



Received: 05-08-2022

Accepted: 15-09-2022

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Achievements of Japan's Soft Power in Southeast Asia (2001-2021)

Nguyen Vo Huyen Dung

University of Foreign Language Studies, University of Da Nang, Vietnam

Corresponding Author: Nguyen Vo Huyen Dung

Abstract

Soft power is no longer a new term in international relations. After being defined by Joseph Nye in his book in 1990 (*Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*), soft power has been officially and widely used at all levels. It has appeared in many countries' foreign policies and became an effective tool in increasing national power. Globalization, the growth of science and technology, and cooperation and peace have been favorable conditions for soft power to develop. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Japan has focused on increasing soft power to

enhance its role and position in the region. Its process of soft-power implementation has earned specific achievements when fostering Southeast Asian people's trust in Japan's capability, improving Japan's impacts regionally and globally, and significantly contributing to its national economic growth. This paper quickly summarizes Japan's soft power implementation process in Southeast Asia (specifically from 2001 until now), then evaluates its achievement during this 20-year-period.

Keywords: Japan, Southeast Asia, Soft Power, Achievements

1. Rationale

At the beginning of the 21st century, more and more countries promoted soft power in diversified and flexible ways to increase their value and attractiveness. The sooner that a country is aware of the dominating ability of soft power, the more active it is in making effective use of foreign policies. Japan is no exception to this trend. After WWII, Japan actively deployed economic aid—an essential factor contributing to Japan's influence in Southeast Asia. Along with economic development, Japan has made remarkable changes in foreign policy. From the "Out of Asia into Europe" motto, Japan has transformed to a "Return to Asia" policy, trying to assert its position in the Asia Pacific region in general and Southeast Asia in particular, towards the goal of becoming a total power. It can be said that the Asia Pacific region, especially Southeast Asia, has a crucial strategic position in Japan's foreign policy. Southeast Asia is the crucial factor for Japan to become a socio-economic power. This region provides most human resources and cheap fuel for the Japanese market. Moreover, with the ambition to become a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, Japan also needs support from Southeast Asian countries.

As for Southeast Asian countries, Japan plays a significant role in these countries' socio-economic development. Southeast Asian countries have learned many valuable lessons through Japan's economic cooperation. Especially the experience of economic recovery and development post-war, the experience of setting goals for sustainable development, which means economic development in parallel with the conservation and preservation of the ecological environment, ensuring community health. It can be said that receiving Japanese influence from Southeast Asian countries is done with a positive and voluntary attitude which is favorable for Japan to promote its soft power in the region. Implementing soft power has been evenly conducted through three main channels: cultural diplomacy, economic aid-development assistance, and political value diplomacy. So far, this combination has worked quite effectively that, to a certain extent, Japan's role and position have been affirmed. Along with identified strengths and weaknesses, Japan's opportunities and threats also should be considered to be active in its process of enhancing soft power regionally and globally.

2. Achievement of Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia from year 2001 to year 2021

Through 20 years of promoting soft power in Southeast Asia (2001-2021), Japan has adjusted policies and action programs in three main fields: culture, economics, and politics. Based on these adjustments, its process of promoting soft power in Southeast Asia can be divided into two major periods, 2001-2012 and 2013-2021. In the first period, Japan focused on promoting its soft power through policies and strategies to enhance cooperation and development with Japan as the center. In the second period, based on continuing to promote cooperation and exchange activities, Japan paid more attention to the

elements of harmony, equality, and “symbiosis,” which emphasizes the role of partners of Southeast Asian countries for the development and shared prosperity of the region.

2.1 Increase the affection and trust of the Southeast Asian people

The first result achieved in deploying Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia is the increase of sympathy and trust of the ASEAN countries. This result is considered an important achievement for Japan, as removing the people's aversion to war in a region where most countries have experienced a long period of invasion and exploitation is not simple. In other words, from easing people's anger about a brutal Japanese fascist government, removing barriers to doubting Japan's goodwill, and arousing sympathy and building trust in Japan is considered a great effort of the Japanese government. It is in the process of creating the image of a friendly, peace-loving, responsible nation; and this effort is reflected in the results of a public opinion survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 2008, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2019 with ASEAN countries.

Looking at the relationship between their countries and Japan, most of the ASEAN people have very positive assessments in the surveys from 2008 to 2019. The rate of good and outstanding evaluations was always at the level of 70-90%, especially in 2019, this rate was up to 93%, demonstrating a very positive development in the relationship between ASEAN countries and Japan. This is also proportional to the level of trust of the ASEAN countries people in Japan when the percentage rating of Japan as a reliable country always reaches 70- 90%, in 2019 reached 93%. In the first survey in 2008, when asked about their thoughts on Japan's actions during WWII, over 50% thought it was already the past, yet 12-27% of people claimed they would never forget these things. It can be said that the Japanese government has been very determined and

united in its efforts to recreate trust and build a new image. The six survey results of MOFA in the years from 2008 to 2019, show that Japan consistently ranked first or second in the list of five most important partners for ASEAN countries. In addition to China, the US, and South Korea, which regularly appear on this list, Australia and the UK share the fourth and fifth position (Table 1). This data further affirms Japan's influence over ASEAN countries when, along with the increase in trust and sympathy, the ASEAN people have also acknowledged the vital role of Japan in the development of ASEAN countries, especially in the economic field. In addition, the assessment of the role and influence of Japan by the ASEAN has also changed significantly in the surveys when, besides economics, Japan has gradually played an essential role in developing the international community, maintaining peace and stability, and solving global problems (Table 2). The survey's results were also consistent with Japan's orientation and strategic development goals. The Japanese government is increasingly focused on strengthening its leadership role in the community regionally and internationally towards common, universal, and global values, emphasizing sustainable development. Japan always commits to contribute and jointly solve everyday problems. On that basis, Japan aims at building an image of a strong nation economically, politically, and harmoniously and culturally.

Table 1: ASEAN's top 05 important partners

Year Country	2008	2013	2015	2016	2017	2019
Japan	28	65	52	60	58	57
China	30	48	50	60	54	59
US	23	47	46	42	44	40
Korea	4	37	26	26	25	28
Australia	4	30	24	23	-	-
UK	-	-	-	23	23	22

(MOFA, 2020)^[8]

Table 2: Role and contribution of Japan

Unit: %

Japan's role and contributions	Year					
	08	13	15	16	17	19
Play an active role in the development of the area	87	92	-	-	-	-
Japan's economic and technical cooperation is helpful in the development of the ASEAN country	92	88	-	-	-	-
Provides development cooperation in the international community	-	-	77	80	90	83
Contributes to global peacekeeping	30	43	82	89	83	92
Contributes to the stabilization of international order	-	-	74	78	74	78
Contributes to the security	-	-	71	78	75	77
Contributes to the stabilization and growth of the world economy	40	67	82	84	83	87
Provides solutions to global issues	27	59	76	91	79	84

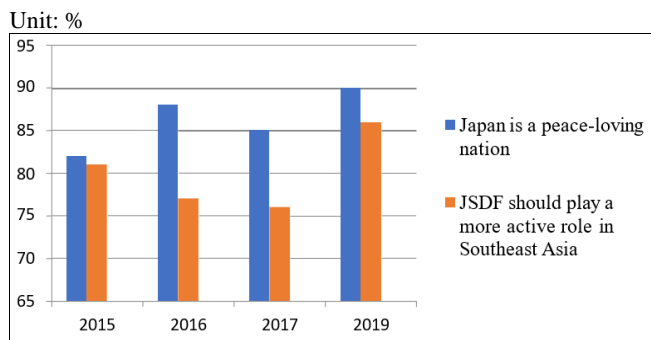
No data in the survey, (MOFA, 2020)^[8]

In the process of promoting Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia, it can be seen that besides the development of the economy, science, and technology, most Southeast Asian people have an affinity with natural scenery, traditional customs, cultural values, culture objects, as well as the peace-loving spirit of Japan. The survey results showed that these criteria always accounted for the highest percentage when surveying ASEAN people about their impressions of Japan. It can be said that thanks to the efforts of the Japanese government in enhancing cooperation, support, and exchanges in many fields with ASEAN countries in the past, it has contributed significantly to the promotion of people's interest in the region towards Japan. In other

words, through promoting Japan's soft power, Japanese cultural values have been disseminated through many different channels and forms, thereby increasing the affection of people in the region towards Japanese culture and Japan in general.

In addition, Japan's active contributions and participation in common regional and global issues have further strengthened the confidence of ASEAN countries in Japan's position and role, indirectly creating favorable conditions for Japan to implement comprehensive national development policies and strategies. Therefore, even if Japan made moves to invest more in its military and strengthen the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), especially

during the second term of PM Abe Shinzo onwards, ASEAN people still believe that Japan is a peace-loving country and the JSDF should continue to play a more active role in handling disasters and natural disasters. ensuring the safety, stability, and prosperity of Southeast Asia. Statistics of survey results in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 showed that the rate of evaluating Japan as a peace-loving country over the past 70 years since WWII is 82%, 88%, 85%, and 90%, respectively; while the support rate for the JSDF should continue to play a more active role in Southeast Asia is 81%, 77%, 76%, 86% respectively (Fig 1).



(MOFA, 2020) [8]

Fig 1: Evaluation of Japan as a peace-loving nation and role of JSDF

So far, it can be seen that the Japanese government has achieved remarkable achievements in building the image of Japan as a peace-loving country, making efforts for the international community. Japan's economic, cultural, and political activities always have certain values and humanistic messages, thereby increasing the ASEAN people's sympathy, trust, and support towards Japan.

2.2 Enhance Japan's political influence

The second one is the increase in of Japan's political influence. In the 20th century, especially after WWII, Japan

mainly focused on economic recovery, stabilizing social order, and gradually rebuilding national resources. Therefore, during this time, Japan was somewhat withdrawn and limited its interference in political security issues in the region and the world. At that time, the image of Japan was an economic giant but a political dwarf, passively dependent on the US in important issues in the international system. However, since the last years of the 20th century and especially the beginning of the 21st century, the world political situation has become more complicated. China's rise is increasingly threatening Japan's national interest. The Japanese government emphasized the importance of increasing political influence in the region because of the impact on the country's position and growth. Therefore, entering the 21st century, Japan has adjusted foreign policy and goals in its development strategy to promote economic development and expand its political influence. Japan's political diplomacy in this period was primarily focused more on Southeast Asia. Through political activities and events, the Japanese government has skillfully combined cultural and art exchange activities to create positive effects for countries in the region. Thanks to the effectiveness of these activities, Japan has both affirmed its position and increased its influence regionally and globally.

Since 2005, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has collaborated with the Globe Scan for social investigative research, the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), and many national news agencies to conduct the world opinion survey to assess the positive and negative effects of countries spread across continents [BBC World Service Poll, 2020] [1]. According to the survey results of BBC World Service, from 2006 to 2017, Japan's positive influence index has remained relatively stable, helping Japan to always be in the top 5 highest positive influence countries in the world (Tables 3, 4). Statistics also showed that most of the Southeast Asian countries participating in the survey, such as Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand, highly appreciated the positive influence of Japan.

Table 3: Japan's influence rate (2006-2017)

Year	06 - 07	07 - 08	08 - 09	09 - 10	10 - 11	11 - 12	12 - 13	13 - 14	14 - 15	16 - 17
Positive	31	56	56	56	53	57	58	51	48	56
Negative	21	20	23	21	21	21	21	27	29	24

(BBC World Service, 2020) [1]

Table 4: Japan's positive rate ranking (2006-2017)

Year	06 - 07	07 - 08	08 - 09	09 - 10	10 - 11	11 - 12	12 - 13	13 - 14	14 - 15	16 - 17
Rank	2	3	2	2	4	1	1	4	5	3

(BBC World Service, 2020) [1]

One of the main reasons Japan is considered to have a positive influence in the international community is the knock-on effect when Japanese popular culture is popular and loved on a global scale. It is the popularity of manga, anime, fashion, music. Japan has contributed to promoting its unique cultural values, peace-loving spirit, and closeness to nature that made a good impression on the international community. Furthermore, the Japanese government's efforts in solving global problems, especially the management, response, handling of disasters, and environmental issues, as well as its efforts to maintain security, order, and stability in the region, have also affected the international community's

assessment of Japan's influence. Moreover, Japan's position and political influence have also been shown through its ranking as soft-power power through the survey results of Portland in conjunction with the USC Center on Public Diplomacy. Accordingly, since 2015, this company has published the annual report The Soft Power 30 – which ranks the top 30 countries with soft power globally. This report is based on public opinion surveys in 25 countries worldwide based on two criteria: objective (70%) and subjective (30%). The subjective index includes governance, business environment, education, culture, government involvement in solving global problems. In

contrast, the objective index includes the popularity of traditional dishes, technology products, and luxury goods produced in the country, a comfortable environment, the friendliness of the people, background culture, and foreign policy (The Soft Power 30, 2020)^[12].

Based on the results of The Soft Power 30 report, from 2015 to 2019, Japan was the only Asian country in the top 10 soft power powers in the world. Meanwhile, the highest positions achieved by South Korea and China in this ranking were 19 and 25, respectively. In 2018, Japan was also the first and only Asian country in the top 5 world soft power. Although in 2019, Japan dropped to 8th position, it is still the only and highest-ranked Asian country in the top 10 (Table 5). One of the reasons for this drop in rankings was the decline in international voting rates, related to the issue of sexism and gender inequality in Japan. Therefore, selecting a female Minister in charge of women's empowerment and gender equality—Seiko Hashimoto as Head of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Organizing Committee—has demonstrated the Japanese government's efforts to improve this weakness.

Table 5: Top 10 world soft power (2015-2019)

Year Rank	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	UK	US	France	UK	France
2	Germany	UK	UK	France	UK
3	US	Germany	US	Germany	Germany
4	France	Canada	Germany	US	Sweden
5	Canada	France	Canada	Japan	US
6	Australia	Australia	Japan	Canada	Switzerland
7	Switzerland	Japan	Switzerland	Switzerland	Canada
8	Japan	Switzerland	Australia	Sweden	Japan
9	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Netherlands	Australia
10	Netherlands	Netherlands	Netherlands	Australia	Netherlands

(The Soft Power 30, 2020)^[12]

Thus, the fact that Japan is continuously in the top 10 soft power powers globally has proven the effectiveness of Japan's soft power promotion during this period. At the same time, this result also reflects the popularity and influence of Japan when the evaluation range of the indicators under both subjective and objective criteria is extensive, covering culture, education, environment, economics, science and technology, politics. In other words, Japan's role and position have now been comprehensively consolidated and enhanced, and Japan's political influence has, therefore, been increasingly expanded and acknowledged.

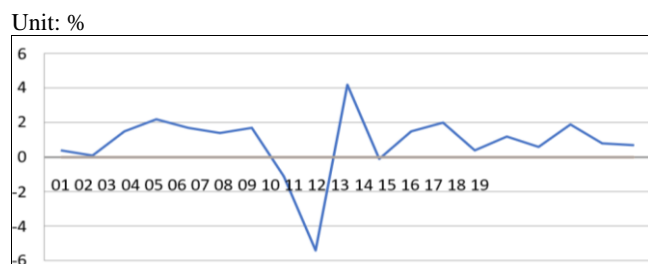
In addition, in the process of promoting Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia, its position and political influence have also been shown through the fact that Japan has always been trusted in the role of maintaining and stabilizing the region's security and order, especially in the South China Sea issue. Since being re-elected for the second term (December 2012), PM Abe with his "positive peace" policy has helped Japan maximize its role in political-security issues. This role of Japan is shown more clearly when in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP) of President Donald Trump's administration, Japan, together with India, Australia, and the United States, are recognized as four main factors. In a 2019 survey by MOFA surveying 3,000 people aged between 18 and 59 years old in ASEAN countries, when being asked which country would play a vital role in the Indo-Pacific

region, 36% chose Japan, higher than China (31%) and the United States (25%) (MOFA, 2020)^[8]. This result shows that Japan is performing very well in its leading role in the region and restraining China's expansion in the context that the US is making adjustments in the policy towards Asia.

2.3 Contribute to Japan's economic growth

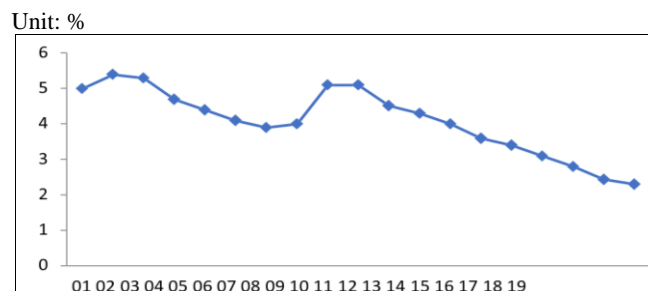
The last achievement and also one of the goals of Japan's soft power strategy in Southeast Asia is to contribute to the national economic growth in which the content industry is the main driving force. In other words, the development of the film industry (animation, cinema) and television, comics, music, etc. have stimulated the development of the domestic economy through the production and export of popular culture products; contributing a certain percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP); increasing the rate of domestic workers, which indirectly reduces the unemployment rate, positively affects the development of the tourism industry...

According to the World Bank's statistics, Japan's economy developed rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century, but it was not stable. There was a period of solid growth, the GDP growth rate reached 2.2% (2004). Still, due to the impact of the global economic crisis (2008-2009), the Japanese economy suffered severe losses, Japan's GDP growth rate fell sharply, peaking at -5.4% (2009). In the second decade, mainly since the end of 2012, along with the drastic and bold policies of economic promotion Abenomics as well as strategies to promote cultural diplomacy activities, the development of content industry, Japan's annual GDP growth rate, although not very high, has achieved certain stability, fluctuating between 0.4%-1.9% (Fig 2). This is also clearly reflected in Japan's unemployment rate statistics in these two periods. If, in the beginning, the unemployment rate in Japan was still high, ranging from 4% to 5.4%, then in the period from 2012 onwards, the unemployment rate decreased every year from 4.3% (2012) down to 2.3% (2019) (Fig 2).



(The World Bank, 2020a)^[13]

Fig 2: Japan's GDP growth percentage (2001-2019)



(The World Bank, 2020b)^[14]

Fig 3: Japan's unemployment rate (2001-2019)

The Mitsubishi Research Institute's annual report on the Japanese film and television industry show that, from 2011 to 2018, the Total Gross Output (TGO) of the industry increased from 11.664 billion yen (145.9 billion USD) to 13.705 billion yen (171.4 billion USD); Total Value Added (TVA) increased from 5.770 billion yen (USD 72.2 billion) to 6.853 billion yen (USD 85.8 billion), thereby increasing TVA's contribution to GDP from 1.23% to 1.25%; labor income increased from 2.654 billion yen (331.9 billion USD) to 3.141 billion yen (392.8 billion USD); the total number of labor positions increased from 264.707 to 520.839 positions (Table 6).

Table 6: The economic contribution of Japan's television and film industry

Unit: billion yen

Year	TGO	TVA		Labor Income	Total labor (position)
		TVA	TVA/GDP (%)		
2011	11.664	5.770	1.23	2.654	264.707
2014	11.352	5.577	1.15	2.571	381.368
2018	13.705	6.853	1.25	3.141	520.839

(Motion Picture Association, 2020) [9]

Especially for the international market, the revenue of Japanese TV shows abroad has also grown very positively in recent years. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan (MIC), total revenue from the sale of overseas broadcast content in Japan has increased from 8.2 billion yen (2004) to 44.45 billion yen (2017) (Table 7). In the 2009- 2011 period alone, there was a slight decrease due to the impact of the global financial crisis but then increased strongly since 2012 partly thanks to a series of policies promoting the development of the content industry by PM Abe's government. The report also analyzed that anime accounts for 70-80% of overseas content broadcast revenue. Asia has always been one of the leading overseas markets for Japanese broadcast content, accounting for 50-60%.

Table 7: Total revenue from Japan's overseas broadcast content sales

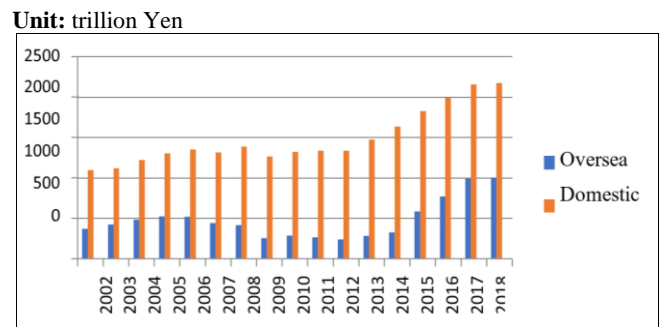
Unit: billion yen

Year	Revenue
2004	8.2
2005	8.3
2006	8.89
2007	9.18
2008	9.25
2009	7.5
2010	6.63
2011	7.16
2012	10.43
2013	13.78
2014	18.25
2015	28.85
2016	39.35
2017	44.45

(MIC, 2019) [7]

It can be seen that for the film industry, the love and popularity of anime cartoons both inside and outside Japan have contributed significantly to the development of its animation industry in particular and the film industry in general. This data reflects that the most popular movies at

the box office are cartoons that always account for a high percentage, proportional to the revenue contributed. In 2018, among the top 31 most loved Japanese films with box office revenue of 79.02 billion yen, nine animated films had total revenue of 28.83-billion-yen, accounting for 36% of the total revenue. According to the animation industry annual reports compiled by the Japan Animation Association (AJA), from 2002 to 2018, the total revenue of the Japanese animation industry increased from 1.096 trillion yen to 2.181 trillion yen, of which overseas revenue has increased from 439 billion yen to 1.009 billion yen, significantly increasing from 2015 to now (Fig 4).

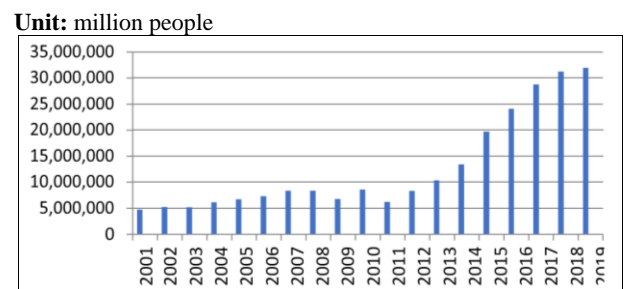


(AJA, 2019) [11]

Fig 4: Japanese animation industry revenue (2002-2018)

Besides, the development of the Japanese film and television industry abroad has positively impacted the growth of the country's tourism industry. Television programs about Japanese culture and lifestyle, animated films with impressive scenes of natural landscapes in local cities in Japan have created an excellent effect in attracting the attention of domestic as well as overseas audiences to visit and learn about Japan.

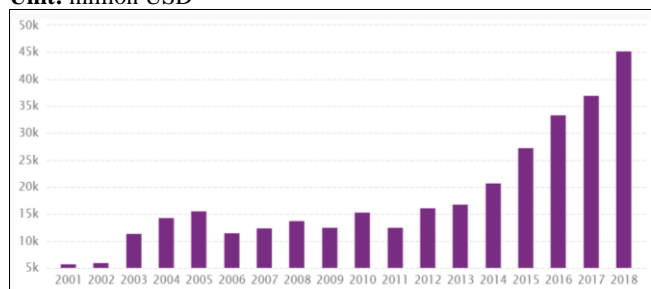
According to statistics from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), from 2001 to 2019, the number of foreign visitors to Japan increased from 4.771.555 to 31.88.049 (Fig 5), of which in the top 10 countries with the largest number of visitors to Japan, there are four Southeast Asian countries, proving that Japan's attraction to this region is vast (JNTO, 2020). The statistics of CEIC Data in 2019 show that the revenue of the Japanese tourism industry has also increased from USD 5.394 million in 2001 to USD 45.276 million in 2018 (Fig 6). In this revenue foreign visitors always have a high percentage. According to the latest statistics in 2018, the revenue from foreign visitors reached USD 41.996 million, accounting for 92.8% of the total revenue of the Japanese tourism industry (CEIC Data, 2019) [2].



(JNTO, 2020)

Fig 5: Total number of foreign visitors to Japan (2001-2019)

Unit: million USD



(CEIC Data, 2019) [2]

Fig 6: Japan tourism industry revenue (2001-2018)

A unique feature in the effect of being loved and promoted by TV series and anime to the Japanese tourism industry is the development of anime tourism. This feature is a form of a tour to the scenes in the film, which according to young people's terms, is "pilgrimage" (visiting the "sanctuaries" of fans). It uses real locations in Japan to serve as the backdrop for anime cartoons with impressive, beautiful, and unique scenes that have motivated the audience to love them. These movies have become a huge tourist attraction. Most of these audiences are looking forward to visiting Japan in general and these places after watching the movies.

Understanding this need of tourists, a series of business

projects related to this type of tourism have been actively promoted and expanded by the Japanese and local governments. In 2016, Anime Travel Association (ATA) was also established to support the development of this particular type of tourism by promoting popular new animated films, recommending/voting actual attractions included in animated movies, and organizing tours to these places. Since its establishment, ATA has attracted significant attention and interest from domestic and foreign tourists. In particular, one of the Association's special activities in Thailand is a collaborative project between Japanese pop group BNK48 and Thai television stations to introduce places of interest and products related to famous Japanese cartoons. This new and exciting type of anime tourism has contributed economic benefits to the Japanese tourism industry and the Japanese economy through travel, accommodation, eating, and shopping, contributing to vividly and effectively promoting Japanese culture life people.

According to the statistical reports of the Mitsubishi Research Institute, the economic profit that this type of tourism brings to localities in Japan is very significant, forming a positive source of income, contributing to the development of the whole economy, culture, and society in these areas (Table 8).

Table 8: Tourism impact on the Local Area

Title/Year	Area	Total economic effects (billion yen)	
		Total revenue	Revenue from tourists consumption
Films			
Bizan/2007	Tokushima City/Tokushima Pref	2.4	1.8
Nobouno Shiro/2012	Ikuta City/Saitama Pref	3.79	1.42
Rudolf and Ippai Attena/2016	Gifu City/Gifu Pref	25.3	16.27
Your name/2016	Hida City/Gifu Pref		
A Silent Voice/2016	Oogaki City/ Gifu Pref		
TV programs			
Lucky Star/2007	Kuki City/Saitama Pref	3.14	2.04
Ryomaden/2010	Kochi Pref	53.5	3.2
	Nagasaki Pref	18.2	10.4
Yae no Sakura/2011	Aizu Area/Fukushima Pref	21.5	8.18
Ama chan/2013	Kuji City/Iwate Pref	3.3	2.1
Mare/ 2015	Wajima City/Ishikawa Pref	6.6	4.24
Segodon/2018	Kagoshima Pref	25.8	16.8
Natsuzora/2019	Hokkaido Tokachi Area	9.5	6.3

[Mitsubishi Research Institute Annual Report]

It can be said that besides the development of industries that are spearheads of Japan, such as automobile manufacturing, home appliances, electronics, technology, etc., the content industry has also made remarkable contributions to the recovery and strengthening of the Japanese economy. Increasing overseas promotion is crucial to the growth of the content industry. Therefore, international cooperation programs in this field combine the needs, tastes, and resources of markets in different countries to produce TV programs, movies, etc., currently being interested and promoted by the Japanese government and ASEAN countries. These activities are also part of the Japanese government's plan to implement the Cool Japan Strategy and the Visit Japan Strategy to develop international markets, exchange culture, and local economies. Hence, these international cooperation programs have contributed to the development of the Japanese economy and increased the dissemination of Japanese popular culture in Southeast Asia.

In summary, the process of promoting Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia has gained very positive achievements. These achievements prove Japan's efforts to adjust its development strategy, focusing on developing soft power mainly through cultural diplomacy and economic diplomacy, thereby creating conditions for political diplomacy to develop. Especially during PM Shinzo Abe's tenure with strong and comprehensive reforms in many fields from the economy with Abenomics policy, culture with Cool Japan strategy, to politics with favorable peace policy; Japan is increasingly becoming an essential and influential strategic partner for ASEAN countries and a decisive factor in stabilizing order, maintaining freedom, peace, harmony, and prosperity in the region.

3. Conclusion

Discussing the process of promoting Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia from 2001 to 2021, some comments and

assessments can be drawn as follows:

Firstly, this process has achieved results and limitations. As a result, this process has contributed to promoting Japanese economic growth; increasing the sympathy and trust of people in the region towards Japan and enhancing its role and political position. Regarding the limitations, the lack of harmony between the "hard" and "soft" factors in political diplomacy and economic diplomacy; the strategy to strengthen Japan's military power; Japan's influence in Southeast Asia is uneven. Secondly, compared with the pre-2001 period, Japan's soft power promotion in Southeast Asia in 2001-2021 is more comprehensive, systematic, and practical. Thirdly, this process has had many impacts on the region, both positive and negative. Finally, through studying the process of promoting Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia, it can be seen that the vital role of soft power in enhancing national synergy.

Talking about Japan's soft power prospects in Southeast Asia, besides strengths and weaknesses, it can be seen that Japan will face many challenges. The competition from other countries is also promoting soft power, the increasingly complicated international political situation; obsession with militaristic Japan; the potential internal instability of the Japanese government's constitutional amendment issue. But in the trend of promoting cooperation and peace of the international community and the Japanese people, when soft power becomes an effective tool to strengthen national power, Japan will also have many favorable opportunities to strengthen soft power in Southeast Asia. China, Japan's biggest competitor in the region, is facing opposition from the international community for its moves that affect peace, stability, and order. Thus, the increase in Japan's position and role in the region and the increasing demand for cooperation and exchange from Southeast Asian countries are expected to create more opportunities for Japan to improve its strength.

As one of the fastest-growing economies, an active and vital member of ASEAN, and a neighbor to Japan's direct competitor, Vietnam can't avoid Japan's soft power promotion process's effects in the region. Accordingly, several recommendations have been proposed for Vietnam to maximize the positive effects and limit the negative ones to create a more proactive position in receiving and enhancing national soft power.

4. References

1. BBC World Service Poll, 2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.globescan.com>, <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org>
2. CEIC Data, 2019. Japan Tourism Revenue. Retrieved from: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/japan/tourism-revenue>
3. Lowy Institute. Asia power index – Key findings. The Lowy Institute Asia Power Index, 2019, p21.
4. Lowy Institute. Asia power index – Key findings, The Lowy Institute Asia Power Index, 2020, p24.
5. Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2020a. Defense Budget. Retrieved from: https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_budget/index.html
6. Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2020b. Retrieved from: https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_budget/index.html
7. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2019. White Paper. Retrieved from: https://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_seisaku/hakusyo/index.html
8. MOFA, 2020. Opinion Poll on Japan. Retrieved from: <https://www.mofa.go.jp>
9. Motion Picture Association, 2020. Research Report Economic Contribution of the Japanese Film and Television Industry. Mitsubishi Research Institute, Inc. Retrieved from: <https://www.mpa-apac.org/research-collateral/>
10. Statista, 2021. Japan: Age distribution from 2009 to 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270087/age-distribution-in-japan/>
11. The AJA. Anime Industry Report 2019 Summary, 2019. Retrieved from: https://aja.gr.jp/download/anime_ind_rpt2019_summary_en
12. The Soft Power 30 by Portland. 2020. Retrieved from: <https://softpower30.com/>
13. The World Bank, 2020a. GDP growth (annual %) – Japan. Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=JP>
14. The World Bank, 2020b. Unemployment rate – Japan. Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=JP>
15. White House. Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aucus/>