

By analyzing the data of table 10, we can observe that the vast majority of international students disagreed with the statement. In fact, almost 80% of respondents deemed the Japanese Covid-19 border measures not to be fair towards foreigners. Also, out of the remaining 20%, almost 16% could only “somewhat agree” with the statement.

Table 11: I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures are NOT the result of xenophobia

Score	% (N. of respondents)
1 (Strongly disagree)	24.7% (42)
2 (Disagree)	17.6% (30)
3 (Somewhat disagree)	24.7% (42)
4 (Somewhat agree)	24.2% (41)
5 (Agree)	7.6% (13)
6 (Strongly agree)	1.2% (2)
Average Score: 2.8	Total: 100% (170)

Although the phrasing of this statement might seem counter-intuitive, I decided to express it this way in order to maintain the same criteria for all questions (with lower scores being attributed to a negative opinion). The results show a very grim reality. In fact, we can see that over two thirds (67%) of respondents believe that the Japanese Covid-19 border measures were a result of xenophobia.

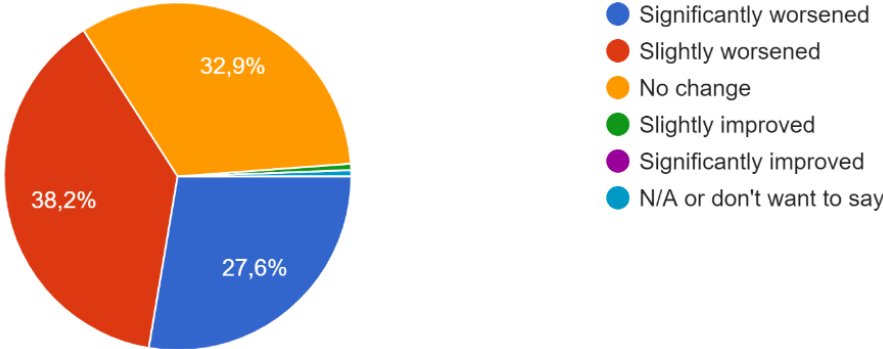
The reason I asked this question is due to the fact that, while the border measures were still in force, many foreign students used terms such as “racism” and “xenophobia” on social media while voicing their disappointment with the current situation, as well as media outlets like *the Japan Times* in a 2021 article titled “Xenophobia spills into Japan’s COVID-era debate on immigration”.¹¹⁰

Question 17 is the last multiple-choice question of the survey, in which I investigated whether international students’ opinion of Japan has changed as a result of the Covid-19 border measures.

Figure 32: As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?

17. As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?

170 risposte



¹¹⁰ Reynolds, Isabel, “Xenophobia spills into Japan’s COVID-era debate on immigration”, *The Japan Times*, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/27/national/xenophobia-japan-immigration/>

Although six options were available, we can observe that the answers are almost entirely made up of three options, which are “Significantly worsened” (27.6%), “Slightly worsened” (38.2%), and “No change” (32.9%). If combined, participants whose opinion of Japan has worsened account for almost two-thirds (65.8%) of all respondents, which is an immensely concerning result in terms of Japanese Soft Power.

Finally, with question 18, “If your opinion of Japan has changed, could you further explain in what way?”, respondents whose opinion of Japan had changed had the chance to elaborate on the way and the reasons their opinion of Japan had changed. Here is the qualitative data of the 53 answers collected, which I categorized in 8 groups:

1. Comments mentioning racism, xenophobia, and the Japanese government not caring about foreigners:

Germany, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“In my opinion the COVID-19 measures of Japan showed clearly that Japan has xenophobic tendencies. Even though other countries became more open after vaccines were available, Japan kept being closed off and the explanations for this decision didn't seem plausible in my opinion. So I believe part of the reason lies in xenophobia.”

Italy, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“Even though I already knew about the slight xenophobia that plagues Japanese society's mindset, as the restrictions were slowly fading away, you could see that they were almost becoming solely for foreign students and workers. Japanese people could freely go around the world, either for work and education or vacation, but no foreigner person (except for a very small exception that was somehow linked to a Japanese person, for example by marriage or family members) was allowed to do it. This made me think that it wasn't just about COVID-19, but also about the idea of having foreigners again after these years of complete isolation. This reinforced the idea that I had about xenophobia within Japanese society, especially in its government and their ideals.”

Italy, 23-26, Male, Significantly worsened:

“With Covid, I not only missed the opportunity of a lifetime to conduct a period of study at one of Japan's top universities, Kyoto University, despite having completed all the necessary bureaucracy to leave, but I also had to forcibly conduct a different mobility program, named "department exchange" with Nanzan University in Japan, and I did not fit in well. In addition to being forced to attend online classes on a night schedule for about 3 months, with courses from 2:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., at the end of the program I found myself not thoroughly enjoying the experience that should have been in presence in Japan. Both of these missed experiences with Japanese universities during Covid showed me the total inability and

ineffectiveness of the Japanese government to commit to a partial reopening of the country, even if only for us students unaware until the very last whether we would be able to leave or not. I had the complete sense that no one cared about our situation, and the universities did nothing to help us during this period except merely responding with simplistic phrases devoid of any desire to commit to answering our questions. The covid restrictions showed me an extremely negative side of Japan that reinforced in me the conviction that I had wasted my time in studying a xenophobic, racist, and uncaring country that has no interest in supporting foreign students and the issues that arose with the difficulties of the covid.”

United States of America, 23-26, Female, Significantly worsened:

“Because of the Japanese border measures, my exchange program at a prestigious Japanese university got cancelled. I lost an amazing opportunity to grow academically and professionally as well, as I had an internship lined up in Japan after completing my semester abroad. While I couldn't enter the country to pursue my education, Japanese nationals were, for the most part, free to exit the country to travel abroad and then come back. I deeply resent the Japanese government for how it treated hundreds of thousands of people that wanted to contribute to Japanese society like all they were all going to just spread the virus in Japan. The border measures were simply discriminatory and xenophobic.”

United States of America, 19-22, Male, Significantly worsened:

“Blatant Xenophobia”

Australia, 19-22, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I have worked really hard during high school to save money to afford to take a year off (before starting university) to spend it in Japan while studying at a Japanese language school. Because of the unreasonable and xenophobic policies that the Japanese government put in act during the pandemic, I had to cancel my plans. Because of this, I lost interest in the Japanese language and culture and decided to pursue a completely different path in my studies”

South Korea, 19-22, Female, Significantly worsened:

“I had briefly gone back to my home country, South Korea, when Covid first hit, and although I was a regular international student at a Japanese University, I was denied re-entry into the country simply because I was not Japanese. To me, this was a clear sign of how xenophobic Japanese policy makers are.”

United Kingdom, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“It was too harsh of a measure which seemed to be abused to uphold racist ideals. Banning tourism is understandable, but all foreigners, even those with Japanese family in Japan, was blatantly cruel.”

France, 27-30, Female, Significantly worsened:

“I had saved so much money to afford attending a vocational school in Japan, and it was my dream to find a job in Japan after finishing my program, but because of Covid it ended up being entirely online. I paid a significant amount of money for poor quality online classes in the middle of the night. It was affecting both my physical and mental health so I ultimately decided to drop out. This only happened because Japanese policy makers were extremely ignorant and racist.”

Russia, 27-30, Male, Significantly worsened:

“Because of the border measures, although I could take some useful online classes, I was not able to do any of the field research that I had planned and I ultimately chose to change subject. Being denied entry into the country after many years of hard work and dedication made an irreparable damage in my opinion of Japan. Now, I cannot help but think of Japan as a racist and unscientific country.”

France, 19-22, Female, Significantly worsened:

“I thought that Japan was trying to open itself towards foreigners but it seems that they don't want foreigners to come to their country. The government but also Japanese people are not as welcoming as one will believe.”

France, 19-22, Male, Slightly worsened:

“Hard to explain but I would say that the fact my exchange has been canceled multiple times, leading me to high highs and low lows consecutively made me think Japan didn't want to welcome us students.”

Italy, 23-26, Female, Significantly worsened:

“I think Japan has not valued the importance of foreign students and the importance FOR foreign students, mostly because it has seen an opportunity to close the door to foreign people and not as much because of the pandemic. Otherwise, it wouldn't have opened its borders much later than other countries (let's say, Korea, for example) and in a way that wasn't always clear and made it so for people to be able to organize themselves to depart once the border did open”

Through these comments, it is apparent that the decisions of Japanese policy makers during the pandemic deeply affected the opinion of Japan of international students, who were brought to believe that the government does not care about foreigners and their lives, as for two years left many people stuck in a “limbo” with no clear sign of when they would reopen the borders. Also, the fact that the borders were never closed to Japanese nationals, and that after a while foreign residents were also able to enter the country, confirms the fact that Japan had the capabilities to let people enter the country somewhat safely, and that it could have let new foreign entries into the country little by little by setting a maximum number of arrivals in order to never exceed its quarantine capacity. However, the government chose not to do so, which led many people to think of Japan as a racist and xenophobic

country. Interestingly, some people also mentioned that the pandemic reinforced the opinion they had of Japan, which means that, even before the border measures, Japan was already struggling with such remarks.

2. Comments mentioning the border measures being strict, rigid, unfair, and unscientific:

United Kingdom, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“The lack of flexibility with regard to studying in Japan was quite poor. I feel as though Japan made very little effort in trying to help people in coming into Japan during this time.”

France, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“Too strict on nonsense regulations”

Germany, 27-30, Female, Slightly worsened:

“I knew even before the pandemic that Japan had strict border policies. But I think the Covid-19 Border Measures were shortsighted”

Italy, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“I think that the measures adopted to prevent the spread of covid in Japan were strict yet inefficient, and not consistent with other G7 countries.”

France, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“Japan has always been known to be pretty close minded towards foreigners but their super harsh border restrictions made it worse in my opinion. They weren’t letting anyone in but they were letting Japanese people travel the world and come back with no problem. I’m in Japan now and I’ve heard from other foreigners that it was quite tough during covid as some Japanese people were seeing foreigners as some sort of covid spreaders”

Germany, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“I do think that the Covid-19 Border Measures were relatively strict compared to the laws and rules which were enforced in Japan itself. This made me realize that there is an irrational tendency in the Japanese government in a time of crisis to blame the danger on the outside. On the other hand, when I actually made it to Japan, I received a warm welcome from most of the people I met which left me with an overall positive impression of a welcoming country towards foreigners.”

Italy, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“I had the chance to live in Japan right after opening the borders and could see the hypocrisy behind

their COVID Border Measures. They enforced excessively strict rules for foreigner travelling to Japan but little to no measures for people already inside the country, which were free to gather and do whatever they wanted with the only requirement of wearing a mask.”

Canada, over 30, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I already felt like Japanese policy makers were strict and unscientific when it comes to foreigners, but the measures that the Japanese Government took during the pandemic confirmed my beliefs”

Italy, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“Gaijin discrimination, unfair treatment”

United Kingdom, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“During the time that I was banned from entering Japan I developed a very negative view towards Japan and almost dropped out of university because I no longer wanted to go to a country that was so discriminatory against foreigners (at this time my Japanese friend was studying as an exchange student in the U.K. so this kind of injustice was difficult for me to accept as it wasn’t fair for my life to be put on hold the way it was when Japanese students could still go abroad - if ‘abroad’ was so dangerous that foreigners could not enter Japan than how was it safe enough for Japanese people to go abroad?). However, since being in Japan and absolutely loving it my opinion has improved again but I will never forget the covid travel ban.”

Belgium, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“Delayed my graduation, was not consistent over time (sometimes open borders, then closed after a week etc.), not equal for everyone as they did send their own students to other countries on exchange without allowing foreign students to come to Japan.”

In these comments, students voiced their complaints about the border measures being completely unfair, as they were, for the majority of the time, one-sided. As mentioned above, claiming that it was too unsafe to have foreigners enter the country, but allowing Japanese people to travel freely and then come back is completely irrational. As described in *Chapter 2*, Japan was not able to prevent new Coronavirus variants from entering the country, therefore one could argue that these excessively strict border measures, in the long run, did more harm than good to the country from both an economic and social standpoint.

3. Comments about the Japanese government being rigid and slow to adapt changes:

Italy, 27-30, Male, Slightly worsened:

“I knew Japanese bureaucracy and authorities were slow and rigid, but not to the extent of taking more than one year to realize that if you are testing everyone coming into the country there is no point in preventing foreign students and workers to come in. Although I have to say that I also believe they were correct in shutting the borders completely during major COVID case surges while other countries were much more careless and incoherent, allowing travel without comprehensive testing and then enforcing stricter and unjustified measures (lockdown etc.) after the damage was already done.”

Belgium, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“I came to experience the rigidity and unwillingness to change of Japanese policymakers.”

Germany, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“For me it highlighted that Japan or better the Japanese government is in a way a bit narrow minded and slow to adapt to rapid changes.”

Italy, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“I see them as too slow in taking decisions and change their behavior.”

Even before the pandemic, Japanese people had a reputation of being rigid, resilient to change, and slow when it comes to decision-making. Although these statements can be classified as stereotypes, the way the Japanese government handled the pandemic consolidated these beliefs in many people.

4. Comments mentioning South Korea:

Argentina, Male, 23-26, Significantly worsened:

“My dream was to look for a job in Japan after I got my bachelor's degree, but since it is not in Japanese studies, I decided to enroll in a Japanese language school to learn the language and culture before starting to look for a job. However, because of the Japanese ban on foreigners and no clear timeline of when the country would open again, I decided to switch to South Korea instead of waiting.”

Thailand, 18 or under, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I lost all interest I had in Japan. Glad I went to South Korea instead.”

South Korea, 19-22, Male, Slightly worsened:

“Although I was personally not affected by the Japanese border measures, reading about them online

made me feel very sad for all of the hundreds of thousands of students who, just like me, wanted to study in Japan. I also noticed that many of them decided to come to my country (South Korea) instead, since our government was much quicker in allowing foreigners in. I also met a few people who came to Korea just so that they could take their online classes from their Japanese universities without having to stay up all night.”

Germany, 18 or under, Female, Significantly worsened:

“Waiting for the borders to open was really frustrating. The border measures were, in my opinion, extremely racist and way too strict. I got fed up and ended up attending a Korean language school in South Korea instead and I am really happy with my decision”

In recent years, South Korea has been gaining more and more economic and cultural relevance not only in East Asia, but also globally. Since the Korean government decided to open its borders to foreign students much sooner compared to Japan, Korean educational institutions were able to attract a considerable number of students who were waiting to enter Japan. As the Japanese government gave no clear timeline of when it would start welcoming international students, it is not unreasonable to think that many students decided to change their study abroad destination.

5. Comments about students feeling frustrated, hopeless, and untrusting of the Japanese government:

Vietnam, 19-22, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I spent the entirety of my two-year master's degree program taking online classes, simply because the Japanese government kept changing their mind on when/how to open the borders. Even when the borders were temporarily open, I was not able to enter the country since, by the time I was able to request a visa, the borders were closed again, which left me completely hopeless and frustrated.”

Belgium, 23-26, Female, Slightly worsened:

“Although I was able to study in Japan unaffected by the border measures, seeing how foreigners were treated by the Japanese government during the pandemic made me rethink trying to find a job in Japan.”

Iceland, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“I had worked hard for a long time to fulfill my dream of studying in Japan and when that dream was suddenly taken away because of the Japanese covid border measures I became frustrated and saddened. These sudden changes to my plans left me feeling stranded, lonely, and unsure of my future.”

United States of America, 27-30, Female, Significantly worsened:

“Seeing Japanese tourists entering my country freely while I was not able to enter Japan to pursue further education felt extremely frustrating and unfair.”

Australia, 23-26, Male, Slightly worsened:

“It was frustrating to know Japanese students were able to come to my university on “exchange” whilst I was still unable to enter their country myself.”

India, over 30, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I have waited to enter Japan to start attending a vocational school for almost 2 years. Since Japan was never clear on when it was going to let foreigners in again, I decided to cancel my plans and started working in India, my home country, as I could no longer support myself financially. I could look for employment in Japan with the experience I got from my current job, but I no longer trust the Japanese government. I feel that, as a foreigner, I could lose my rights at any moment, just like the foreigners who lived in Japan during COVID and that would not be able to re-enter if they left.”

Brazil, 23-26, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I still love Japan as a country, its culture, its food, its language. However, I now know that, as a foreigner living in Japan, I could lose everything that I worked hard for in this country with little to no regard from the government. Because of this, I think I will go back to my country and look for employment there after graduating from my Japanese university, while before the pandemic, I was sure I would start working in Japan.”

These comments show just how deep the border measures affected not only the lives of international students during the pandemic, but also their future. Many were hoping to pursue their education in Japan but couldn't, while others who were already studying in Japan had to rethink about their career choices as they lost their trust in the Japanese government. I believe that it is going to take quite some time for the Japanese government to fully regain foreigners' trust after having been affected by the entry restrictions.

6. Comments mentioning the MEXT Scholarship:

Iceland, 19-22, Male, Slightly worsened:

“Because I was a MEXT Scholarship student, I was allowed into the country during a time when most foreigners were not. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity given to me from the Japanese Government, but during the time I spent in Japan, I was basically seen and treated like a virus spreader.”

France, 19-22, Male, Slightly worsened:

“I was disappointed seeing how the government did not allow exchange student from overseas except for the ones who obtained the MEXT scholarships. It felt like they could open the border but choose not to, only for opening it for the "chosen ones". It also felt like the measures were a bit extreme despite the current situation at that time. When the measures started being less suffocative, it was blurry where the line was as a foreigner, especially since Japanese people surrounding me were still really cautious about going out, meeting people, wearing masks, etc. ...”

Kyrgyzstan, 23-26, Female, Slightly improved:

“The online classes that I was able to attend thanks to the MEXT scholarship were conducted on a good level, professors were trying their best for providing students with necessary information, etc.”

It comes to no surprise that, out of 170 respondents, only one person stated that their opinion of Japan had improved, even if only slightly. Also, the fact that this individual is a MEXT Scholarship recipient further demonstrates just how effective the program is to strengthen Japan’s Soft Power. In fact, MEXT Scholarship students were always given priority treatment and were often allowed to enter the country when other international students were not.

7. Comments mentioning losing interest in Japan:

Canada, 23-26, Female, Significantly worsened:

“I have dedicated my entire university career to Japanese studies, only to find myself rejected twice (2020 and 2021, the latter while the rest of the world had already opened its borders) and thus denied meaningful opportunities and experiences. Right now, I no longer want to deal with Japan or anything related to it, and I have shifted my interests to a completely different field.”

Brazil, 18 or under, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I lost my opportunity to study for a year at a Japanese high school, and since the Japanese government did not release any timeline regarding when/how it would open the borders, I also missed the opportunity to change my study abroad destination. I completely lost my interest in the country and I don't think I'll visit it in the future.”

Thailand, 18 or under, Male, Significantly worsened:

“I lost all interest I had in Japan. Glad I went to South Korea instead.”

South Africa, over 30, Male, Significantly worsened:

“Because of the Japanese border measures, I had to put my PhD research on hold, and during that time,

I suffered a lot financially. My interest in Japan has now faded a bit, and looking back, I wish I had chosen to dedicate all of those years to a different country.”

Argentina, 27-30, Male, Significantly worsened:

“Since a significant part the research for PhD had to be done in Japan, I had to put my life on hold for over a year and a half, which put me in a very tough spot, especially in in regards of my finances and mental health. Even after I finally made it to Japan, I could tell that my passion for my research topic had definitely faded because of how poorly I was treated during COVID.”

Many of the students who mentioned losing interest in Japan were people who had dedicated many years of their lives to learn about the Japanese culture and language, who then presumably felt deeply betrayed by how they were being treated by the Japanese government. Others, on the other hand, seem to be people who were in the initial stages of them being interested in the country, and the upfront refusal from entering Japan probably caused a shift in their interests.

8. Other:

United Kingdom, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“Japanese “mass behavior” became very apparent. Lack of individuality among people disappoints me somewhat.”

Italy, 27-30, Male, Slightly worsened:

“My dream of studying in Japan should have remained a dream, instead it got cancelled, I had to apply again, it got cancelled again for one semester and I lost almost two years of time (2020-2022) to have an overall bad experience the 6 months I spent there.”

Hong Kong, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“The services which should be available (visa services) have been severely delayed and almost interrupted plans to go to exchange despite that it is after Feb. 2022”

United Kingdom, 19-22, Female, No change:

“I already had an image of Japan being unintentionally unaware/uncaring of problems stemming from systemic policies. e.g., Recent LGBT legislation changes actually made LGBT discrimination worse not better. So, it didn’t change my opinion but further cemented it instead.

United States of America, 19-22, Female, No change:

“While my opinion of Japan has worsened, it is not due to their Covid restrictions. It was more so due to how I was treated there.”

Egypt, 23-26, Male, Significantly worsened:

“Lost an amazing opportunity to expand my education by attending a vocational school in Japan. I had already paid my school's fees, which were not reimbursed to me. I am extremely unsatisfied with how I was treated by both my school and by the Japanese government.”

United Kingdom, 19-22, Female, Slightly worsened:

“I heard there were difficulties for Japanese nationals who returned to the country during covid if they did not look Japanese (especially for ハーフ)”

3.2 Cross Analysis of the Survey's Data

Although the first overview of the data already gives us a great quantity of information about how international students' opinion of Japan has changed as a result of the Covid-19 border measures, there are still questions that need to be answered. We have discovered that the majority of foreign students claim that their opinion of Japan has worsened due to the entry restrictions implemented by the Japanese government from the year 2020 to 2022. However, to determine if this has had a negative impact on the Japanese Soft Power, we also need to shed light on whether the negative effects of the entry restrictions will have an impact on the long term, and we need to unravel whether the border measures impacted different groups of people in a distinct manner.

To give an answer to the above-mentioned questions, first and foremost, I will compare how different groups of students answered question 17, “As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?”. Earlier, we discovered that 27.6% of students selected “Significantly worsened”, 38.2% chose “Slightly worsened”, while 32.9% claimed that their opinion of Japan had not changed. Now, I would like to compare the responses of students who have been affected by the border measures with the responses of students who have not been affected. As I briefly mentioned, there is a disparity in the number of respondents in these two groups, with 65.9% of students (112 people) claiming to have been affected by Japan's entry restrictions, and 34.1% (58 people) stating that they were unaffected. Therefore, in order to fairly compare the two, I have randomly extracted 58 answers of the 112 people who were not affected to match the number of the students who were. As one would expect, the cross analysis of the data shows that people who were affected by the Japanese Covid-19 border measures were significantly more likely to report their opinion of Japan to have worsened. In fact, over 60% of students who were not affected by the entry restrictions reported

no change in their opinion of Japan, in contrast with the 14.3% of the students who were. Also, while around 40% of students who were affected claimed that their opinion had significantly worsened, we can see that less than 2% of the participants who were not affected by the border measures chose this option. Interestingly, a very similar number of people in the two groups stated that their opinion of the country had slightly worsened (around 38% of the people who were not affected, and 41% of the students who were). The fact that over one third of international students claimed that their opinion of Japan had slightly worsened despite not personally experiencing the effects of the border measures shows just how negatively the Japanese government’s policies had been perceived abroad.

Table 12: Cross analysis of questions 12-17

	As a result of the Covid-19 Border Measures, has your opinion of Japan changed?					
Were you affected?	N/A or don't want to say	No change	Significantly worsened	Slightly improved	Slightly worsened	Total
No	0.00%	60.32%	1.59%	0.00%	38.10%	100.00%
Yes	1.59%	14.29%	41.27%	1.59%	41.27%	100.00%

In addition to this, we can further analyze how international students’ opinion of Japan has changed accordingly to how they have been affected by the border measures. By looking at *Table 13*, we can observe that students who were not able to enter the country (who had their study abroad period in Japan canceled or conducted entirely online) are much more likely to have experienced a significant worsening in their opinion of Japan, while the majority of students who were eventually able to go to Japan (who chose “conducted partially online” and “postponed”), selected “slightly worsened”. Therefore, when it comes to students who conducted their study abroad period partially online or had it postponed, we can see that eventually being able to study in Japan did not entirely repair the damages that the entry restrictions inflicted on their opinion of Japan.

Table 13: Cross analysis of questions 13-17

	As a result of the Covid-19 Border Measures, has your opinion of Japan changed?					
My study abroad period in Japan was	N/A or don't want to say	No change	Significantly worsened	Slightly improved	Slightly worsened	Total
Canceled	0.00%	11.54%	61.54%	0.00%	26.92%	100.00%
Conducted entirely online	0.00%	8.33%	50.00%	0.00%	41.67%	100.00%
Conducted partially online	0.00%	23.08%	23.08%	7.69%	46.15%	100.00%
Postponed	8.33%	16.67%	8.33%	0.00%	66.67%	100.00%

All the more, almost 40% of international students who were not affected by the entry restrictions reported their opinion of Japan to have slightly worsened (see *Table 12*), and if we investigate the difference between unaffected students who studied in Japan before and after the Covid-19 border measures, we discover that over half of the participants (51.7%) who studied in Japan after the entry restrictions had been lifted have experienced a slight change for the worse in their opinion of the country despite being unaffected by the measures, while only 22.2% of students who studied in Japan before the pandemic reported such change. This, in addition to the other considerations made above, allows us to say that the border measures are potentially going to keep having a negative effect on the Japanese Soft Power for the next few years.

Table 14: Cross analysis of questions 8-17 (Respondents who were unaffected by the border measures only)

When did you study in Japan? (Unaffected)	As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?				
	N/A or don't want to say	No change	Significantly worsened	Slightly worsened	Total
After February 2022 (After Covid-19 Border Measures)	0.00%	44.83%	3.45%	51.72%	100.00%
Before March 2020 (Before Covid-19 Border Measures)	0.00%	77.78%	0.00%	22.22%	100.00%

However, although the overall majority of respondents (65.8%) stated that their opinion of Japan has worsened, in *Question 16*, many participants still gave very positive scores when asked whether they would recommend Japan as a travel or study abroad destination, to which nearly half of respondents gave a score of 6 (strongly agree), and some gave a positive evaluation even when asked if they would like to work in Japan (see *Figure 31*). By combining the answers given to these three statements, we obtain an comprehensive score, where the maximum score is 18, on how students perceive life in Japan (as a foreign tourist, student, and worker) to be. Although, even in this case, we can observe a difference in people who were or were not affected when looking at the average scores given to these three statements (the average combined score of people who were affected is 10/18, while it is 14.9/18 for students who were not affected), the overall evaluation is still a positive one.

On the other hand, when it comes to recommending Japan as a travel or study abroad destination, and wanting to work in Japan, we can observe a considerably large gap when comparing participants according to their knowledge of the Japanese culture and language. As the data of *Table 14* and *Table 15* shows, the scores given by people on the lower end of the spectrum of both language proficiency (“I do not speak Japanese”, “Beginner” and “Pre-intermediate”) and cultural knowledge (“Not at all knowledgeable” and “Somewhat knowledgeable”) were significantly lower than the scores of other

groups. Interestingly, in addition to this, the top scores were given by people on the middle of the spectrum when it comes to both language capabilities (“Intermediate” and “Upper-intermediate”) and cultural knowledge (“Moderately knowledgeable”), and not by the most knowledgeable groups.

Table 15: Cross analysis of questions 6-16 (statements 1 to 3)

Rate your Japanese language proficiency	Average Combined Score of Question 16’s Statements 1 to 3
I do not speak Japanese	4.7/18
Beginner	6.9/18
Pre-intermediate	7.4/18
Native speaker / Native level	8.8/18
Advanced / Business level	9.9/18
Upper-intermediate	12.5/18
Intermediate	12.9/18

Table 16: Cross analysis of questions 7-16 (statements 1 to 3)

Rate your knowledge of the Japanese culture	Average Combined Score of Question 16’s Statements 1 to 3
Not at all knowledgeable	5.4/18
Somewhat knowledgeable	8.4/18
Very knowledgeable	10.4/18
Moderately knowledgeable	12.2/18

One can assume that people with less knowledge did not spend much time learning about Japan’s culture and language before Japan enforced its strict Covid-19 border measures, therefore, if they found themselves completely rejected from entering during the earlier stages of them showing interest in Japan, it is only natural for them to feel considerably negatively about the country, as they did not have the chance to experience and see Japan in a positive light. Also, we saw that the groups with the most cultural knowledge (“Moderately knowledgeable”) and with the highest language proficiency levels (“Advanced / Business level” and “Native speaker / Native level”) averaged scores towards the middle of the spectrum. This is most likely due to the fact that, while on one hand many of them probably had other opportunities to experience and see in a positive way, and therefore gave high scores, others might have felt disappointed and frustrated by how they were being treated by the Japanese government, especially after working hard to reach high language and cultural competences. Although these are nothing but assumptions, there are several comments left by the survey’s participants who confirm this statement. Below are a few examples:

South Africa, over 30, Male, Advanced / Business level (language), Very knowledgeable (culture):
“Because of the Japanese border measures, I had to put my PhD research on hold, and during that time, I suffered a lot financially. Looking back, I wish I had chosen to dedicate all of those years to a different country.”

Brazil, 23-26, Male, Native level (language), Very knowledgeable (culture):
“I still love Japan as a country, its culture, its food, its language. However, I now know that, as a foreigner living in Japan, I could lose everything that I worked hard for in this country with little to no regard from the government. Because of this, I think I will go back to my country and look for employment there after graduating from my Japanese university, while before the pandemic, I was sure I would start working in Japan.”

Italy, 23-26, Female, Advanced / Business level (language), Very knowledgeable (culture):
“I have dedicated my entire university career to Japanese studies, only to find myself rejected twice (2020 and 2021, the latter while the rest of the world had already opened its borders) and thus denied meaningful opportunities and experiences. Right now, I no longer want to deal with Japan or anything related to it, and I have shifted my interests to a completely different field.”

After analyzing the influence that Japanese language proficiency and knowledge of the Japanese culture had on participants’ responses to the statements “I would recommend Japan as a travel destination”, “I would recommend Japan as a study abroad destination”, and “I would like to work in Japan”, I will examine whether different types of international students, on average, gave distinctive scores to these statements, focusing in particular to the difference between MEXT Scholarship students and non-MEXT Scholarship students. To determine the effectiveness of the MEXT Scholarship as a tool of Soft Power, I decided to combine the responses of all non-MEXT Scholarship students (which include exchange students, international regular students, privately-financed students, and visiting researchers / visiting students) and find their weighted average. The result of this comparison is summarized in *Table 16*, where we can observe that, in regard to the three statements mentioned above, non-MEXT Scholarship students gave combined a score of 9.5 out of 18 on average, while MEXT Scholarship students’ score averaged to 14.4 out of 18, creating a difference of almost 5 points.

Table 17: Cross analysis of questions 11-16 (statements 1 to 3)

Type of international student	Average Combined Score of Question 16’s Statements 1 to 3
MEXT Scholarship students	14.4/18
non-MEXT Scholarship students	9.5/18

Through this analysis we determined that, on average, MEXT Scholarship students are significantly more likely to recommend Japan as a travel destination, as a study abroad destination, and are more prone to wanting to work in Japan compared to other types of international students (even comparing each of the three statement’s score singularly), which makes them great “ambassadors” of the Japanese Soft Power and proves the effectiveness of the scholarship program.

Lastly, while analyzing results from a geographical standpoint, the only factor where a distinct pattern can be noticed is when comparing how respondents of different nationalities replied to *Question 16’s* last two statements, which are “I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures were fair towards foreigners”, and “I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures are NOT the result of xenophobia”. This analysis comes to the interesting discovery that, while all other nationalities, on average, seemed to disagree with these statements, participants from China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan) generally agreed with them. In fact, by looking at the two tables below, we can observe that, on the scale where a “1” means to strongly disagree, and a “6” means to strongly agree, responses from Chinese nationals averaged to a 4.1 (“somewhat agree”) when asked if they believed that the border measures were fair towards foreigners, while the weighted average of other nationalities results into a score of 1.7 (between “strongly disagree” and “disagree”). Similarly, when asked if they believed the border measures not to be the results of xenophobia, Chinese nationals’ score averaged to a 4.5 (between “somewhat agree” and “agree”), while the responses of participants of other nationalities averaged to a 2.1 (“disagree”). This is most likely due to the fact that the Covid-19 border measures implemented by the Chinese government throughout the pandemic, were very similar, if not even more strict, than the Japanese ones.

Table 18: Cross analysis of questions 1-16 (statement 4)

Nationality	Average Score of Question 16’s Statement 4 (Border measures were fair towards foreigners)
China	4.1/6
Other Nationalities	1.7/6

Table 19: Cross analysis of questions 1-16 (statement 5)

Nationality	Average Score of Question 16’s Statement 5 (Border measures NOT the result of xenophobia)
China	4.5/6
Other Nationalities	2.1/6

Chapter 4. Conclusions

Through this study, after defining the concept of Soft Power, I analyzed the limits of the Japanese Hard Power and the main resources of its Soft Power. As mentioned in *Chapter 1*, the first element that hinders the Japanese Hard Power is its stagnant economy, which Japan has been suffering from ever since the burst of the economic bubble (1991), which makes it more challenging for Japan to use economic leverage, especially in light of the rapid growth of China and South Korea's economies. Then, the influence of Japan's pacifist Constitution strongly inhibits its military power, as Japan formally renounces to its right of belligerence through Article 9. Lastly, as population is often listed as one of the potential Hard Power resources of a nation, I dwelled into the Japanese demographic crisis, mentioning both the long life expectancy of Japanese nationals and the scarily low fertility rate, which are causing Japan's population to keep ageing, as well as shrinking. After determining the main resources of a country's Soft Power to be its culture, values, and policies, I analyzed Japan's Soft Power, starting with its "Cool Japan" strategy, which aims to revitalize the Japanese society and strengthen its Soft Power through its initiatives. The most recent Cool Japan strategy was formulated in 2019 by surveying foreign nationals with extensive knowledge of Japan about what they believed to be attractive about the country. By doing so, it was possible to identify what the gateways through which foreign nationals discover their interest towards the Japanese culture are. These gateways include elements of the Japanese high culture, such as Japanese literature, art, temples, and shrines, as well as elements of the Japanese pop culture, for example, anime, manga, J-pop, and videogames. The Strategy also mentions that due to several events that Japan hosted and is going to host until the year 2025, Japan has been and will keep being in the spotlight of international attention, which is why the Strategy states that there is the need to create an environment where diversity is embraced and where the people who are fascinated by Japan can actively contribute and incorporate their perspectives to Cool Japan initiatives. Other than the Cool Japan strategy, the Japanese government conducts several public diplomacy activities, out of which I particularly focused on analyzing cultural diplomacy programs such as the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program and several international educational exchange programs, such as the MEXT Scholarship Program. Japan's many Soft Power resources, in fact, heavily contribute to making the country a desirable destination for numerous new foreign tourists, students and workers each year. However, from the year 2020 to 2022, Japan kept its borders closed to most foreigners, whether they had requested entry into the country for tourism or to pursue their education. A survey conducted in January 2022 by Davide Rossi reveals that international students' mental health, physical health and finances had severely declined, and that their opinion of Japan had plummeted as a result of the ongoing "travel ban" imposed by the government.

As the main purpose of this research is to investigate the effects that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures had on the Japanese Soft Power, focusing on how international student's opinion of Japan has changed as a result of them, I conducted a survey to attempt to give an answer to the following questions:

1. Has international student's opinion of Japan has changed as a result of the Japanese Covid-19 border measures?
2. If so, do the entry restrictions have the potential to have a long-term negative effect on the Japanese Soft Power?
3. Were different groups of people affected differently? If so, how?

With a first overview of the survey, "How the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected international students' opinion of Japan", which, differently from the one conducted by Davide Rossi, targeted both students who had been affected by the entry restrictions and students who had not, it was unveiled that 27.6% of respondents claimed that their opinion of Japan has "significantly worsened", 38.2% selected "slightly worsened" and 32.9% chose "no change". This answers the first research question, as a combined value of 65.8% of international students whose opinion of Japan has been negatively impacted by the entry restrictions.

Next, to attempt answering the second question, I conducted a series of cross analyses of the data I collected with the survey. Firstly, I compared the answers to the question "As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?" of participants who were affected by the border measurements to the ones of the students who weren't, to which I discovered that, although students who were affected by the border measures were much more likely to choose "significantly worsened" (41.3%), and students who were not affected by the measures, for the most part reported "no change" (60.3%), almost the same number of participants from both categories selected "slightly worsened" (around 40% each). Also, although the opinion of Japan of students whose study abroad period in Japan was conducted partially online or got postponed was not affected as negatively as the opinion of the students who conducted their studies completely online or had them cancelled, it is clear that being able to eventually study in Japan did not entirely repair the damages that the entry restrictions inflicted on their opinion of the country. In addition to this, since almost 40% of participants who were not affected by the measures reported a slight worsening of their opinion of the country, I decided to compare the answers of unaffected students who studied in Japan before March 2020 to those who studied in Japan after February 2022, and discovered that students who studied in Japan after the border measures had been lifted tend to have a worse opinion of the country, despite non being personally affected. Through this process, I arrived to the conclusion that, while it is too soon to determine whether the border measures will have a negative impact on international students' opinion of Japan in the long term and more research will be needed in the years to come, it is safe to assume that they are having a negative effect in the short to medium term.

When it comes to determining how different groups of were affected by the border measures, I discovered that there is a noticeably large gap in how different groups scored (from 1 to 6) the statements "I would recommend Japan as a travel destination", "I would recommend Japan as a study abroad destination" and "I would like to work in Japan". When scores were compared according to the participants' Japanese language proficiency level and cultural knowledge, I noticed that the individuals

on the lower spectrum for both factors (with low language proficiency and low cultural knowledge) have given the worst scores, as they presumably found themselves being rejected from entering the country during the earlier stages of them showing interest in Japan, leaving them with just a negative image. Then, to determine the effectiveness of the MEXT Scholarship Program as a tool for Soft Power, I compared the combined average scores of MEXT Scholarship students with the other types of students, the result of which is that, on average, MEXT Scholarship students consistently gave higher scores to all three statements, with a combined score of 14.4 out of 18, in comparison to the 9.5 out of 18 of non-MEXT Scholarship students. Lastly, while investigating whether nationality played a role in how the border measures were perceived, I noticed how Chinese nationals replied to the statements “I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures were fair towards foreigners”, and “I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures are NOT the result of xenophobia” in a completely different way than other participants. In fact, while students from most other countries replied with either “strongly disagree” or “disagree”, the majority of Chinese students selected “somewhat agree”. As I previously mentioned, this is most likely due to the Chinese government imposing even stricter border measures than Japan for most of the pandemic, making Chinese students perceive the Japanese ones as rather fair and not xenophobic. Also, the fact that respondents from other Asian countries, like Vietnam and South Korea, did not reply to these questions the same way as Chinese nationals did, allows me to exclude geographical closeness and cultural similarities as the reason.

Lastly, when inspecting the qualitative data collected through the last question of the survey, in which participants could further elaborate on how their opinion of Japan has changed, I identified several comments mentioning racism, and xenophobia, others complaining about the Japanese government being too rigid and slow to adapt to changes, and more about people losing interest in Japan, out of which many allegedly chose to study in South Korea instead. In addition to this, during the time the Japanese borders were closed, many foreign nationals used the phrase “Cruel Japan” instead of “Cool Japan” when raising their voices against the one-sided entry restrictions imposed by the Japanese government, which they did not only post on social media platforms (“#CruelJapan” was a trending topic on Japanese *Twitter*), but also by holding protests outside Japanese consulates and embassies around the world in January, 2022.¹¹¹ These are all very concerning facts, especially considering just how important international educational exchange programs are as a resource of Soft Power. A recent research by Gallarotti (2022) called: “Pedagogical offensives: soft power, higher education and foreign policy”, explains that study abroad experiences are extremely beneficial not only to students, who become more open-minded and accepting of different cultures, but also to nations, as foreign students, by experiencing “cultural imprinting” essentially become ambassadors of their host nations and tend to

¹¹¹ Jibiki, Koya, “‘Cruel Japan’: Closed borders ignite furor from those shut out”, *Nikkei Asia*, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Japan-immigration/Cruel-Japan-Closed-borders-ignite-furor-from-those-shut-out>

think and act in a favorable way to the host country's Soft Power.¹¹² However, as is apparent by the replies to the final question of the survey, Japan was not the only choice for many students, who decided to switch to South Korea, which was accepting students at that time. In fact, Davide Rossi, whose company "Go! Go! Nihon", which in 2016 branched out in "Go! Go! Hanguk", helping students to study abroad in South Korea as well, in a *Reuters* interview mentioned that "Japan is no longer the main destination for study in East Asia, with more students now going to South Korea". In the same *Reuters* article, it was explained how the prolonged Japanese Covid-19 border measures caused a shift away from Japanese studies, defining it as a "a giant own-goal for Japan after decades of masterful use of soft power".¹¹³ In fact, the border measures restricted the flow foreign students, as well as foreign tourists and workers, which did not only have a negative impact on the economy, but also to Japan's cultural diplomacy, as it tremendously limited the opportunities for cultural exchange. In addition to this, when a country's policies promote values and interests shared by others, they can become a source of Soft Power. In the very beginning of the pandemic, the way the Japanese government handled the spread of the disease and its border measures were seen as effective and reasonable, which might have enhanced Japan's image as a responsible and capable nation. However, as time went by, and especially as vaccines became widely available, the Japanese entry restrictions were perceived as overly strict and unfair, as they were mostly one-sided. Because of these factors, it is safe to assume that the border measures enforced by the Japanese government caused a tremendous loss in the country's Soft Power.

A few respondents of the survey commented that they believe that, during the pandemic, although Japan could have opened its borders to new foreign entries, it decided not to because it did not want to start welcoming foreigners again. However, after a year since the Covid-19 border measures against international students have been lifted, the government not only aims to regain the number of international students it had before the pandemic by 2027 (around 300.000 students), but has also set a target to attract 400.000 foreign students by 2033. In addition to this, due to Japan's low birth rate and ageing population, Japan needs to attract talented foreign workers. Therefore, the government is also planning to start measures in order to encourage international students to find employment in Japan following their studies, and one example would be to enable foreign students to take part in internship programs.¹¹⁴ It is difficult to determine whether these targets are realistic or not, however, in order to achieve these goals the government should not only expand the MEXT Scholarship Program, as it was proved to be a great tool for the of Soft Power for the country, but also actively try to repair the negative image of Japan that has developed among foreign students due to the Covid-19 border measures, by

¹¹² Gallarotti, Giulio, M., "Pedagogical offensives: soft power, higher education and foreign policy", *Journal of Political Power*, (2022):p. 495-500

¹¹³ Lies, Elaine, "Japan's border crackdown leaves students in limbo and economy in a pinch", *Reuters*, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-border-crackdown-leaves-students-limbo-economy-pinch-2022-01-25/>

¹¹⁴ "Japan aims to regain pre-pandemic level of international students", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2023, <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20220622-39732/>

creating an environment where studying in Japan is more easily achievable and where international students are truly welcomed.

Bibliography and online references

English References:

“Aspiring JETs”, The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, 2023, <https://jetprogramme.org/en/aspiring/>. Accessed 20.08.2023.

Baldwin, David, “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies,” *World Politics* 31, 2 (1979): p. 94.

“Cool Japan Strategy”, The Cabinet Office, Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, (2019): p. 13, https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/about/about.html 25.08.2023.

Dahl, Robert A., “The Concept of Power”, *Behavioral Science* (1957): p. 201

“Defining Public Diplomacy”, Center on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California, 2022, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-is-pd#:~:text=In%20the%20past%20few%20decades,advancing%20its%20foreign%20policy%20goals.,> Accessed 15.08.2023

“Definition of Public Diplomacy”, U.S. Department of State, Dictionary of International Relations Terms, (1987): p. 85

EF English Proficiency Index, “The world’s largest ranking of countries and regions by English skills”, (2022), <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/>, Accessed 11.08.2023.

“Fumio Kishida becomes Japan's 100th prime minister”, *Nikkei Asia*, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-election/Fumio-Kishida-becomes-Japan-s-100th-prime-minister>, 30.08.2023.

Gallarotti, Giulio, M., “Pedagogical offensives: soft power, higher education and foreign policy”, *Journal of Political Power*, (2022):p. 495-500

Gallarotti, Giulio M., “Soft Power: What it is, why it’s important, and the conditions under which it can be effectively used”, *Division II Faculty Publications, Paper 57* (2011): p. 6

Gilpin, Robert, “War and Change in World Politics”, New York: Cambridge University Press (1981): p. 13

Gordon, Andrew, “A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present” ,Oxford University Press, (2014): 104

Hayakawa, Kayoko et al., “SARS-CoV-2 infection among returnees on charter flights to Japan from Hubei, China: a report from National Center for Global Health and Medicine”, Global Health and Medicine, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7731067/>, Accessed 26.08.2023.

Hayden, Craig, “The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts”, Lanham, Lexington Books, (2011) p. 84-138.

“History”, The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, 2023, <https://jetprogramme.org/en/history/>, Accessed 17.08.2023.

Iwamoto, Kentaro. “Kishida says Japan on 'brink' of social dysfunction as births fall”, (2023), <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Kishida-says-Japan-on-brink-of-social-dysfunction-as-births-fall>, Accessed 11.08.2023.

“Japan aims to regain pre-pandemic level of international students”, The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2023, <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20220622-39732/>, Accessed 25.09.2023.

“Japan's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations”, Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pko/pamph2005.html> , Accessed 09.08.2023.

“Japan election: PM Fumio Kishida declares victory for ruling LDP”, BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59110828>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

“Japan's shrinking population defies efforts to stave off decline”, Nikkei Asia, (2023), <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Society/Japan-s-shrinking-population-defies-efforts-to-stave-off-decline>, Accessed 09.08.2023.

“Japan's top business lobby calls for further easing of border controls”, The Japan Times, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/02/22/business/keidanren-border-controls-further-easing/>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

“Japan to open to tourists after COVID, with masks, insurance and chaperones required”, Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-open-tourists-after-two-years-only-with-masks-insurance-guides-2022-06-07/>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

“Japan to suspend entry of overseas travelers due to omicron”, Nikkei Asia, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Japan-to-suspend-entry-of-overseas-travelers-due-to-omicron>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

“Japan to waive PCR-test rule for triple-vaccinated travelers”, Asahi Shimbun, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14702058>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

Jibiki, Koya, “Cruel Japan!: Closed borders ignite furor from those shut out”, Nikkei Asia, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Japan-immigration/Cruel-Japan-Closed-borders-ignite-furor-from-those-shut-out>, Accessed 26.09.2023.

“Joint Statement on the Entry Restrictions in Japan”, German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (AHK Japan), 2021, <https://japan.ahk.de/en/infothek/newsroom/news-details/joint-statement-on-the-entry-restrictions-in-japan>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

Lies, Elaine, “Japan's border crackdown leaves students in limbo and economy in a pinch”, Reuters, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-border-crackdown-leaves-students-limbo-economy-pinch-2022-01-25/>, Accessed 26.09.2023.

McConnell, David L., “Japan’s Image Problem and the Soft Power Solution The JET Program as Cultural Diplomacy”, *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., (2008): p. 18-31

McGray, Douglas, “Japan’s Gross National Cool”, *Foreign Policy*, (2002): p. 1-8

Mearsheimer, John J., “The tragedy of Great Power Politics”, New York, Norton (2001): p. 55

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Border enforcement measures to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)”, 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/fna/page4e_001053.html. Note: a Web Archive was used to examine previous version of the webpage. , Accessed 15.09.2023.

Munez, E., "Sakoku." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sakoku>. , Accessed 14.09.2023.

Normile, Dennis, “Japan ends its COVID-19 state of emergency - The country’s COVID-19 countermeasures relied on voluntary social distancing and limited testing”, *Science.org*, 2020, <https://www.science.org/content/article/japan-ends-its-covid-19-state-emergency>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

Nye, Joseph S. Jr., “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”, New York, Public Affairs (2004): p. 1-2

Nye, Joseph S., “Soft power: the evolution of a concept”, *Journal of Political Power* (2021): p. 1-14

“Pandemic concerns dominate Lower House election campaign”, *NHK World*, 2021, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/1803/>, Accessed 17.09.2023.

“Population Pyramid of Japan”, (2023), <https://www.populationpyramid.net/japan/2023/>, Accessed 09.08.2023. , Accessed 15.08.2023.

“Result of International Student Survey in Japan, 2022”, Japan Student Services Organization, (2023): p.4

Rossi, Davide, “How the Japanese Travel Ban Has Affected the Lives of International Students”, Open the Borders to Safe Study in Japan Association, 2022, <https://educationisnottourism.com/>, Accessed 25.09.2023.

Sekine, Shinichi, “Japanese life expectancy falls for the 2nd year in a row”, Asahi Shimbun, (2023), <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14968992>, Accessed 11.08.2023. , Accessed 30.08.2023.

Shimizu K, Negita M., “Lessons Learned from Japan's Response to the First Wave of COVID-19: A Content Analysis”, Healthcare (Basel), 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7711542/>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

Slodkowski, Antoni, “Japan considers Oct. 17 election as PM ratings hit record lows”, Reuters, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-pm-sugas-ratings-hit-record-lows-party-leader-race-looms-2021-08-30/>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

Sugiura, Eri, “Japan’s tight border rules threaten foreign investment, business groups”, Financial Times, 2022, [sayhttps://www.ft.com/content/6a007e4a-2398-4ff2-8b79-ed7190a0e504](https://www.ft.com/content/6a007e4a-2398-4ff2-8b79-ed7190a0e504), Accessed 20.09.2023.

Takahashi. Ryusei, “How the 2020 Tokyo Olympics is being held during the pandemic: What we know”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/06/10/national/tokyo-olympics-covid-19-japan/>, Accessed 18.09.2023.

The Constitution of Japan and Criminal Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 9, “RENUNCIATION OF WAR”, Ministry of Justice: (1947), https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

The Constitution of Japan and Criminal Statutes, Chapter 9, Article 96, “AMENDMENTS”, Ministry of Justice: (1947), https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

“Tokyo Games cancellation would cost Japan \$17 billion, Nomura says”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/05/25/business/economy-business/nomura-olympics-cancellation-cost/>, Accessed 22.09.2023.

Umeda, Sayuri, “Japan: Interpretations of Article 9 of the Constitution”, The Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Directorate (2015): p. 3-12

“Universities in Japan welcome open borders but face long entry backlog”, Nikkei Asia, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Education/Universities-in-Japan-welcome-open-borders-but-face-long-entry-backlog>, Accessed 23.09.2023.

U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Japan, “Health Alert – U.S. Embassy Tokyo”, 2020, <https://jp.usembassy.gov/health-alert-us-embassy-tokyo-april3-2020/>, Accessed 18.09.2023.

“Virus infections related to Tokyo Games totaled 878”, The Japan Times, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/09/08/national/science-health/athletes-village-total/>, Accessed 18.09.2023.

Vogt, Gabriele, et. Qin, Sian, “ Sanitizing the national body: COVID-19 and the revival of Japan’s “Closed Country” strategy”, National Library of Medicine, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9482887/>, Accessed 18.09.2023.

Waltz, Kenneth, “Theory of International Politics”, Reading, Addison Wesley (1979): p. 113-131

World Bank. “GDP Growth (annual %), Japan, South Korea, China” The World Bank Group. Accessed 09.08.2023. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2022&locations=JP-KR-CN&start=1982&view=chart>, Accessed 09.08.2023.

World Bank. “Population, total - Japan” The World Bank Group. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?contextual=default&end=2022&locations=JP&start=1960&view=chart>, Accessed 09.08.2023.

“Yoshihide Suga picked by Japan's governing party to succeed Shinzo Abe”, BBC News, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54070281>, Accessed 10.09.2023.

“86% in Japan fear COVID rebound if Tokyo Olympics held: Kyodo poll”, Kyodo News, 2021, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/06/1e508739dd9c-urgent-86-in-japan-fear-covid-rebound-if-tokyo-olympics-held-kyodo-poll.html>, Accessed 15.09.2023.

Japanese References:

『11月入国者、10月比7%増の8万人 水際緩和は228人利用』、日本経済新聞、2021、
<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA151A60V11C21A2000000/>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『ビジネス関係者らの往来停止 原則外国人の入国を全面的に制限』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201226/k10012785521000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

文部科学省、『国費外国人留学生の手続きについて』、2013、
https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/ryugaku/boshu/1330944.htm, Accessed 18.09.2023.

文部科学省、『国費外国人留学生制度について』、2013、
https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/ryugaku/06032818.htm, Accessed 18.09.2023.

『外国人留学生ら 検査など条件に再入国認める 来月5日から政府』、NHK ニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20200730/k10012540231000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『外国人の新規入国 段階的に緩和へ オンライン申請手続き始まる』、NHK ニュース、2022、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20220225/k10013501761000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『海外に短期出張日本人など 再入国時14日間の待機免除決定 政府』、NHK ニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201030/k10012689181000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

池田伸壹、『「コロナ鎖国」は何だったのか 訪日望む人を足止め、透けた日本社会』、朝日新聞、2022、
<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASQ4634DMQ44UPQJ017.html>, Accessed 17.09.2023.

『インドなど3か国からの入国者に対する水際対策を強化へ』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210507/k10013016371000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『高齢者へのワクチン優先接種始まる 初日は約120か所予定』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210412/k10012969491000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『水際対策きょうから大幅緩和 入国上限撤廃 個人旅行も解禁』、NHK ニュース、2022、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20221011/k10013854251000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『日本とベトナム 相互に入国制限緩和で合意 感染拡大以降で初』、NHK ニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20200619/k10012476581000.html>, Accessed 17.09.2023.

『日本政府 24 日以降 日本人以外イギリスからの入国停止へ』、NHK ニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201222/k10012778761000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

二階堂友紀、『外国人留学生の入国、月内にも緩和 再入国は全面解禁へ』、朝日新聞、
2020、<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASN8P7648N8PUTFK008.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『入国前 14 日以内 インドなど 3 国滞在は原則入国拒否 14 日から』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210512/k10013026731000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『入国時の待機 きょうから 3 日間に短縮 外国人の入国も一部再開』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20211108/k10013338331000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『入国制限措置 10 月 1 日から全世界対象に緩和 限定的な範囲で』、NHK ニュース、2020、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201001/k10012642691000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『「令和の鎖国」で失ったもの “開国”にみいだす希望』、毎日新聞、2022、
<https://mainichi.jp/articles/20221105/k00/00m/030/301000c>, Accessed 17.09.2023.

『連休初日 東京都から出た人は去年比 4 割余増 沖縄へは 2 倍以上に』、NHK ニュース、
2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210430/k10013006081000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『政府、留学生入国 300 人を追加許可』、日本経済新聞、2022、
<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA012GY0R00C22A2000000/>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『政府 緊急事態宣言解除後も入国制限措置 当分の間継続』、NHK ニュース、2021、
https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/special/coronavirus/emergency_2021/detail/detail_111.html, Accessed
20.09.2023.

『新型コロナワクチン 来月下旬にも接種開始へ体制整備急ぐ』、NHK ニュース、2021、
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210102/k10012793561000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『新型コロナウイルス感染症の拡大防止に係る上陸拒否について』、出入国在留管理庁、2021、<http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/930006078.pdf>, Accessed 22.09.2023.

『新型コロナ きょうから 3 回目の“緊急事態宣言” 4 都府県が対象』、NHK ニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210425/k10012996281000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『首相、水際対策「6 月に G7 諸国並みに緩和」 新型コロナ』、日本経済新聞、2022、<https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA051HA0V00C22A5000000/>, Accessed 22.09.2023.

『出入国管理統計表』、出入国在留管理庁、2023、https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/policies/statistics/toukei_ichiran_nyukan.html, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『東京に 4 回目の緊急事態宣言へ 期限来月 22 日まで 政府方針』、NHK ニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210707/k10013125451000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『東京都 新型コロナ 2447 人感染確認 2 日連続で過去最多更新』、NHK ニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210107/k10012801261000.html>, Accessed 20.09.2023.

『都内で東京五輪中止求めるデモ 組織委入るビル周辺など行進』、NHK ニュース、2021、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210717/k10013143971000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

厚生労働省、『新型コロナウイルスに関連した肺炎の患者の発生について（1 例目）』、2020、https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/newpage_08906.html, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『変異したコロナウイルス 確認された国からの水際対策は』、NHK ニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201222/k10012777301000.html>, Accessed 19.09.2023.

『全世界からの外国人の新規入国 28 日から 1 月末まで停止 政府』、NHK ニュース、2020、<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20201226/k10012785521000.html>, Accessed 21.09.2023.

『緊急事態宣言期間は 1 月 8 日から 2 月 7 日までで最終調整』、NHK ニュース、2021、https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/special/coronavirus/emergency_2021/detail/detail_17.html, Accessed 18.09.2023.

List of figures

Figure 1: Power (Source: Nye, 2004).....	6
Figure 2: Foundations of Soft Power (Source: Gallarotti, 2011)	8
Figure 3: GDP Growth (annual %), Japan, South Korea, China	10
Figure 4: Population Pyramid of Japan (2023).....	12
Figure 5: Examples of Japan's Attractions	15
Figure 6: Trends in Number of International Students by Source of Funds (As of each May 1)	20
Figure 7: How long have you been waiting to enter Japan?.....	36
Figure 9: Because of the Japan Travel Ban I have.....	37
Figure 8: Over the past month I've experienced.....	37
Figure 10:Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my mental health has.....	37
Figure 11: Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my physical health has.....	38
Figure 12: Because of the Japan Travel Ban, my financial condition has.....	39
Figure 13: What will you do instead of coming to Japan to study?	41
Figure 14: If you selected "Choose another country" please specify in which country.....	41
Figure 15: Would you recommend Japan as a study or travel destination to your family and friends?	42
Figure 16: Nationality	45
Figure 17: Age.....	46
Figure 18: Gender.....	46
Figure 19: Highest level of education you have completed	47
Figure 20: Employment status.....	47
Figure 21: Highest level of education you have completed	48
Figure 22: Rate your knowledge of the Japanese culture	48
Figure 23: When have you studied in a Japanese educational institution? (onsite/online)	49
Figure 24: If you have answered "Across multiple periods" in the previous question, please select which periods	50

Figure 25: What type of Japanese educational institution have you attended/were you supposed to attend?	50
Figure 26: Which of the following best describes you?	51
Figure 27: Have you been affected by the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures?	52
Figure 28: Due to the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures, my study abroad in Japan period has been... ..	52
Figure 29: If you had to take online classes due to the Japanese Covid-19 Measures, did you take them.....	53
Figure 30: How have the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures affected your... ..	53
Figure 31: Please share your opinion on the following	56
Figure 32: As a result of the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures (March 2020 - Feb 2022), has your opinion of Japan changed?	59

List of tables

Table 1: Timeline of Japan's Covid-19 Border Measures	33
Table 2: Mental Health.....	54
Table 3: Physical Health.....	54
Table 4: Finances	55
Table 5: Education / Education opportunities	55
Table 6: Career / Career opportunities	56
Table 7: I would recommend Japan as a travel destination.....	57
Table 8: I would recommend Japan as a study abroad destination	57
Table 9: I would like to work in Japan.....	58
Table 10: I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures were fair towards foreigners.....	58
Table 11: I believe that the Japanese Covid-19 Border Measures are NOT the result of xenophobia.	59
Table 12: Cross analysis of questions 12-17	71
Table 13: Cross analysis of questions 13-17	71
Table 14: Cross analysis of questions 8-17 (Respondents who were unaffected by the border measures only)	72
Table 15: Cross analysis of questions 6-16 (statements 1 to 3).....	73
Table 16: Cross analysis of questions 7-16 (statements 1 to 3).....	73
Table 17: Cross analysis of questions 11-16 (statements 1 to 3).....	74
Table 18: Cross analysis of questions 1-16 (statement 4)	75
Table 19: Cross analysis of questions 1-16 (statement 5)	75

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who have contributed to the completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Hirofumi Utsumi, for his invaluable guidance, and insightful feedback throughout the entire research process. His expertise has been essential in shaping the direction and quality of this work. I would also like to thank Professor Toshio Miyake for agreeing to become my co-supervisor.

Words cannot entirely convey how much I am grateful to my family. My mother, my father, and my sister have done nothing but supporting me throughout these years during my academic journey. Despite having chosen a very different path from them, they have shown me so much unconditional love, encouragement, and understanding during the demanding phases of this research.

I am also thankful to all of the friends I made during my studies, not only at Ca' Foscari University, but also to all of the amazing people I met during my exchange periods at Meiji, Waseda and Seikei University, for their unwavering support throughout this journey. In particular, I would like to thank my friend Kim for providing emotional encouragement and companionship during moments of stress.

Lastly, I am profoundly grateful to my dear William, who stood by me during the highs and lows, offering encouragement, patience, and understanding during the most challenging moments. Your love and support have been my anchor, and I am truly fortunate to share this accomplishment with you.