

The Role of Game Industry in Japan's Public Diplomacy

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Topics

Soft Power and Cultural Exports

Cool Japan Policy

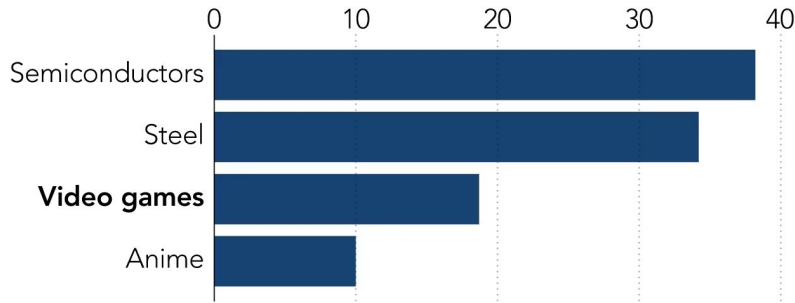
Global Dominance of the Japanese Gaming Industry

Soft Power and Cultural Exports

Video games are an important example of how Japan has created an effective source of soft power through trade. The international success of these games has not only generated economic gains, but also increased Japan's cultural appeal.

Video games are a key Japanese export

(2022 overseas sales for selected sectors, in billions of dollars)



Source: Japan Cabinet Secretariat

The Companies Making The Most From Video Games

Public companies by video game revenue in 2017



Excluding hardware sales

* Estimate – video game revenue is not separately reported

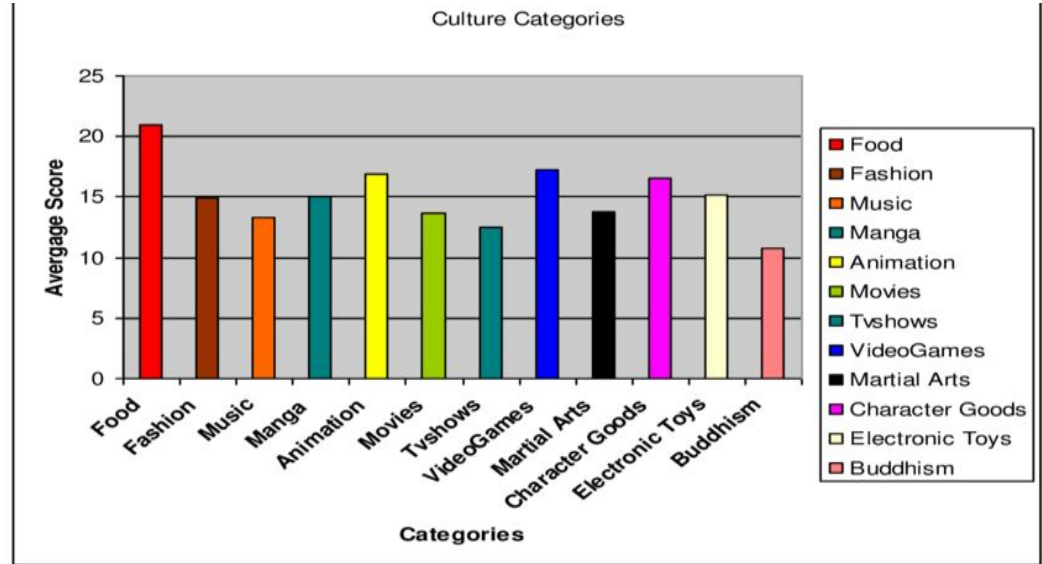
Source: Newzoo



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Cool Japan Policy

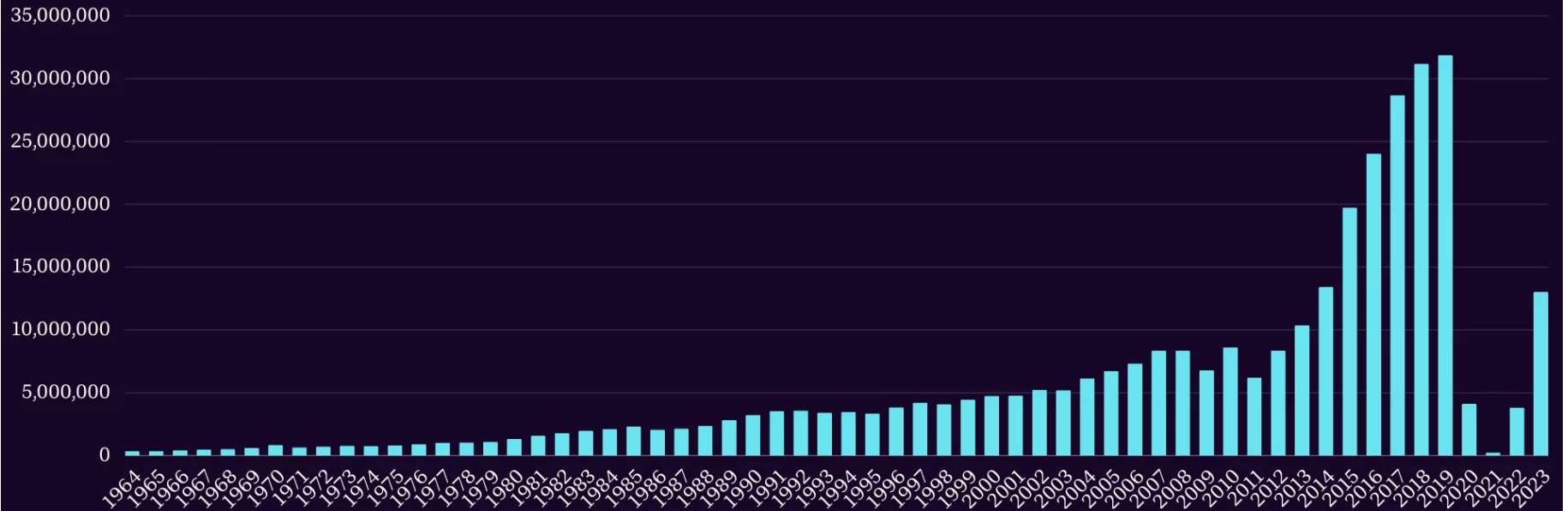
Japan's “Cool Japan” policy was launched as an official initiative in the early 2010s. Under this policy, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) aimed to increase Japan's cultural exports and strengthen the country's soft power through these exports. Video games, anime, fashion, cuisine and other cultural products were at the center of this strategy.



https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242762654_The_Branding_Potential_And_Japanese_Popular_Culture_Overseas

Cool Japan Policy

Trends in the Visitor Arrivals to Japan by Year



*2023 data covers period between January and July.

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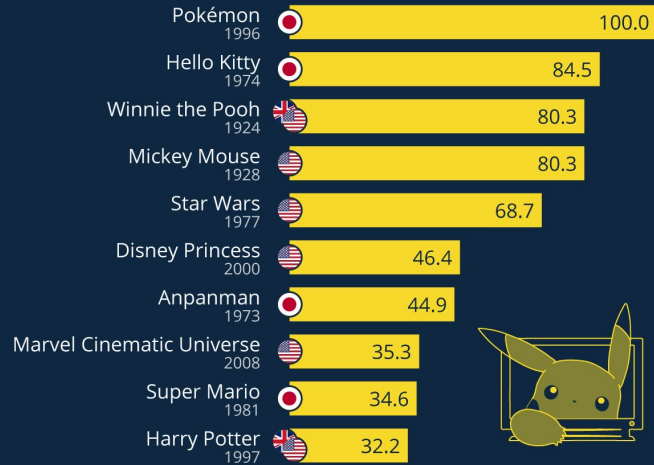
Japan's gaming industry, led by giants like Nintendo and Sony, has established global dominance through iconic consoles such as PlayStation and Nintendo Switch, as well as worldwide phenomena like Pokémon, Mario, and, achieving unparalleled leadership in both economic success and cultural influence.

Million-selling game consoles					
Platform	Type	Firm	Released ^[2]	Units sold	Ref.
PlayStation 2	Home	Sony	2000	>160 million	[1]
Nintendo DS	Handheld	Nintendo	2004	154.02 million	[20]
Nintendo Switch #	Hybrid	Nintendo	2017	146.04 million	[20][note 1]
Game Boy & Game Boy Color	Handheld	Nintendo	1989, 1998	118.69 million	[20][note 2]
PlayStation 4 #	Home	Sony	2013	117.2 million	[22]
PlayStation	Home	Sony	1994	102.49 million	[23]
Wii	Home	Nintendo	2006	101.63 million	[20]
PlayStation 3	Home	Sony	2006	87.4 million	[24][25]
Xbox 360	Home	Microsoft	2005	>84 million	[note 3]
Game Boy Advance	Handheld	Nintendo	2001	81.51 million	[20]
PlayStation Portable	Handheld	Sony	2004	80 million	[1]
Nintendo 3DS	Handheld	Nintendo	2011	75.94 million	[20]
PlayStation 5 #	Home	Sony	2020	65.6 million	[33]

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The Pokémon Franchise Caught 'Em All

Estimated all-time revenue of the most valuable media franchises in the world (in billion U.S. dollars)



As of January 2021
Source: Statista research



statista

Event ↕	Date ↕	Game of the Year ↕	Venue ↕	Viewers (millions) ↕
2014	December 5	Dragon Age: Inquisition	The AXIS (Las Vegas)	1.9 ^[25]
2015	December 3	The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	Microsoft Theater (Los Angeles)	2.3 ^[25]
2016	December 1	Overwatch		3.8 ^[26]
2017	December 7	The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild		11.5 ^[27]
2018	December 6	God of War		26.2 ^[28]
2019	December 12	Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice		45.2 ^[29]
2020	December 10	The Last of Us Part II	Virtual event ^[a]	83 ^[30]
2021	December 9	It Takes Two	Microsoft Theater (Los Angeles)	85 ^[31]
2022	December 8	Elden Ring		103 ^[32]
2023	December 7	Baldur's Gate 3	Peacock Theater (Los Angeles)	118 ^[33]
2024	December 12	Astro Bot		154 ^[34]
2025	December 11 ^[35]	—		—

"POKePARK was very popular as the world's first theme park of Pokemon and attracted approximately 4.15 million visitors." (Nobukazu Saito, PokePark general producer).

www.poj.com/pokemon/news/2006/2-21.shtml 1

Conclusion

This study examines the role of the Japanese gaming industry in the context of soft power and considers the impact of these products on global diplomacy. Games companies such as Sony, Nintendo, Sega have become an effective tool in international area by introducing Japanese culture and innovation to millions of people around the world. Moreover, games such as Ghost of Tsushima, Sekiro have contributed to the spread of cultural heritage by combining samurai culture and Japanese history with modern gaming technologies.