

カルチャーショックを
乗り越える日本の経験



extra

Navigate Cultural Shock: Japanese experience

Systemic project about cultural integration

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Abstract

Culture shock is a **significant challenge** for those moving to a new country, as it involves encountering a different and unfamiliar culture. This study focuses on the **experience of culture shock in Japan**, based on the six months spent in the country. The main objective of this thesis is to **provide practical tools and suggestions to help people adapt more easily to life abroad**, particularly in Japan, while preserving the magic of cultural difference.

The research work includes a review of theories on culture shock and its common characteristics. Using Japan as an example, it analyses the peculiarities of Japanese culture that can be surprising and sometimes disconcerting to newcomers. Through the **analysis of personal experiences and interviews** conducted with expatriates in Japan, the main stressors and difficulties that can arise during the adaptation process are identified.

By analysing culture shock in Japan and offering practical advice, **this thesis aims to provide a valuable contribution to those preparing to live abroad**, particularly in Japan, so that they can cope with cultural adaptation in a more serene and rewarding way, taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by a new culture without losing the **magic of cultural difference**.



Introduction

Over the past decades, the phenomenon of **migration and expatriation** has become increasingly common, bringing with it a wide range of challenges and opportunities. One of the most significant aspects of this process is **culture shock**, a complex and universal experience that afflicts those who move to a new country. Despite the cultural diversity and specificities of each place, culture shock has common characteristics among individuals who experience adaptation to a new culture. **This thesis aims to explore the phenomenon of culture shock, focusing specifically on the Japanese context.** The choice to explore the Japanese reality stems from our personal experience, having lived in Japan for six months, during which we were able to experience first-hand the challenges and wonders of culture shock. Our main motivation in conducting this research is to **create a project that can help those moving to Japan integrate and interact** with the locals, while preserving the essence and magic of cultural difference.

To achieve this goal, we undertook a comprehensive **methodological approach**. Initially, we conducted an extensive search of the existing literature on culture shock and its common characteristics. This allowed us to acquire a solid theoretical basis and a better understanding of the factors that contribute to culture shock. Subsequently, we used methods such as **questionnaires and interviews** to collect data and first-hand accounts from people living in Japan as foreigners. This phase of research allowed us to gain a broader and more comprehensive view of the experience of culture shock in Japan, thus integrating our personal experience with the perspectives of other individuals. Based on our research and collected data, we developed a **project aimed at facilitating the interaction and integration of newcomers to Japan, while preserving the challenge and excitement of culture shock.**

Our project is based on practical strategies, useful tips as well as specific suggestions for coping with and overcoming the difficulties that arise when adapting to a **new culture**. Our aim is to make a meaningful contribution to those who are preparing to live in Japan by providing them with concrete tools for a **smoother and more rewarding adaptation experience.**

JAPAN, LAND OF THE RISING SUN

日出づる国、日本



Introduction

1.1 ABOUT JAPAN

Japan is an East Asian island in the Pacific Ocean, bounded to the west by the Sea of Japan, to the north by the Sea of Ochotsk, to the east by the North Pacific Ocean and to the south by the East China Sea.

It is a mostly mountainous archipelago of volcanic origin consisting of **6852 islands**, the five largest of which are Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku and Okinawa, which alone account for about 97% of Japan's land area.

With a **population** of around **124 million**, it is the eleventh most populous country in the world.

Japan is the world's third largest economy by GDP, gross domestic product, and the fourth largest by purchasing power. It is also the world's fourth largest exporter and sixth largest importer. It is a member state of the G7 and 19th in the world for human development (the quality of life is very high as well as life expectancy) which has caused a **progressive ageing of the population**, **demographic pressure** and **economic-social fallout** that, together with the **environmental emergency**, constitute the main challenges for the country.

Shinjuku district, Tokyo, Japan, Tottori prefecture



About major cities

1.2 MIRRORING THE MANY FACES OF JAPAN

Tokyo

Kyoto

Osaka

Nagoya

Kanazawa

Sendai

Fukuoka

Sapporo

Hiroshima

Kobe

東京

京都

大阪

名古屋

金沢

仙台

福岡

札幌

広島

神戸



Photos of Tokyo city, Japan, Tottori prefecture

TOKYO 東京

In Japanese, the literal meaning of Tokyo is “**capital of the east**”. Historically, the city was called “Edo”, literally “entrance to the bay” or “estuary”, but was renamed Tokyo after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when the government moved the Emperor from the historical capital, Kyoto, to Tokyo.

The Greater Tokyo Area, which includes Tokyo and several neighbouring prefectures, is the **largest metropolitan area in the world** with over 38 million residents. A huge metropolis, rich in stimuli, history and contrasts, being divided into 23 districts, each of them has a unique character and is administered separately.

The transport network is one of the most complex and efficient in existence and carries several million passengers every day: the three busiest railway stations in the world are all located in Tokyo and are in order **Shinjuku**, **Shibuya** and **Ikebukuro**. Despite its size, Tokyo is considered the **safest metropolis in the world** due to the very low

incidence of theft, assault and crime of all kinds: every year, more than 3 billion yen in cash that had been lost, more than 20 million euros, are found and returned to their rightful owners by the neighbourhood police, the so-called “**kobans**”. Tokyo is a metropolis full of **architectural contrasts**, some areas are characterised by towering skyscrapers, others by ancient temples and Unesco World Heritage gardens.

Artificial islands, giant statues of Godzilla and Gundam and huge shopping malls where you can get lost in the crowds are just some of the many **visual stimuli** that make Tokyo crowded, spectacular and surprising.

It is an **exception in the whole of Japan**, as the reality of Tokyo is very different from a normal Japanese city, it is much more multi-ethnic, modern and full of people, workers and tourists; it is much more common to meet foreigners and therefore it is more common to be able to speak in English and to find directions and texts in English as well.

KYOTO 京都

Kyoto, Japanese, lit. “**capital city**” has almost 1.46 million inhabitants, and is the capital of the prefecture of the same name.

For over a millennium, from 794 to 1868, Kyoto was the capital of Japan and the residence of the Emperor.

An ancient city steeped in **history and tradition**, it still shows all the signs of its splendid past and fascinates visitors with its numerous **temples** and **Zen gardens**, most of them UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Being smaller and less densely populated than other famous cities, it retains the charm of a **distant Japan**. It is a very touristy but intriguing city, surrounded by **nature** and full of small architectural and natural beauties among temples and parks.

A preserved historical feature is the famous “**hanamachi**”, i.e. “**geisha town**” called “**Gion**”, which is famous for being the last place on earth where

one can see **real geishas**, considered today as workers of the highest respect, admired and with whom, to be in company or to see a performance, is a luxury.

The **traditional buildings** are also important heritage of the city, they are preserved as the city was spared from the 2WW bombing. In fact, no skyscrapers are allowed to be built in the city, a unique feature throughout Japan that makes Kyoto an attractive and different city.

Throughout the ages, the people of Kyoto suffered earthquakes and fires and had to work hard to rebuild the city, where the original infrastructure is well maintained and many famous sites are carefully crafted replicas.

It is a **quieter and calmer city**, if one can avoid the tourist crowds, where one breathes a totally different atmosphere, where the man-nature relationship that is typical of the tradition and religion of the Rising Sun is more pronounced.



Photos of traditional temples and geishas in Kyoto, Japan, Kyoto prefecture

OSAKA 大阪

Osaka, lit. “**big slope**”, referring to the area of Kansai where it is located, is by population size the third largest city in Japan with 2.6 million inhabitants.

It has long been the **main centre of commerce** and industry, and is still second in importance only to Tokyo, while it is recognised by the Japanese as the “**capital of good food**”, some of the area's most popular dishes being **okonomiyaki** and **takoyaki**. From all points of view it is a peculiar and **eccentric** city, as are the locals, they have a particular accent and compared to the average Japanese the inhabitants of Osaka are considered more spontaneous and exuberant, lively and noisy, therefore also friendlier to tourists and foreigners. It is a city of **excess**, full of restaurants, pubs, nightclubs and vitality, considered as a **city that never sleeps** because of its shopping streets and nightlife, where you can find anything, even at the limits of legality. This is why it is called “the Naples of Japan” by many Italians.

Despite this reputation, it remains, like all other cities in Japan, safe and cleaner than average.



Photo of Osaka city, Japan, Osaka prefecture

NAGOYA 名古屋

Far from the splendour of the other major Japanese metropolises despite its size and populousness, Nagoya is a typically Japanese city.

Far from excess or architectural extravagance or uniqueness, it is a **historically labour-centred city**, aesthetically very coherent since being a large centre of factories it was razed to the ground during the 2WW and has been completely rebuilt. The driving force of the city is the presence of the many companies that have their factories on the outskirts of the city, the most important being the nearby Toyota, followed by Mitsubishi.

However, the city is also very dense with **foreign immigrants** working for these large companies. This growth in population and industry is also due to its central location in relation to the large cities of Kyoto and Tokyo.

It is described by many Japanese as **quiet, even boring**, but perfect for raising a family, as it is very safe compared to other cheaper cities in terms of cost of living.



Photo of Nagoya city, Japan, Aichi prefecture

KANAZAWA 金沢

Kanazawa is a **major city on the Sea of Japan**, only three hours from Tokyo by high-speed **Shinkansen** train.

The spectacular Japanese Alps, rising up to an altitude of 3.000 metres, are a striking backdrop on the way to Kanazawa. Being very favourably located between the sea and the mountains of the Hokuriku area, it has a milder climate than Kyoto or Osaka, which makes the city very attractive for tourism.

During World War II, it was one of the few Japanese cities to be spared from bombing, which is why its **immense historical and cultural heritage** has remained intact and well preserved. It is regarded as the “**little Kyoto**” for its heritage dating back to the Edo period, such as the **Kenrokuen gardens**, which are among the three most beautiful and historic gardens in Japan. The charm of this city, less famous than others, is that it is quieter and less touristy, but it is certainly rich in references to feudal Japan, with constant references to symbols such as geishas, ninjas and samurai, whose dwellings and historical architecture are still preserved.



Photo of Kanazawa city, Japan, Ishikawa prefecture

SENDAI 仙台

The city of Sendai is the capital of Myagi prefecture and the largest city in north-eastern Japan.

This place is a **mix of the future and the past**, where the history of the **samurai** is tangible. The city is also famous as the “**city of trees**”, in fact the relationship with **nature** here is very heartfelt and deep; it is a green city by the sea, surrounded by mountains.

The **Hirose River** flows through the busy city centre, separating it from the old castle site. It is also the most famous city in Japan for the quintessential Japanese dish, sushi, as it has the largest number of restaurants in the whole country, followed only by the delicious grilled beef tongue or gyutan. Sendai is famous for its **matsuri**, the **Tanabata Festival**, which brings more than 2 million visitors each year and is Japan's largest tanabata.

It is not a city rich in monuments or attractions, even the famous castle, home to important ninja families, is no longer present but it's indicated by a statue. Being a relatively modern city, it holds the characteristic of being considered a ‘normal city’ of Japan, hectic but at the same time less grey than other big cities, due to its nature and milder climate.



Photo of Sendai city, Japan, Myagi prefecture

FUKUOKA 福岡

Fukuoka is the fifth largest city in Japan and the cultural, economic and administrative centre of the southern island of Kyushu, which is Japan's third largest island.

It is the capital of the prefecture of the same name and is the result of the union of the **port town of Hakata** and the ancient **walled city of Fukuoka**. These two parts were united in the late 19th century for all intents and purposes, except geographically because they were divided by the **Naka River**.

The city of Fukuoka has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years, becoming a tourist hub full of **attractions and cultural events**. Despite its size, it is a city where the most commercial and tourist areas are concentrated in a few places, so it can be enjoyed on foot.

Fukuoka due to its location represents a **crossroads of cultures**, it is much closer to China and South Korea than to Tokyo; in fact and unfortunately many tourists/visitors very often fail to visit it because it is at the very tip of Japan, and also the climate is very humid especially in summer. Fukuoka is famous for good food, in particular there are widespread **yatai stands** where you can taste dishes such as **tonkotsu ramen**, a typical dish that is reproduced everywhere in the country but which has its origins here.

The people of Fukuoka are also quieter and friendlier than the normal Japanese stereotype of Tokyo, perhaps due to the presence of free sea and beaches, large parks that relieve stress and are frequented all year round.

SAPPORO 札幌

The city of Sapporo has approximately 1.970.000 inhabitants, and the literal meaning is "**major river flowing across a plain**" in the Ainu language, and is the capital of the prefecture of Hokkaido, the largest island in the north of the country.

The city of Sapporo was chosen at the beginning of the Meiji era to become the administrative centre of Hokkaido to replace Hakodate, the regional capital at the time. Precisely for this reason, the **city's urban planning model is extremely different** from that of almost all other Japanese metropolises, based on a grid system.

Unlike most of Japan's major urban environments, Sapporo is full of greenery. In fact, the city's inhabitants spend a lot of time outdoors and there is a strong **union between natural beauty and contemporary architecture and artistic sculptures**.

The city attracts many tourists especially for the magnificent Snow Festival, the "**Yuki Matsuri**"; in February each year, during which the city is filled with ice statues created by artists from all over the world, which are also illuminated at night. Sapporo is world-famous for the production of the **beer** of the same name, and is very popular during the winter season as a stopover for snow sports in the many tourist areas around the city. In fact, the whole island retains the characteristic of being in unspoilt nature, and Sapporo, surrounded by mountains, has a moderate climate and many possibilities for local food and attractions, making it a popular destination for many tourists all year round, even when the weather is harsher.



Photo of Fukuoka city, Japan, Kyushu prefecture



Photo of Sapporo city, Japan, Hokkaido prefecture

HIROSHIMA 広島

The city of Hiroshima is a very famous port city, and this fame is unfortunately due to the tragic events of the past. In 1945, it was bombed by a nuclear attack that razed the city to the ground, claiming more than 80,000 lives, more than doubled over the years due to radiation. But despite this terrible event, the city has since then not been gloomy or bitter about its past, but **promotes messages of peace and understanding for the future**, with the hope that no people will ever relive those horrors. Every year on the anniversary of 6 August, celebrations are held to commemorate the victims, and one of the most poignant services is the **lantern service**; millions of people write messages of peace on paper lanterns that are lit at sunset and floated down the river.

The Peace Museum is one of the city's most visited cultural sites, where the memory of the past and hope for the future come together.

The city, like other large cities in Japan, has numerous attractions and districts where entertainment and leisure make it a lively city. Famous also for its excellent local cuisine, **okonomiyaki** is one of the city's typical dishes. Influenced also by foreign cuisines, it is a symbol

of a vibrant city that, despite its painful past, has been reborn from its ashes. In fact, there are many modern areas, dedicated to art, conviviality and shopping centres, which become hubs for meeting people.

The city actually looks like a big concrete metropolis like all the other big Japanese cities, full of lights and people busy in their everyday lives, as the traces of the past are few and concentrated in a small area compared to the whole city.

Twenty years after the war, in fact, Hiroshima is once again **one of Japan's most productive cities**, no longer focused on the war industry, the main reason for the bomb's launch, but on the automobile industry, still home to the Mazda plant.



Photos of Hiroshima city, Japan, Hiroshima prefecture

KOBE 神戸

The city of Kobe is the capital of Hyogo Prefecture, on the island of Honshu, and is one of the 10 largest cities in Japan, in fact it has about 1.5 million inhabitants.

The most fascinating aspect of Kobe is its location, as it is enclosed **between Mount Rokko and the sea, creating breathtaking scenery**. Starting from Mount Rokko, it offers an unparalleled panorama of the bay and the city and can be reached by cable car. One of the most visited attractions of Mount Rokko is undoubtedly the **botanical garden**, which features numerous specimens of plants and flowers. Once visitors arrive at the botanical garden, they can follow a path through it, discovering small vantage points such as a greenhouse full of plants and a viewing terrace outside. One of the most interesting things about this terrace is the presence of a foot onsen, where visitors can sit and enjoy the view while experiencing an outdoor foot sauna. One of the most interesting aspects of the city is the presence of different realities, which make it different from other Japanese cities.

It is a **mix of different neighbourhoods**, "**Makimachi**"; i.e. **China Town**, one of the largest Chinese areas in the whole of Japan, consisting

of narrow alleys full of street food stalls, to the European quarter, characterised by typical architecture that clashes with the Japanese context, to the harbour area, defined as American. It is a very spacious open-air area, relaxing despite the many attractions and shopping centres for tourists. One of the most interesting and frequented areas of the harbour area is definitely **Meriken Park**, where numerous Japanese gather to spend time together and enjoy the view, i.e. to see the ocean and the mountains.

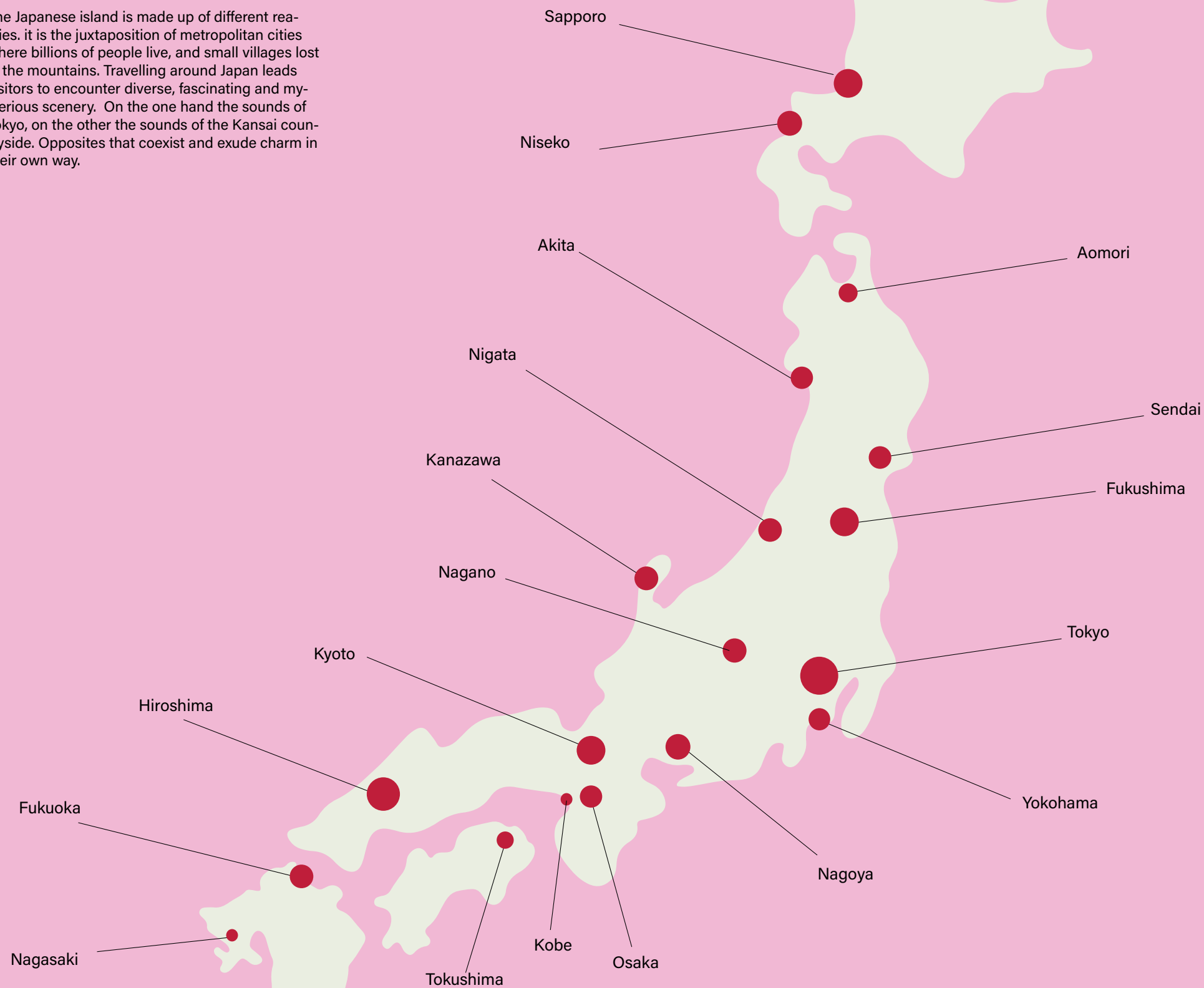
Kobe, due to its history as a port city of trade and commerce, is still full of shopping streets, including department stores and more traditional covered markets. Precisely for this reason it is very lively and full of people and the curious, as these areas are all pedestrianised, very interconnected and walkable.

The reason why Kobe is famous all over the world is its cuisine, specifically the **beef**, called **wagyu**, which is of the highest quality and of which the city is very proud, so much so that it is sold in every kind of restaurant, from sushi to ramen or as a steak in itself.



Photos of Kobe city, Japan, Hyogo prefecture

The Japanese island is made up of different realities. It is the juxtaposition of metropolitan cities where billions of people live, and small villages lost in the mountains. Travelling around Japan leads visitors to encounter diverse, fascinating and mysterious scenery. On the one hand the sounds of Tokyo, on the other the sounds of the Kansai countryside. Opposites that coexist and exude charm in their own way.



Cultural values

1.3 ABOUT JAPANESE CULTURE

Japan has always been regarded as a fascinating and mysterious country. Being geographically on the other side of the world and historically closed to trade and commerce, it is difficult to talk and tell about it if one has not lived there for a long time or does not know its history and cultural and social complexity.

Social and behavioural rules

One of the first things one notices as soon as one arrives in Japan is that there is a substantial and many times underestimated part of knowledge about the country and its principles that one cannot read and learn about through books and blogs on the Internet: everyday social behaviour and rules.

Obviously many of these are learnt with time and mostly by making mistakes, and it is normal from the eye of the native Japanese to see foreigners and/or tourists make mistakes; “non-Japanese” people, at least aesthetically speaking, are so “excused” and “forgiven” if they behave in certain ways that a Japanese towards his fellow countryman would consider inappropriate and rude. Very often a foreign person in a country other than their own is regarded as a tourist, even if they are not, and as is the case everywhere in the world, they are also regarded in Japan as an asset, for the economy and for the interest foreigners show in the country’s culture and beauty.

As a tourist, many gaf and mistakes are accepted, but one is unlikely to have contacts and/or ways of getting to know locals.

If, on the other hand, a person decides to settle in Japan for study and work, automatically certain unspoken rules must be known and respected, especially if it is taken for granted that one will have interactions with Japanese people in everyday life.

The **Japanese** are also perhaps stereotypically seen as **very polite** and **respectful** people, **introverted** and **reserved**, **kind** but **aloof**. Behaviour in society and a sense of respect are very important and very strict, and influence not only the language and expressions used in speech but also non-verbal language, i.e. body movements and posture.

As is typical in other Asian cultures, it is important to know how to refer to the other person, but unlike in Italian, French or German, and in general in neo-



Photo of people in the underground

Latin languages, there is no formal form of “lei” as verbs are not conjugated for different people. In Japanese, to differentiate who one is addressing, the whole sentence changes, not the verb, but rather suffixes are used before certain words and many expressions are changed to more respectful, long and specific forms.

For example, honorific forms can also be used in reference to things and verbs in the form of prefixes, i.e. they are placed before the word, placing the syllable “O” (お) or “GO” (ご) immediately before it.

It is also **essential to use the surname of the other person**, in any context, since the birth name is reserved only if there is a close, intimate relationship. Furthermore, only in very friendly contexts is it possible to call the other person by

their surname alone, but suffixes called honorifics are used daily to address one’s interlocutor or a third person with the correct degree of respect that depends on the person’s role, the degree of familiarity with them, and their age in relation to one’s own. Although this seems trivial as it is politeness in every culture to pay respect to older people or in academic/working environments, in Japan it is very strict and uncompromising in this: even grandparents and parents are obliged to **speak in the most respectful form possible**, and very often only the surname is used in family circles or certain precise suffixes to call mother, father, grandparents, brothers or sisters. Suffixes are neutral, but in reality many are used mainly or only for men or only for women, and are not used to refer to oneself, to avoid being considered crude and rude. From the moment one meets a new person who seems to be of the same age, it is absolutely among the **first questions to ask one’s age**, precisely as a gesture of politeness to know how to address one another, especially in the school environment, where even a year of age implies a change of tone and suffixes.

The most common is the suffix “-san” that follows the surname, translatable as sir/daughter, is used in any formal, generic context, for different ages and little knowledge between people, or to address a stranger. “Chan” (ちゃん) is a pet name used between girls for girls, classmates and friends, or for children and pets; conversely, “kun” (君 or くん) is used by boys towards other boys, and both can be used by people older in age than younger, but not the other way around. “Senpai” (先輩) is used to address a classmate or sports club older than the interlocutor, or between colleagues, but never in reference to the boss, even as a single word not associated with the name. “Kohai” (後輩) is the term used to address a younger classmate but has a negative connotation as it emphasises that the

person is inexperienced or novice. “Sensei” (先生) literally teacher or master, is used to refer to someone who is older than us and has great experience in a certain field, so not just “teachers”. “Sama” (様 or さま) is the honorific suffix used for deities, in work contexts or in general for people who hold important roles, or to address groups. However, these are usually not used by the Japanese to address foreigners, as the former know that in our culture and especially that the English language does not provide for them, but if the attempt is to integrate into society by also speaking Japanese, **honours and language must necessarily follow certain standards**.



Photo of a woman bowing

One of the characteristics that characterises the Japanese is **extreme politeness**, understood as politeness but above all **humility**.

In the West, there is a habit of showing off one's individual qualities, developing pride; in Japan, on the other hand, **people tend to downplay their skills**, in fact humility together with **workaholicism** are important qualities in this culture.

In support of this thesis, it is in fact typical to hear the Japanese say in response to a compliment a simple **"ie ie"** which can be translated as **"no no"**, or a phrase such as **"it's nothing/ it's just my duty"**; thanking is a sign of arrogance and boasting, as if one wants to show that one possesses that quality for which one has been praised. The kindness of the Japanese people stems from their **willingness to provide any kind of help** before the tourist/guest can ask for it.

Of course the manner is different from what we are used to, there are **no effusions or physical contact**, but the feeling of wanting to help and being hospitable is. Often help from a Japanese person is completely spontaneous, especially from those people who have perhaps been the first to experience being a foreigner in a country other than their own, such as giving directions, helping with speaking and translating, or even a simple gesture of respect and cordiality such as a nod of the head.

On this point, which seems to contradict the fact that gesticulating is completely foreign to the Japanese way of expressing oneself, one actually has to consider non-verbal language: for example, the **Japanese greeting**, also understood as a general sign of thanks, is the famous bow. Its use and the way it is done changes depending on the context and the people to whom it is addressed: among peers a nod of the head is enough, among strangers the movement of the head is accentuated and one does not make eye contact, in school and work contexts the bow must be of the whole body, at a minimum of approximately 15°, as when thanking a group for a job done or a group outing, and finally even up to 90° as a sign of respect, total reference or to ask for forgiveness and/or to thank important figures, such as bosses, doctors, etc. It is also **important that the person saying thank you continues to do so until the other person leaves and is out of sight**; it is very common to see even in the street people continuing to greet a group that is now back to back.

It is also unusual to note that even when crossing the street, or passing in front of a person so as not to get in the way, a polite Japanese person thanks by bowing his or her head several times and placing a hand perpendicular to the forehead asks

"sorry" for the disturbance or hindrance caused. Extreme politeness is characteristic of many jobs dealing with the public, as it is normal to be greeted by shop assistants with a "welcome" to which one usually does not even reply, to see train conductors and public transport drivers bowing at departure or arrival to thank people, to see orderly and composed queues forming even in the world's largest train, metro and even bus stations.

The sense of respect and kindness thus extends beyond the interpersonal context, but also **concerns public spaces in the sense of maintaining polite behaviour everywhere**, especially there where one can annoy others, an almost shocking example is seeing trains and buses overcrowded but very quiet, where one speaks in a whisper so as not to disturb the people around, perhaps tired after a day's work. It is normal to make mistakes, especially for a foreigner, perhaps forgetting to mute the mobile phone on public transport, talking too loudly, eating and drinking in the street, which is considered uncivilised because it gets dirty, and not near vending machines or neighbourhood shops, the **"konbini"**, for which in a perhaps even ironic way the concept of **"sumimasening"** was born. It derives from perhaps the most commonly used word in Japan every day, i.e. **"sumimasen"** or "apology", which is used for any context in any situation, not only by foreigners, so the English verbal form with the suffix in -ing refers precisely to the attitude of continually apologising for anything, from walking down the street, to paying at the till, from expressing gratitude when one feels at fault for causing annoyance, or starting a conversation to asking for directions, from ordering at a restaurant to saying sorry for a mistake or delay.

These unspoken details and rules of the Japanese people and culture that one learns from living in and getting to know the country are what make the Land of the Rising Sun special, little things, so different from the ways that are familiar to us that they amaze. So it is typical that living in Japan one feels the natural urge to conform to local norms of behaviour.

As already mentioned in the East, not only in Japan, expressions of affection are considered an intimate moment to be confined, and perhaps enhanced, only in the private sphere, so kisses, hugs and effusions in public are very rare, mostly between kids, maybe friends, who hold hands in vehicles, or young couples who do not hold hands out of shyness but at most lean on each other.



Family & respect

One of the fundamental pillars within Japanese society is the **family**, generally composed of the father figure (**お父さん**, "Otosan") and mother figure (**お母さん**, "Okosan"), the children, and at least one of the grandparents (grandmother, "Obosan", **お祖母さん** and grandfather "Ojosan", **お祖父さん**).

It is very common to find a difference in the roles of the family figures, in fact the exhausting work schedule usually forces the father figure to be absent from home for a long time, thus leaving the mother in charge of bringing up the children. Women take care of everything, from the children to the financial management of the home, and thus represent the real reference figure. The situation is different when the father is busy running a family business, often carried out under the same roof as the home, which allows him to enjoy the company of the family more and be more present.

There are many cases in which women, although married, work; but most of the time they choose very early to give up employment to devote themselves to the family, to the detriment of their professional career. Often the decision is forced by the need to devote themselves to older family members or children (long waiting lists in



Photos representing an hikikomori

kindergartens, for example, leave little choice). **The Japanese family is based on succession but is not to be understood as an absolute succession of blood, but as a union aimed at ensuring the continuity of the family institution.** Very often when, for example, a family has only daughters, one "adopts the son-in-law" to ensure that the family name continues. Thus one can speak of a "**proximity family**"; not necessarily formed by blood ties but by the fact that everyone lives under the same roof.

In Japan, it is also stipulated that by marriage the spouses take the same surname, which implies that one of them renounces his or her own and this generally concerns the woman. There are few cases in which it is the husband who takes the woman's surname, this is only when she has a prestigious job role.

The Japanese family nucleus generally presents the characteristics described above: the **marginal figure of the father**, in spite of a **more established mother**, and this together with the high "demands" of society (both at school and at work) lead to various phenomena of social unease, among which stands out what is known as "**hikikomori**": **young people who tend to isolate themselves from society in an extreme manner, limiting their relations with the outside world to only via the Internet, and who often invert the sleep-wake cycle.**

It is very interesting to observe how these aspects of Japanese reality have connections with the past or with religion.

As seen before, the **mother figure is extremely important** and this value can be found in Confucian culture, which advocates filial love and attachment to the family.

This feeling can be expressed by the concept of "**amae**", a noun of the verb "ameru", meaning "**to depend on**". It is no coincidence that the Judeo-Christian religions are very much based on the father figure, Buddhism and Shintoism are on the mother.

The Japanese psychoanalyst Takeo Doi expressed the concept of "amae", which although it is not unique to the Japanese, is only defined in Japanese, while other languages do not have a term for this concept, so it is an untranslatable word.

The concept expresses the relationship of dependence and union that exists between mother and child, which triggers a sense of obligation to the parent, and how this is then translated into every social relationship.

The Japanese family is therefore characterised by a mother who is psychologically and physically present and close and an absent father, always at

work, with a rather marginal role.

This aspect of Japanese society is also reflected in manga and anime, where scenes of everyday life are fundamental and where we find this type of parental figure. This bond between parent and child is so implicit that it becomes a criterion for all other internal constraints in Japanese society.

The Japanese live in three different worlds of dependency: parent-child dependency characterised by "amae"; dependency in the world of work; relationship with strangers where there is no mutual dependence.

A familiar aspect that is reflected in society and in how the Japanese live and relate is the **tendency to split behaviour according to situations.**

Inside the home they present and behave in one way, outside in another. The mother, for example, is part of the world of the "**uchi**", of the inside: the symbiosis, the empathy, the intimate complicity, the

harmony that is created between mother and child, which must be translated "**soto**", i.e. the outside, into external relations, in a different form. This must always maintain a **firm form of reserve**, called "**enryo**".

So it is as if one were keeping to a double psychic register: one for the inside and one for the outside. True, the father figure is physically absent, but the patriarchal role he embodies is present and cumbersome. Around this figure arise all the expectations towards the son, who has to carry on the family name and traditions, take care of the elderly members in the future and fulfil himself professionally.

Indeed, **in Japanese society, the concept of masculinity and virility is associated with the ability to be strong, calm, dedicated and able to control one's emotions and feelings.**

Implicitly, these are the reasons why the Japanese person is usually perceived as reserved, shy and not very talkative.



Photos of mother and daughter in the street

School and work-related values

When one thinks of Japan, the many positive aspects of everyday life as we mentioned in the first paragraph spring to mind. But in reality there are some elements that clash with this country's image of perfection, especially when it comes to work and school rhythms.

The Land of the Rising Sun is famous for the stress experienced by its citizens, largely due to constant social pressure. Being a worker or a student entails different responsibilities, tasks and expectations.

From childhood, the Japanese have a pattern to follow and those who cannot or do not want to be part of it are considered different and therefore a blemish on society.

As seen in the previous paragraphs, in Japan there are many **unspoken rules** and many **behaviours to follow**; being part of the community is fundamental because we are still talking about a **collectivist society**.

The Japanese pace of life is **frenetic and stressful**: it is common to see exhausted people coming home from work late at night, or students still wearing their uniforms at eleven o'clock at night because they have just finished one of the many classes, which parents and society impose, outside the normal compulsory schooling.

As we have already seen, Japan is a country full

of contradictions, **on the one hand the excessive stress of achieving perfection and on the other traditional Zen meditation techniques.**

The world of work in Japan (and in Asia in general) is extremely stressful, with exhausting rhythms, not because there are laws that say to work 12 hours a day, but because working so much is normalised.

It is common practice to **work to the point of exhaustion and is considered an admirable gesture**, showing one's dedication and respect for the company and superiors.

Even when not explicitly requested, it is the employees themselves who voluntarily choose to stay in the office until late in the evening, because if even one person does so, the others, colleagues for example, must do likewise. It is very common in offices to see people resting and sleeping so that they can take a break and then resume work.

An unfortunately widespread social phenomenon in Japan is "**Karoshi**", a Japanese term describing **death from overwork**, and there are two types: deaths caused by cardiovascular problems due to excessive stress and suicides due to depression. This attitude of self-sacrifice at work is extremely ingrained in the Japanese mentality, as are certain rules and behaviours to be followed in the workplace.

Women, for example, must adhere to very strict aesthetic standards not required of men, such as elegant clothing and well-defined make-up, with a view to always showing the best version of oneself. They must wear low to medium heels, not high ones because the latter are not allowed, so it is common to see Japanese women walking around with a pair of comfortable shoes in their handbags. One of the most absurd rules imposed on women in terms of aesthetics in the workplace is the ban on wearing glasses. The motivation for this imposition is that the frames risk spoiling the oval of the face and the idea that glasses convey coldness and an aloof air to the people wearing them.

Beauty standards in Japan are oppressive and sexist, to say the least.

These crazy rhythms of life lead to extremely high levels of stress and discomfort, so much so that there are **crying clubs** in Japan where workers and/or students can get together and vent all their negative emotions, as complaining and/or quitting is absolutely not allowed.

Initially, there were hotels with special rooms and generally reserved for women as they were considered the weaker subjects; but with time, Japanese society and government realised the need to make these collective venting spaces. This approach is very interesting coming from a country that is generally reluctant to show emotion and affection. Working hard for the Japanese is not something that is done for the exclusive personal fulfilment or sustenance of the family, but to contribute to the system. This **feeling of responsibility and devotion** to one's country is palpable; one is not an individual, but a cog within a complex system, namely Japanese society.

This obsession with productivity and excellence is a value that society imposes on children from an early age and which immediately creates **rivalry, rankings and competition** in and between schools. Since there are both public and private schools, wealthy families enrol their children in the best and most prestigious institutes, mostly private, which due to their reputation then guarantee the possibility of easier access to better middle schools, and so on to better high schools and then better universities, guaranteeing then in job interviews many more chances of being able to enter big companies and hold more and more important positions. Right from the start, in fact, many young people attend many courses in addition to their normal schooling, in so-called "**preparatory schools**" until late in the evening, in order to study and prepare for better scores in the

entrance tests to the various schools.

It is normal for children to come home only for dinner time, to attend sports clubs even at weekends, and thus have even less opportunity to interact outside school, among peers or to have a deeper relationship with the family. **School is taken so seriously socially that on the days of the big university entrance tests, traffic is blocked at peak train times to ensure that vehicles are not delayed or there are no accidents for which children may be absent or late for tests.**

Contrary to what one might imagine, university is not the most difficult school, as it is the last step before entering the world of work, but once in, it can be seen as an opportunity for students to study what they are really interested in, the courses are usually as little as 3 hours a week and the study and workload involved is much less, this is because students are given more time to follow their passions and inclinations, before the crucial period of job hunting.

In these few years, the Japanese can also break out of the aesthetic standards and uniform rules, including the possibility of dyeing their hair. The university in the third year accompanies the students to the choice of whether to continue their studies or not, and from the moment they want to start working it is the university that on the basis of its fame and prestige has the task of guiding them to job hunting, it is in fact the responsibility of the institution to make sure that even before finishing their degree the student has been accepted for some job. But for the stressful period of the job hunting the students have to revert, not by law, but as a matter of implicit regulation, to the Japanese standard of dress and appearance.

Living in this society is difficult for many foreigners, especially if one's country of origin is very different in standards and expectations; it is clear that the Japanese also suffer from these constant social pressures given the **ever-increasing number of people in distress in counselling centres, psychiatric clinics and for psychological help.** Even if these problems are not talked about, as they are considered uncomfortable by many Japanese people, the numbers and statistics of suicides and psychological illnesses such as the "**hikikomori**", people who due to trauma, unhappiness, depression and/or lack of sincere ties decide to have no more contact with society and lock themselves away at home for life, preferring the virtual world of video games, are evident.



Photo of a Japanese student waiting for the train

Aesthetic values

Generally to a Westerner, Asian people appear aesthetically and stereotypically all alike. In the Japanese case, the classical Japanese physiognomy and build is, in fact, predominant in the majority of the population, perhaps also because historically most foreigners in Japan have always been Koreans and Chinese, whose aesthetic characteristics over the generations have blended with those of the Japanese. While aesthetically different populations, such as those of the Okinawa region, the islands in the far south of the country, have always been considered, also for cultural and historical reasons, outside Japan, and so have the inhabitants, darker in complexion, as not being true Japanese. As mentioned in paragraph three, Japan being a collectivist country and characterised by a strong homologation in behaviour and thoughts, also **from an aesthetic point of view has very rigid and sometimes absurd aesthetic canons** with which both men and women have to deal, even resorting very often to cosmetic surgery, typically influenced by Korean fashions.

It is only in the last few years that aesthetic fashion has become so rigid and inspired by the country historically rival to Japan, Korea, certainly due to the media success that pop music groups have had, showing boy or girl bands of very young, talented boys, who dictate the canons and trends in fashion and beauty among young Asians and influence the whole world.

While historically there has always been the stereotype of Japanese female beauty, given by the film and historical culture of the elegant, mysterious and seductive figures of the geishas, who have always fascinated the West, the figure of the Asian man is actually very far removed from the typical canons of beauty of the virile, tall and powerful man. On the contrary, he has always been associated, also due to migration, with the stereotype of the short, thin, wiry and unattractive man. **The fashion and aesthetic canon dictated by the idols of K-Pop**, the singers and dancers of the Korean pop genre, which then influenced J-Pop, the Japanese counterpart, has radically changed the way Asian boys are perceived and seen in the world.

Aesthetic standards generally change in all cultures over time, just think of Greek figures or modern-day catwalk models, so that the softer, androgynous Asian beauty of many boys and girls fascinates many cultures.

While both oriental men and women are considered more attractive, the aesthetic canons they face are becoming increasingly rigid for both sexes. The most famous and oldest dictate is about the **skin**,

which must be as white as possible, as a sign of grace and elegance. This is historically related to the idea that tanned skin is characteristic of humble people and agricultural workers who, being in the sun all day, inevitably tan; hence white skin is also a symbol of higher social status and beauty. Today, it is still the most common feature that every woman in Japan looks for, in fact in a dysphoric way towards darker-skinned foreigners, skin-whitening creams are widely advertised, only very light foundations are usually sold, and very high sun protection is a must all year round.

In summer, one sees the classic women walking around the streets equipped with UV-protection umbrellas, light gloves to keep their arms from tanning, wearing very opaque but light clothing so as not to be hot but to be covered from the sun, wearing long skirts and even wearing masks and hats with visors and neck shields so as not to tan their faces. These are just some of the obsessive Japanese stratagems to maintain the whiteness of the skin, as well as skin care, the treatment of wrinkles and imperfections.

Other much sought-after characteristics are **thinness and slenderness of the body**, as Asians are already generally very thin and tend to be shorter, **being small and petite for a girl is attractive** as it is defined as "**kawaii**", literally **cute**. Most of the other canons concern the face, which must be oval, small, as it is sweeter, more childlike and therefore **kawaii**. The eyes must be big, hence the widespread use and fashion of contact lenses, which serve to enlarge and/or colour the pupil and have the characteristic of the separate eyelid, and not the monolid, typical oriental, which makes the eye appear flatter. For this special adhesive tapes are sold to recreate it and make the eyes appear larger, as well as the bags under the eyes, understood as the fat that is created under the eye when one smiles, should be accentuated/created with make-up or through a scalpel. Similarly, the nose, generally wider and flatter in the Japanese, should be straighter and thinner, even "French-style".

Japanese women have always been associated with the idea of a modest, graceful, quiet and above all serviceable woman from the past, still today in the way they behave and dress, they must be elegant, poised, not provocative in their clothing.



Photos of a Japanese girl dressed as a Geisha (on the left)



The reasons for this quest for Western aesthetic connotations at all costs must be sought in history, as they are in line with the social changes Japan has faced over the centuries, when **after the 2WW it was inevitably influenced by Western culture.** The traditional female beauty ideal of the geisha in traditional dress, the **kimono**, is completely covered, absolutely unprovocative, so that **even today Japanese fashion involves being very demure in appearance**, even to the point of having to follow many fixed rules at work and school with uniforms.

Similarly, the **white foundation** called **oshiroi**, composed of rice and water, is symbolic of beauty in white skin, which persists to this day. Leaving behind the neck two slices of bare skin, i.e. not painted white, forming a 'V', is also a symbol of female seduction, as the neck has always been considered an extremely seductive part of the female body.

So much so that in schools it is forbidden for girls to tie up their hair, precisely so as not to "tempt" their classmates or even male teachers. Similarly, **even make-up, strictly forbidden in schools, must be light, not excessive or provocative for women**, characterised by sweet, pastel, pinkish, almost childlike tones, always recalling the concept of tender and cute, which becomes almost fetishised.

Men must also follow certain rules, especially in working environments.

A suit and tie, a strictly white shirt, elegant shoes, for any office job; similarly a black or grey suit, knee-high, neat hair, but not loose for women, there are no exceptions in colours and shapes.

Similarly at school, both summer and winter uniforms are compulsory, the same for all boys, differing only in the two sexes, with skirts for girls and trousers for boys. Everything must be coordinated, including the socks, which must be knee-length, corresponding to the length of the skirt. The outfit includes, depending on the school, either a jacket, or jumpers, in some cases also a tie, bows for girls, up to a school bag, backpack and hat for younger children.

In addition, it is also compulsory to have **black hair**, so if a child's hair was lighter as perhaps the child of immigrants, it would have to be dyed.

The underlying concept is that in this way all students are equal, there are no distinctions of social status indicated by more luxurious clothing, and that there are no distraction in this regard, sexually among the children.

In fact, since every school must have, for reasons including police recognition in case of accidents, a unique uniform, distinctions between different schools inevitably arise.

This is because as there are differences between private and public schools, more or less expensive, these can be seen by the quality and beauty of the uniforms, how rich they are in detail, stitching, accessories, for example inspired by a British, navy etc... aesthetic. Such specific clothing for both school and work is bought in specialised shops, not in ordinary malls.

This rigidity and conformity inevitably leads to the fact that at a certain point, for example once compulsory schooling is over, many young people decide to dress and style themselves in a particular way, embracing styles and fashions that are also very bizarre, from punk style, to lolita fashion, coloured hair or the "shinouri" style that takes up the style of geishas and countless other kinds of street fashion.

But the most globally present aesthetic concept, and one that has economic, political and social repercussions, is that of the aforementioned kawaii, which extends to entertainment, clothing, food, toys, personal aesthetics, behaviour in the way

people move and pose, in their facial expressions and gestures. Something kawaii must not only be cute, but also small, funny, ornate, innocent-looking, childlike, usually in pastel shades. It derives from the term *kawaige* (可愛げ) which can be translated as **innocent childlike beauty**. These are therefore childlike features, graceful features, large, sparkling, tender and expressive eyes that are based on the aesthetics of manga and anime and are commercially sought after all over the world. This aesthetic invests the whole of Japan, just think that every city has its own mascot, and even government institutions, from the Ministry of Justice to police departments, use characters as instruments to spread culture and values. Cuteness, halfway between femininity and childishness, extends to looks and behaviour, so that sometimes certain prissy attitudes and expressions are replicated by ordinary people, inspired then also by the protagonists of video games and finally by voice synthesisers such as **Vocaloids**.



Photos of Tokyo city, Japan, Tottori prefecture



Photos of Tokyo city, Japan, Tottori prefecture

Conviviality and culture of food

Japanese culinary culture is **one of the most appreciated in the world for its healthy, balanced and tasteful components**. It originates and is inspired by the interaction with the Chinese culinary tradition, but what characterises Japanese cuisine is its **extreme refinement and elegance**. As we have seen in the previous paragraph, the **aesthetic cult** is fundamental in society and this is reflected and is also part of the culinary dimension: **everything must be beautiful** in the first place, even before being cooked; dimensions and colours must be in **harmony**, everything is treated as if it were a work of art.

One of the things that strikes those who come to Japan is the **experiential dimension linked to food**. It is not just the taste, but also its aroma as well as the visual and tactile experience. Japanese cuisine is called **Washoku (和食)** and traditionally avoids extreme tastes and aromas, but prefers to enhance the natural taste of the dish.

Japanese cuisine can be divided into several groups. There are **dishes served cold**, called **"namasumono"** and other groups include **cooked dishes "nimono"**, **roasted "yakimono"** and **fried "agemono"** and **grilled dishes "teppanyaki"**; there are **salads (sunomono)** and **fermented dishes "tsukemono"**, and finally **rice dishes "gohanmono"** and **sushi**.

An important characteristic of cooking is also the discovery of the **"umami"** taste, defined as a **pleasant savoury taste that is naturally found in protein foods** such as meat, fish, vegetables and dairy products, which are necessary for our organism and are considered pleasant, stimulating salivation, digestion and absorption of nutrients. It is precisely for this reason that the typical Japanese cuisine and diet, although very simple, is **characterised by natural elements**, protein and simple carbohydrates, rice, fish or meat.

The stereotype coming from abroad is that Japanese cuisine only consists of sushi, but as soon as you arrive in the country, you realise the vastness and variety of food that each city has to offer. It is amazing the amount of different eateries, restaurants and izakaya that one can come across just walking down the street.

One of the things that is perhaps most surprising is the **presence of single-course establishments, dedicated to the preparation of a single food and/or dish**. Compared to the Italian habit of having the meal organised by courses, in Japan the meal is served at a single time without a precise order, in the idea of having many dishes on the table, to be shared among the diners. **Eating together is perhaps one of the most important convivial**

rituals in Japanese culture, so much so that it is typical to organise dinners and get-togethers among colleagues and friends, to let go of accumulated tensions. The **habit of sharing dishes** is certainly interesting, whereby various dishes are usually decided together and divided among the diners, so that each person eats in small separate dishes taking directly from the shared plates.

Walking through the Japanese streets one can come across small restaurants where the maximum capacity is six to seven people, or places where customers eat lunch standing up on the fly and then return to their own activities. This, in fact, is a very common aspect for the Japanese; as seen above, the pace of work and life is extreme, to say the least, so there is a **habit of eating in a hurry**. There are places where customers order their meal from a machine, give the ticket they have received to a waiter, and in a few minutes the cook prepares the dish, so customers eat and as soon as they have finished they vacate their seats and leave. **Eating alone in Japan is normalised**, it is not considered something strange as it may still be in other countries, but this does not mean that the Japanese lack a sense of conviviality.

It is common to get together with friends to drink in izakaya or to dine among colleagues to enhance the sense of community and thus also improve collaboration in the workplace. In this sense, the Japanese have a habit that in our case may seem extremely bizarre and perhaps out of place, which is to indicate on the CV as if it were a skill, their conviviality and the fact that they drink. This represents a social factor, namely the willingness to get together after work and socialise with colleagues and employers.

Another feature of Japanese restaurants or pubs, which may surprise people from abroad, is the way they order; very often there is no need to ask for help or talk to anyone, as ordering is done via tablets, machines and large screens.

Common throughout Japan are the restaurants of the **"Ichiran ramen"** chain, places that prepare ramen that are also open late at night and whose particularity lies in the way the meal is ordered and consumed. There is a machine where you can choose and pay for the type of ramen, then there are long counters to sit at, where each seat has its own privacy because there are partitions between each seat. For each seat there is a curtain in front, behind which the ramen is prepared, by waiters and cooks whose only interaction is the classic welcome. As we have already seen, it is common to eat alone, but in these places to indicate the specifications of your ramen all you have to do is fill

out a card and hand it over the curtain. When the dish is ready, it is handed over with a bow wishing you a good meal. Of course waiters can be called if needed, but there is no need to talk or interact more, so in general Japan is ideal for introverts. There are so many different types of places and foods you can come across in Japan, from the most traditional to the most diverse novelties and combinations of fusion cultures.

One of the most striking things when coming to Japan are the convenience stores, **"konbini"** in Japanese, **real oases in the city where you can buy whatever you need**. They are small supermarkets where you can do a little shopping, buy ready-made food, stop for a coffee, pay your bills or simply use the toilets.

There are several chains famous for some particular products, for example Family Mart, famous for its delicious fried chicken called **"Famichiki"**; others are Lawson, 7eleven, which being international also have ATMs for withdrawals from foreign banks. Of course, these places have slightly higher prices than ordinary supermarkets, but they are considered more convenient because they are open 24 hours a day.

The concept of shopping in Japan is also different from others: Italians tend to shop more lavishly and less frequently; the Japanese, on the other hand, tend to **shop almost every day**, so you do not usually see people with lots of bags and full trolleys. It is no coincidence that the latter are different: there tend to be only small baskets and the trolleys, placed at the entrance of the supermarket, act as a support for the basket.

Very practical is the payment at the till, whereby one simply hands the basket with the products to the cashier, who, while scanning the entire shopping, places the products neatly in another trolley. Next to the cashier you pay in cash or by card using special machines, and after paying, the customer takes the basket with their shopping and moves near the entrance to stations designed to calmly bag their products.

In this way, shopping is less stressful because there is no hurry to bag the products to avoid keeping the next customer waiting.

The eating habits are different from the Italian ones, they include a lot of **fermented vegetables** and cereals, in addition to these, fermented plums also called **"umeboshi"** (with which a delicious liqueur is made) and miso are widely used.

Miso is the basic component of soups and is derived from soya, fermented grains and whole sea salt; it is ubiquitous in Japanese meals, as

well as being used as a remedy for flu and colds. These foods are part of everyday life along with rice and fish, and **in supermarkets there are entire departments dedicated to fresh fish and sushi at very low prices**. The situation is different in the case of the fruit and vegetable department.

In Japan, **fruit**, in particular, is **very expensive** because it is mostly imported and tends to be less tasty for this reason, so that the portions of fruit in the Japanese diet are decidedly smaller than what an Italian may be used to. It is no coincidence that fruit is brought as a gift when invited to dinner at the homes of relatives and friends.



Photo of two Japanese in a typical restaurant



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Photos of people eating

Hygiene and sustainability

The sense of respect, explored in the first paragraph, can also be extended outside the interpersonal context, as the Japanese have a **deep sense of devotion also towards their country, towards common spaces, which translates into extreme care, cleanliness and order in public places.** The concept of cleanliness in Japan, as well as being a sort of social rule, is also a **right**; it is no coincidence that there are **public baths with showers called "sen-to" created to help the poorer sections of society.**

Another type of **public bath**, in this case thermal, is the **"on-sen"**, where the Japanese (in most cases divided by sex) bathe naked in boiling water, regenerating body and spirit; here before entering, one must take a shower so as to enter the tubs of clean water.

The sense of cleanliness also derives from traditions and respect for a place, especially a sacred one; in fact, before entering the shrines one must take an ablution to purify oneself and wash hands and mouth.

Cleaning is taught from an early age and in some schools there is a home economics hour for both sexes. One practice adopted by every class is to



Photos of a Japanese on-sen

clean the classroom once a week, either in shifts and pairs, or as an extracurricular activity as a group. This teaches the children from a young age to organise themselves, to take responsibility and to increase their sense of teamwork and cooperation. Therefore, cleanliness is an important aspect that society attaches importance to, especially in common and frequented places, such as schools, workplaces and even stations, which are always very clean.

Contrary to what one might think, even at the busiest intersections in Tokyo, **there are no litter bins in Japan.** This is because in the past there have been cases in which bombs have been placed in the litter bins of the busiest places, which is why it was decided to eliminate them as much as possible. So it is common practice, if you have something to throw away while you are on the street, to keep it in your pocket or purse, with a view to taking it home and then sorting it properly. The only exception are vending machines, near which it is accepted to eat, drink and, perhaps away from the main street, even smoke. In this regard, it is surprising to learn that it is **absolutely forbidden to smoke in the street**, so as not to annoy one's neighbour, and similarly nowadays not even in the premises.

Similarly, it is **impolite to eat while walking or strolling**, whatever it may be, as it is **unhygienic** and one risks littering the ground, soiling oneself or making crumbs, and as there are no waste bins either, one has to keep dirty food packaging in one's hand or purse. It is therefore socially accepted to eat nearby only where food is sold, and where there are therefore free baskets, the only exception being water.

For smoking there are designated areas in the busiest centres, such as open-air cages with benches, partitions and ashtrays. Although they seem very convenient, they are rare and it is often the Japanese themselves who seek out more isolated corners and alleys to hide and smoke, even when it is not allowed and is against the law. **The act of smoking and chatting in company is not part of Japanese culture but is more considered as a stress reliever, a moment to be given in silence and tranquillity.**

So much so that, well aware of the smog and pollution of the big cities, it was customary long before the time of Covid-19 to **wear a mask**, especially on crowded public transport. This is both for reasons of hygiene and to prevent colds or seasonal illnesses, but with the pandemic period, wearing a face mask has also now become a

fashion, a habit that is difficult to break, because behind it, **girls can finally avoid wearing make-up, and people can also hide and perhaps feel less observed, more protected from the gaze of others.** In fact, in recent months, even after the emergency was over and after the national authorities declared that wearing surgical protection was not compulsory, all Japanese people, even outdoors, even in parks playing sports, still continue to wear it. Even if someone more fed up than others decides to take it off, in a short time seeing everyone else constantly wearing it, he decides for approval and not to be strange or different, to put it back on. In this way, the Japanese everywhere continue to use the mask, even in the torrid and sultry summers of many metropolises, and often foreigners or tourists who are not used to it, and who, because of the heat or because it is no longer used in other countries, are looked at badly or even avoided.

The Japanese sense of hygiene and cleanliness is also reflected in the extreme care of packaging, which is sometimes excessive to say the least due to the amount of plastic present. Tangible is the Japanese passion for packaging and wrappings, which often follow the kawaii aesthetics already addressed above and which can be from



Photos of packaging in Japanese supermarkets

the most refined, made of fabric according to traditional techniques to the most commercial and widespread, mostly in polymeric material.

It is no coincidence that Japan ranks among the top countries in terms of plastic consumption per capita.

It is common to find any object wrapped in plastic, especially products such as fruit and vegetables. As mentioned, these are relatively expensive, and what strikes the visitor is certainly the amount of plastic used to wrap them. Indeed, walking into a local grocery shop or one of the big supermarkets one comes across expanses of perfect, shiny vegetables and fruits wrapped, often individually, in **one or more layers of plastic**. The same goes for other products, from sweets to savoury snacks, for which there is no medium-large packaging: biscuits, for example, are wrapped individually or two by two in small boxes with a maximum of a dozen biscuits.

These are the most shocking characteristics in terms of eating and consumption habits, which can be explained by the following main reasons: hygiene and “**omotenashi**” a term meaning “**sense of hospitality**”. This expression can be used and extended to many areas, but in general it **refers to the care one puts into something and the dedication to the customer**.

Hygiene is fundamental in Japanese society and extends to all areas of daily life, personal, in the care of public open spaces and towards the products that consumers buy. **Everything must be clean and above all look clean in a marketing perspective**. Sellers treat customers with the utmost kindness, and devote care and dedication to the way products are presented and packaged, mainly as a matter of image and to give the goods a luxurious and exclusive appearance.

In spite of the massive consumption of plastic, especially in the food sector with the fresh and ready-to-eat food that can be found at convenience stores every day, Japan boasts a very efficient and **rigorous system of separate waste collection**.

This is independent in each prefecture (in Japan the term indicates regions) but is more or less homogeneous throughout the country. In the city of Kyoto, for example, small objects, bottles and plastic containers should not be thrown into the **same container, but carefully separated**.

These specificities make Japan one of the countries with the highest percentage of recycled plastic, even this is 84% of that which is collected.

This number, when compared to other countries, is quite high, but it is necessary to distinguish the various recycling systems used in Japan: material (23%), whereby plastic is reused in new products

but is inconvenient in the long run because the molecules that make up the plastic deteriorate and lose quality; chemical (4%) whereby polymeric waste is first broken down into molecules and then converted into new plastic materials by processes that cost energy and money; and thermal (56%) through the process of combustion in incinerators to recover heat in the form of energy, which has a strong negative environmental impact.

In terms of emissions, Japan, burning most of the waste it produces and using nuclear power, is **responsible for 3-4% of global CO2 emissions alone**. **The environmental problem is not felt as an emergency, even by the younger generation**, and it is only in recent years that one hears talk of a climate emergency in Japan, so much so that in 2020 alone the Japanese Ministry of the Environment set the goal of reducing plastic in circulation by 25% by 2030.

It is also true that with Japan being hit hard by violent rains and typhoons, with victims and destruction of buildings and property, public opinion is beginning to realise the reality of climate change and its link to global warming. Due to cultural factors, such as the avoidance of self-assertion and conflict, climate strikes and demonstrations by citizens are rare, but the media and extreme catastrophes are awakening the majority of the population. However, the issue remains in the hands of the government, which sometimes considers these weather events not necessarily related to the need to reduce emissions. Therefore, companies often adapt new green policies in order not to be left behind by Western partners and to seize new business opportunities. **Japan, culturally and socially, also from an environmental point of view, is slow to undertake new strategies, and only in the new generations can one hope for greater open-mindedness and attention to sustainability**.

Contradictions

1.4 THE APOLOGY OF OPPOSITES

Social homologation vs Independence



Photo of a rush-hour crossing

Japan is not an idyllic or perfect world as many enthusiasts make it out to be, it is certainly a fascinating country but controversial because of its contrasts. If on the one side we have kindness towards our neighbors, there is also on the other the unwillingness to take the trouble to be the first to help, which can also be defined as not wanting to be the non-conformist and strange among others, which could lose us and risk, for example, speaking English to a foreigner.

Whereby many people even understanding English, but not speaking it out of fear, do not respond and/or hide, hoping and believing that surely there is a person who can help a foreigner or a person in difficulty who is much more competent and good at it than they are.

This social homologation, whereby everyone more or less has similar thoughts, similar ideologies, even politically (just think that the same party has ruled more or less permanently since 1946) makes the Japanese a very integral people. Despite this, being independent and not part of a group, like having a family, is not considered in a bad way.

Certainly, being part of a group is very important: it's not coincidence that the pursuit of the 'group' is constantly encouraged.

Anything that can bring the individual to be part of the collective is important, any attitude that can strengthen internal cohesion is promoted, whether in the work environment or in social situations.

Sacrificing oneself for society is normal, everything is done for the greater good.

Being rooted in the group to which one belongs is not perceived as oppressive, but as the root of one's identity; in fact, this kind of attitude has given the country enough compactness to withstand the intense pressures of economic development that Japan faced from the post-war years to the 1980s.

Despite this attitude of being part of a group and an integral part of society, **the concept of privacy is very important to the Japanese, as they are generally very reserved and respect the spaces and boundaries of others.**

There is no tendency to intrude on another person's personal dimension, so even if one is curious to know more about another person's personal life, it is not polite to ask questions unless the person is the first to speak about it.

Moreover, as seen above, there is a kind of split attitude ('tatemae' and 'honne') that influences Japanese behavior.

Introversion vs Hospitality

One of the words one very often associates when thinking of Japan is **hospitality**. Very often the image one has of this country is stereotyped, artificial and based on today's pop culture. In reality, Japanese culture is characterised by various symbolic elements, which are very often incomprehensible to Westerners, and in order to understand and get to know the real customs and ways of doing things, one has to refer to the past. All topics are rooted in traditions and history as well as in today's social conditioning.

The Japanese people are often described as introverted, but at the same time hospitable, and for those who come from a different culture and background to the Japanese, these two terms seem to clash with each other almost as if they were an oxymoron. Despite this first impression from the outside, looking closer one realises how these adjectives can coexist without clashing. **Japanese introversion derives from centuries of closure that led the country not to be colonised: this has allowed it to preserve millenary traditions and hand them down almost intact to the present day**, especially Buddhist and Shintoist cults, which the population has managed to reconcile with modern daily life, almost always protecting them from outside influences.

This protective attitude, however, has affected the population's behaviour and way of relating; being able to form a relationship with a Japanese person is much more difficult for someone from the outside. Undoubtedly language, as seen above, is one of the biggest obstacles, but the difference in background can greatly affect the possibility of establishing a lasting relationship. This does not mean, however, that the Japanese are a hostile people who are reluctant to come into contact with the different, on the contrary, there is a lot of curiosity towards those who come from abroad. Hospitality is one of the core values of Japanese culture, and the Japanese term that fully encapsulates its essence is '**omotenashi**', which is a **disinterested attitude of natural kindness shown to a guest**. This term has already been introduced in the section on hygiene and shopping, in fact it encapsulates various elements of everyday life that relate to the desire to make the guest feel important. Japanese hospitality translates into a natural and disinterested attitude, it is not a social duty or convention, for the Japanese being kind is a gift that one gives to the guest, and anticipating their needs is for them a source of gratification.



Photos of the Tea ceremony

Modernity vs Tradition



Photos of Temple Zojo-ji and Tokyo Tower

If one had to describe the essence of Japan in one word, it would be **contradiction**. This can be perceived in various areas of Japanese culture and everyday life, like a kind of red thread that unites and relates extremely different concepts.

Japan is a place where modernity and tradition go hand in hand without clashing, and where there is a balance and synthesis between the avant-garde and millenary tradition: the perfect destination for those who have their eyes on the future but their roots in the past.

When one tries to visualise Japanese landscapes, what comes to mind are the large, busy metropolises, where people disentangle themselves between super-crowded intersections and neon lights; but at the same time one thinks of the peace of Zen gardens, the blossoming of cherry trees and the calm of temples. Tokyo, for example, may be the perfect example of this contradiction and coexistence: on the one hand, the more modern districts such as Ginza, Shibuya and Akihabara full of clubs, shops, where skyscrapers soar full of lights and sounds, people move as if they were an indistinct mass, giving the impression of being overwhelmed by continuous waves of sensory input. On the other in the more traditional districts, such as Ueno or Asakusa, it is as if time had stood still, where temples and wooden buildings have stood still for centuries.



Photos of woman with Han'nya: popular mask from Japanese no theatre

On the one hand modernity on the other tradition, two sides of the same coin. One of the striking aspects of daily life is to see many people going to the temple before going to work to pray, even if only for two minutes; fully dressed businessmen stopping in a quiet and calm place before jumping into the urban jungle and the stress of modern life. Often in the cities you can come across small temples more or less hidden in nature, which, like small oases, are characterised by a kind of halo of calm and mystery from which you can hear the noise of the city in constant movement.

Nature regulates and controls everything, and the Japanese have a deep respect for it despite the extreme technology that characterises the country.

Nature is mother and guide, it is the origin of everything and these feelings are rooted in Japanese daily life by the Shinto religion; a philosophy whereby every natural element possesses a soul/spirit and the elements of nature are inhabited by the divine.

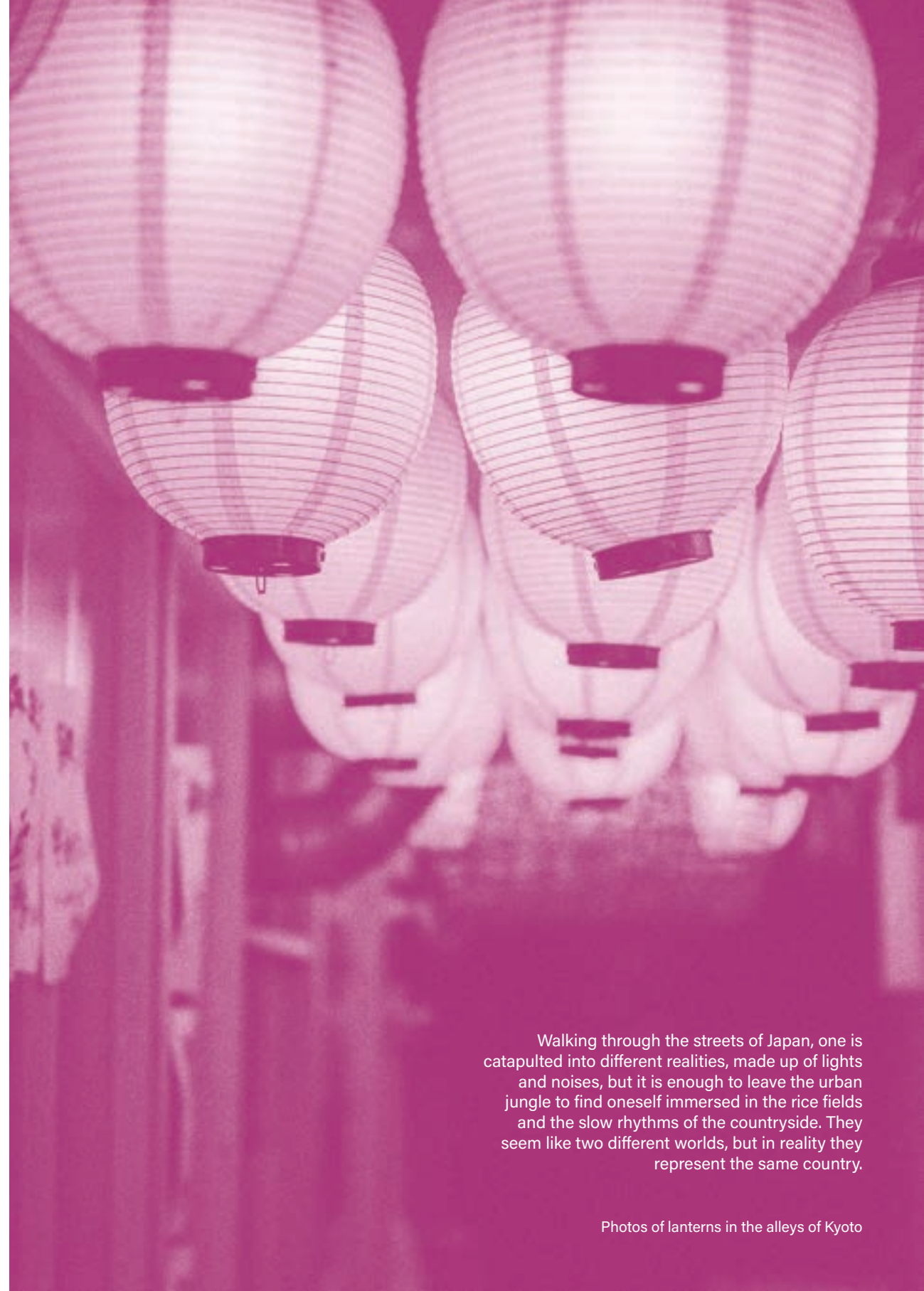


Photos of a calligraphy course



Photos in Akasaka, Tokyo

All this spirituality then coexists with the extreme materialisation of life, needs and habits. For Italians, for example, accustomed to historical preservation and consistency of style in cities, whereby one breathes the ancient spirit of medieval, Renaissance or 19th century remains in many cities, finding oneself in front of Japanese cities can be destabilising, since they are a mix of architectural styles from every era, where even the historical buildings are often reconstructions. But it is precisely these extremes that one is fascinated by and appreciates Japan for. On the one hand, there are carefully guarded millenary rituals, such as the art of the tea ceremony or ikebana, or the precise steps for wearing a kimono; on the other hand, there are humanoid robots that act as patrols in airports or bullet trains that make it possible to reach distant cities in no time at all. The gestures of Kabuki actors, the movements of Geisha on the one hand and the deafening noises of Arcade or Pachinko on the other. What is special about Japan is precisely this **duality**, this duality that fascinates visitors from all over the world.



Walking through the streets of Japan, one is catapulted into different realities, made up of lights and noises, but it is enough to leave the urban jungle to find oneself immersed in the rice fields and the slow rhythms of the countryside. They seem like two different worlds, but in reality they represent the same country.

Photos of lanterns in the alleys of Kyoto

How do differences create culture shock?

ABOUT CULTURE SHOCK

カルチャーショックについて



Culture shock

2.1 WHAT IS CULTURE SHOCK?

The expression 'culture shock' refers to a set of mixed feelings that a person may experience when faced with change.

Cultural shock mainly leads the individual to experience anxiety, bewilderment and confusion when faced with a major change in his or her life, e.g. due to moving to a new country. Numerous studies in medicine, anthropology and psychology have shown how individuals faced with a sudden social and cultural change experience these feelings. Known examples of culture shock are the Paris Syndrome¹ (which particularly affects Japanese tourists visiting the French capital) and the Jerusalem Syndrome². In everyday life there are various examples of culture shock starting with language, different climate, different eating habits, physical and hand gestures as well as the way of greeting etc., and these are just some of the differences one faces.

¹Paris syndrome, Pari shogun, **パリ症候群** is a syndrome that affects Japanese (but not only) visiting the French capital. It consists of the experience of feelings of disappointment and discomfort that arise from the difference between the idealised vision of the city, (matured through photographs, films) and the real vision.

²Jerusalem syndrome is a syndrome that consists of the sudden manifestation of hallucinations, delusions by religious people/enthusiasts visiting the city.

The term '**culture shock**' was coined in 1951 by the American anthropologist **Cora Du Bois**, with the aim of describing **the sense of bewilderment and disorientation experienced by herself and her anthropologist colleagues during their first weeks of contact with different cultures.**

According to the anthropologist, this sense of anxiety and bewilderment was caused by the loss of points of reference, a classic phenomenon due to the detachment from routine and the departure from one's comfort zone.

An individual's reference points are of **two types: physical and interpersonal.**

Physical reference points mean, for example, the familiarity of streets, buildings, meeting places; while **interpersonal reference** points refer to the communicative sphere, to relationships with other people. Scholars have noted how this sense of instability is reflected in a feeling of insecurity and confusion, often of abandonment and loneliness. Relating to new people from different backgrounds is not always easy, the subjects pointed out that it takes time to overcome the above-mentioned feelings.

In 1954, the Canadian anthropologist **Kalervo Oberg** took up the expression 'culture shock' and broadened the scope. According to Oberg, **this concept also covers all people who travel abroad and come into contact with new customs and traditions.**

The anthropologist noted how the state of shock occurs when the person is overwhelmed by anxiety due to the loss of common reference points in interpersonal relationships, in the sphere of communication. This naturally leads people to adopt different attitudes according to the different situations they face in everyday life.

The anthropologist published the study, '**Cultural Shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments**'; in which this type of phenomenon was defined as a kind of '**occupational disease**' that is characterised by four phases and related symptoms.

The phases identified by Oberg are as follows:

Honeymoon phase:

this can last from a minimum of two weeks to a maximum of six months. The person is **fascinated and attracted by everything new and the differences between the new and the old culture are seen in a romantic light**. The person begins to feel a sense of fascination with the new culture, which may eventually evolve into an idealisation of it. One feels oneself to be a 'citizen of the world' and this enhances one's self-esteem. One tries to interface with other people by trying to learn the rules imposed by the target society;

Crisis period:

in this case the situation changes radically, the excitement disappears and the sense of novelty diminishes. **These feelings are replaced by unpleasant feelings of disappointment, frustration and anger as one encounters unfavourable situations** that may be perceived as strange and offensive to one's cultural attitude. To these must be added stressful events due to moving to the new home, transferring to the new school or difficulties with the foreign language. The person, in some cases, reacts aggressively by adopting rude and arrogant attitudes in self-defence in order to alleviate the sense of discomfort.

Adjustment phase:

this step is characterised by the individual's awareness of his new situation and **he begins to accept the customs and traditions of the new culture and begins to appreciate them and approach them in a positive manner**. Attitudes of intolerance are replaced by a sense of superiority towards the people of the host country and, although some difficulties still persist, the person succeeds in making self-deprecating remarks about himself and his condition.

Acceptance and adaptation phase:

in this phase, **the person feels at ease within the new culture, whose customs and traditions he or she serenely accepts, and also begins to enjoy certain aspects of it, such as the food and culture**. The rare unpleasant situations are dealt with without anxiety and, once the person has left the country, he or she will generally feel nostalgic towards it.

With regard to the symptoms of this 'disease,' Oberg identifies a series of attitudes, recurring behaviour in various individuals living in a different country from their country of origin. Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: **excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (sometimes called "the tropical stare"); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irritations of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense³.**

Oberg's theory is based on the concept that culture shock is all the more severe the greater the distance between the new culture and the culture of origin, but as far as **goal striving stress** is concerned, the opposite situation can occur: **in this circumstance the person is likely to have more difficulty if the cultural difference between the two countries is minimal, as the expectations of adaptation to the new culture will be higher**. For this reason, the person, should he or she fail in the realisation of his or her goals, will experience a greater shock than in a country with a very different culture and lower expectations of personal fulfilment.



Photos of Ema 絵馬 votive tablets

³OBERG K. 1960. Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. Practical Anthropology pp142-143

In 1955, the Norwegian sociologist **Sverre Lysgaard** devised a model of adaptation to a foreign culture by observing the behaviour of Scandinavian students, scholarship holders at an American university. **This is based on the concept of a curvilinear relationship (U-curve theory) between the adaptation phase and the residence phase.** During this phase, the individual goes from a period of initial enthusiasm to a period in which the awareness of having to adapt to the new culture is hindered by difficulties in communication, ending with a recovery phase in which he or she acquires fluency in language and fully understands all facets of the new culture.

Robert G. Hanvey took up this concept by applying a **model of cross-cultural awareness development through the formulation of four levels.** The first two, the lower ones, are based on superficial knowledge of the new culture, i.e. those stereotypical cultural traits learnt from the mass media that at first are considered **'bizarre, unbelievable, frustrating and primitive.'**⁴ As for the higher levels, these are achieved through intellectual understanding and through acceptance of cultural differences. In this way, the person is finally able to feel part of the new culture. Over the years, numerous professionals including anthropologists, psychologists, doctors and teachers have taken an interest in this common and impactful topic.

For example, the psychologist **Paul Pedersen**, defines culture shock as **'the process of a person's adaptation to an unfamiliar environment and the emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive and physiological impact this has on them.'** Pedersen himself specifies that shock occurs when a person plunges into a state of uncertainty where they do not know what to expect from themselves or the people around them⁵.

Cross-cultural teacher and counsellor **Urmila Chakraborty** defines culture shock as the **'feeling of insecurity, confusion or anxiety that people experience when they reside for a longer or shorter period of time, even for work, in a society [...] different from their own.'**⁶



For example, the individual suffering from culture shock **may find it difficult to decide when and whether or not to make common gestures, such as shaking hands, asking for advice, making an appointment, accepting or not accepting an invitation, taking a statement seriously or how to react to other situations.**

This type of attitude manifests itself due to the uncertainty caused by the different customs and ways of doing things in the various countries. In fact, the individual in a familiar cultural context would know how to behave and how to overcome these situations easily; on the other hand, in the host country, he or she is in difficulty and the fear of making a mistake or being disrespectful is triggered.

Another example with a different perspective is that of **Peter Adler**. In 1975, he proposed an interpretation of the concept of culture shock that **was not necessarily negative** and more neutral than his predecessors: **'Although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth.'**⁷ In his essay, Adler highlights how there are **negative and difficult sides to living in a place completely different from one's home, but he also reasons about the positivity of this phenomenon.** Individuals leaving their comfort zone are pushed to interact and relate with people from different backgrounds, thus coming into contact with different habits and cultural aspects, which leads to a not indifferent **development and growth.**

Culture shock, as seen above, has common characteristics, but there is no right or wrong way to experience it.

Every individual in his or her life experience has been able to experience the various effects of this situation, both physically and emotionally; there may be slight headaches or stomach upset or insomnia, as well as the feeling of loneliness and the fear of not being able to rely on anyone.

These elements certainly represent the negative side of moving abroad or changing cities, but equally there are always positive aspects that make one re-evaluate one's thinking.

Every country, however different from home, has so much to offer and as soon as you get over the most difficult phase and adapt to the new life, the new routine.

Culture shock is a normal experience that many people go through while travelling or moving to a new place and which leads to a constant challenge. Those who experience this realise how their outlook on things has changed.

As much as culture shock is often referred to with a negative connotation, one eventually realises how it leads individuals to be much more self-aware and thus to personal growth.

⁴Manila Franzini, Intercultural competence training in intercountry adoption, FrancoAngeli, 2012, p.107

⁵Paul Pedersen, The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World, ABC-CLIO, 1994, ISBN 0-313-03073-1).

⁶Urmila Chakraborty, Cultural shock, in Serena Gianfaldoni (ed.), Lessico interculturale, FrancoAngeli, 2014, ISBN 8820433125

⁷ Adler, P. (1975). The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock. Journal of Humanistic Psychology.

Reverse culture shock

2.2 WHAT IS REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK?

Reverse culture shock, on the other hand, refers to the phase of **readjustment to the culture of origin** once adaptation to the foreign culture has been completed. This can cause the same effects as described above with the difference that, **these are the psychological and psychosomatic consequences of the process of readjustment to the primary culture.**

This reverse phenomenon is caused by a **discrepancy between the expectations of return and the reality** one finds oneself facing. Returning to one's country of origin after a more or less short period, or after years spent abroad, is more difficult than expected because, although one expects to find a stable and unchanged environment, this inevitably changes during the period of absence. This lack of familiarity leads the individual to re-experience the initial stages of adjustment in the foreign land. One is confronted with great changes and very often **it is difficult to cope with the magnitude of these changes**, returning and no longer feeling at home is one of the most common feelings of those living abroad.

A further aspect that should not be underestimated is **the change in the person**; those who return are very often not the same person who left months/ years ago. Living in another country leads to a **change of life, habits, way of thinking**, value system, etc., a real process of maturing and adaptation is triggered. This aspect is one of the many positives you can take with you from such an experience, it changes your life and makes you see things with different eyes, but at the same time you may feel out of place. Numerous studies have been conducting interviews with students who experienced a period abroad and **struggled to readjust when they returned for a variety of reasons**. As in the case of culture shock, reverse culture shock also **has symptoms**.

Boredom:

After all the novelty and stimulation of the time spent abroad, **returning to family, friends and the old routine** (however pleasant and comforting) **can seem very boring**.

Nobody wants to hear:

One of the most common aspects is **the disinterest in hearing about the adventures and triumphs experienced abroad as much as you will be in sharing them**. This attitude is not meant to be a rejection of the person, but simply friends and family after hearing the important points will feel that they have heard it all. **What is different is the interaction with those who have had a similar experience, in which case there is interest and enthusiasm in telling and listening to these life stories.**

People see the 'wrong' changes

It may happen that people **focus on small changes** in behaviour or ideas and in some cases these are attributed to the influence suffered abroad. These episodes may be motivated by jealousy, fear or feelings of superiority or inferiority.

Reverse nostalgia

Reverse nostalgia refers to that **feeling of missing people, places and things one gets used to living abroad.**

Relationships have changed

It is inevitable that when you return you will find that **some relationships with friends and family have changed.** In the same way that people who have lived abroad have changed attitudes and ideas while abroad, it is likely that people at home have also undergone changes. **These changes may be positive or negative, but to expect that there have been no changes is unrealistic.** The best preparation is flexibility, openness, a minimum of preconceptions and moderate optimism.

People misunderstand

It is possible to find oneself in situations of misunderstanding, **some people may misinterpret words and actions and this leads to difficulties in communicating.** For example, what one is used to seeing as humour (especially sarcasm, jokes, etc.) and as a way of showing affection or establishing a conversation, might not be seen as wit, but as aggression or ostentation.

Feeling of foreignness/critical look

It may happen that the reality of **returning 'home' is not as natural or pleasant as one thinks.** In some cases, reality is less pleasant or more challenging than one remembered, so **it happens that one feels a sense of alienation, sees faults in society that one had never noticed before** or even becomes critical of everyone and everything for a time. This attitude is similar to the one one has as soon as one leaves home for a new place.

Failure to explain:

Generally, explaining all the things seen and feelings experienced while studying abroad is difficult as **other people do not have a similar frame of reference** or travel background, no matter how sympathetic they may be as listeners. Very often, **stories from foreign countries and different cultures can leave listeners without a frame of reference.**

Inability to apply new knowledge and skills

Many returnees feel regret and frustration because **they do not have the opportunity to apply newly acquired social, linguistic and practical skills,** which seem useless or irrelevant. In this case, one must try to adapt to reality as necessary, change what is possible, be creative, be patient and, above all, use the intercultural adaptation skills acquired abroad to help one's return.

Loss/compartmentalisation of experience

Very often returning home plus the combination of external pressures (work, family, friends) makes returnees **fear that they will somehow 'lose' the experience,** which becomes compartmentalised like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. In this case, **it is very important to maintain contacts and relationships with the people encountered during the experience;** it is crucial because in this way one exercises one's skills, language and honours what one has achieved abroad.



Being foreigners

2.3 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FOREIGNER?

So,
here you are
too foreign for home
too foreign for here.
never enough for both.

Diaspora Blues, poem by Ijeoma Umebinyuo

Humans have always felt an irresistible urge to travel the world in order to get to know other realities; **mobility and curiosity** are fundamental characteristics of human beings.

In history and literature, there are many examples of men, warriors and wandering women who leave their homes and go further afield in search of something else. What drives us is certainly curiosity, but also interest and in many cases, unfortunately, need. It is essential to understand, however, that **migration is a key element in development**, for without it there would be no progress. As seen above, living in another country can entail problems and obstacles.

The decision to leave certainly brings with it positive expectations, but it also brings with it a confrontation with reality that may make the individual vulnerable. The importance of certain factors should not be underestimated, among them: the loss of the cultural envelope of sounds, smells, language, everything one had around until the moment one arrives in a dimension of foreignness that one finds hard to understand. **Change is something that is frightening because one is heading into the unknown, no one knows what might happen; but at the same time it leads to forms of improvement and growth.**

In a society and a world that is constantly moving and trying to be more and more globalised, the question arises:

**WHO IS THE
FOREIGNER
THEN?**



Today we are constantly questioning what it means to be a foreigner, what it entails and how it changes the concept of hospitality, but also of rejection. Stranger, the very etymology of the word says: **one who is external, foreign**.

The anthropologist **Michel Agier** analyses the figure of the stranger according to **three criteria**. The **first criterion refers to spatiality**; that is, the foreigner is one who arrives from somewhere else, from outside: the **OUTSIDER**.

The **second criterion is related to legal and geopolitical issues**. It is defined as foreignness, in which case reference is made to the legal conditions affecting a subject who is not dependent on the state in which he or she arrives, i.e. the relationship between citizenship and the foreigner. The central theme of this second criterion is law, we link the latter to the concept of nationality; but **those who arrive from outside do not have the same rights**.

The state decides which rights to grant to the foreigner, from the residence permit, to residence, to the right to work and vote; all these together represent the right of citizenship.

This entails defining and measuring the status of a foreigner according to its relationship to citizenship. The **third criterion refers to the English term STRANGER**, which precisely means foreigner but also **strange**.

This huge concept revolving around the word 'stranger' is impeccably expressed by **Jim Morrison when he says in the opening of 'People are Strange': 'People are strange, when you're a stranger.'**

In fact, when observing a foreign person, we notice behaviours and ways of doing things that are different from ours and are therefore labelled as strange.

According to Polish sociologist, philosopher and academic **Zygmunt Bauman**, this is why foreigners cause anxiety, **because they are unpredictable, different, strange**. What is most frightening is not knowing what to expect from them, because they behave differently, with whom one is unfamiliar. **It is interesting to note how some countries, more than others, struggle to open up to the new, to the different, and Japan is one of them.** For historical, political and social reasons, the country of the Rising Sun tends to be reluctant to migratory phenomena, even though it needs them. As mentioned above, confrontation with what is different frightens people because they have no idea how to behave and at the same time they are afraid of losing their values.

The Japanese in this sense are **very attached to traditions and to what represents the very essence of the country and of being part of it**. Westerners in particular are probably the ones who pose the biggest challenge to them, because the background is totally different. The way of interacting, behaving, joking can sometimes be too exuberant for Japanese.

Of course, the foreigner who lives in a different place is transformed over time as he learns new words, new styles and ways of dressing, interacting, eating, travelling... It should be noted, however, that this process can take time as the foreigner has to understand and make sense of the new social context. The fundamental element in this process is certainly **social contact**, which facilitates the integration of the foreigner by sharing social patterns, stories and personal tales. Certainly in the first phase of adaptation, the **foreigner tends to feel anxiety and stress because he is uncertain what to do, but thanks to social contacts, he realises that these feelings are purely temporary**.

Recent studies have also highlighted how Internet technologies can provide access to **social support** during the transition to international environments. This facilitates interaction with host citizens and provides access to a wealth of useful information. Returning to what was said earlier about the adaptation and integration of the foreigner into a new country and social context, **it is very interesting to observe how some countries have developed their own methods to achieve this**.

Japan, however, has taken a step further in this regard. **As is well known from the statistics, the birth rate in Japan, as in Italy, is very low, consequently the country desperately needs migrants to revive its declining economy.** However, this **is not widely accepted** by the Japanese population because **they are so afraid of diversity that they cannot imagine integration into their society, which is extremely homogeneous**.

To solve this problem, the government has decided to create **'migrant factories'**, i.e. schools where foreigners are **'reprogrammed' with the aim of making them fit in without creating tense situations**. In a way, this idea has a double meaning, in fact it is intended to show the Japanese that integration is possible if it is well coordinated by the government.

The message is that even if you are not Japanese by birth, you can become Japanese⁸; it is no coincidence that these schools teach not only the language, but also the culture, traditions and customs.



A few years ago, Prime Minister Abe proposed solving the problem of an ageing population through the use of technology, thus **adopting robotics rather than immigration**. This example highlights how there is still distrust and difficulty when it comes to immigration.

Until a few months ago, Japan was completely closed to tourism and forbade entry to students especially from China.

Of course, on the foreigner's side, one perceives (at least in most cases) a willingness to be part of the new environment one has moved into.

One of the most interesting aspects of migration, as well as of temporary travel, is the comparison. The confrontation with people from different cultures and backgrounds that leads one to very often reconsider one's own beliefs, or simply realise that there is something else in the world. From religion, to the way of dressing, to the way of greeting, these are just random examples of the differences with which one finds oneself interacting, but they represent those aspects of everyday life that one learns to know and perhaps in time adopts as one's own.

This is probably the best part of being a foreigner; what was initially foreign to you then begins to be part of your experience and becomes something you can no longer give up. Going back to Agier's discourse and the three criteria mentioned above (**strangeness, foreignness and exteriority**), if you rise above them, you realise how easy it is to find the happiness of living in the world: a **Cosmopolitan Happiness**.

⁸Pietro mentioned a similar concept in the interview: the Japanese who decide to expatriate, however much they integrate and assimilate the customs and traditions of the new country, deep down they are still Japanese.

Relationships

2.4 STARTING OVER

Moving to a new country essentially means starting all over again from the beginning.

Everything you were used to is no longer part of your new daily routine and you have to learn to get involved, to adapt.

These two words are fundamental when a person decides to leave the motherland, to live in a new and different place.

As seen above, the reasons why a person decides to leave may differ, but what they have in common is the need to start again.

Starting again from scratch. A concept that hides an intrinsic duality, fear on the one hand and freedom on the other.

One of the aspects that the foreigner faces in a new country is definitely the **relational one**.

Whether the person is 20 or 40 or more years old, fitting in is always the most difficult, but also the most important part. **Humans, after all, are social animals and need others.**

Anyone who leaves his or her country faces strong mixed feelings, such as guilt but also enthusiasm for the new adventure that awaits him or her. One feels guilty because one leaves behind family and lifelong friends and is afraid of not being able to have the same in the new country.

Work and friendships are definitely the two cornerstones for becoming part of a new reality.

Making friends in a foreign environment can be challenging, especially for those moving at a more adult stage of their lives. It is easier for students to make friends because there are many more opportunities to meet each other, e.g. classes, student clubs and associations that foster integration with peers. In recent years, interpersonal relationships have also been challenged by **covid**.

Various aspects of our lives and ways of doing things have changed abruptly, in order to adapt to the hygiene and health regulations dictated by the pandemic. For almost two years, all kinds of relationships were virtual, while physical ones were kept to a minimum and shielded by masks, sanitising gels and the use of the elbow as a greeting. This period certainly influenced the way of relating, even now that security measures have been lifted.

These dynamics had a greater influence on the integration of the foreigner in host country; **many looked upon the foreigner with fear because he was a covid carrier and this reduced the possibilities of socialising.**

As mentioned in the section on culture shock, this can strongly influence the subject's adaptation.

A study tried to understand the relationship between **culture shock, CQ (cultural intelligence) and the work/social performance of Filipino individuals who moved to Taiwan.**

CQ is defined as “**a person’s ability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts**” and was first introduced by **Christopher Earley and Soon Ang** in **Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions across Cultures.**

CQ can be a method for foreigners to adapt more easily to the world of work and the new intercultural context. Indeed, to reduce the problems caused by cultural diversity in the workplace, employees need to be open to interacting with colleagues from different cultures and have the ability to build interconnections with people different from themselves. In other words, **when employees understand cultural differences in the workplace, they are more likely to accept them.**

The results showed that CQ was positively correlated with the performance of Filipino workers and negatively correlated with culture shock. **This meant that foreign workers with higher CQ performed better in a culturally diverse workplace.** Second, that CQ and culture shock had a negative relationship. Furthermore, **culture shock partly mediated the relationship between CQ and performance.** These results suggested that CQ may serve as a **predictor of intercultural effectiveness**, meaning that Filipino workers with higher CQ experienced less culture shock in a culturally diverse workplace.

Language stress

2.5 WHAT ARE LANGUAGE BARRIERS?

Another fundamental aspect when moving abroad is certainly the language. **Knowing the language of the place is very important in everyday life and to be able to relate in the working environment and with friends.** There is an increasingly disruptive trend in the world towards rapprochement and mutual enrichment of the cultures of different peoples. In recent decades, migration has reached unprecedented levels.

This naturally increases people's desire to master not only their mother tongue, but also the languages of the countries in which they live. It is no coincidence that in today's world, it is increasingly important to know several languages. **The main purpose of language is to increase and improve interpersonal communication in the different spheres of human life:** political and social, professional and personal. In addition, the important role of language in the thought process must be emphasised.

Learning a new language is never easy, especially if it is very different from one's native tongue, and requires **incredible effort and dedication**. This process can be longer or shorter and more or less stressful depending on the person and their attitude. Very often, **living in a foreign country only forces people to learn what is necessary for survival:** the ability to understand everyday language and enough language skills to order a coffee and communicate with their colleagues or schoolmates.

The rest depends on the person, their motivation and their ability to learn.

Certainly speaking a new language 24 hours a day is very tiring and mentally exhausting, because there is this continuous switch between the language of origin and the 'adopted' one. One of the most common aspects among expats, unfortunately, is **the feeling of insecurity about the language**.

As seen, learning a new language is not easy, and many foreigners feel a sense of inadequacy and stress when they have to speak it.

Numerous studies have been carried out in the field of linguistic and psychological sciences on how, for example, students experience this language stress particularly at the time of presentations; but in particular, the feeling of anxiety grows when they have to write.

Some researchers and scholars, in order to eliminate the fear of speaking, propose using **interactive video games** (such as Second Life) or any game environment that allows one to hide one's personality behind a virtual character. However, the effectiveness of this approach is less since the reduction of anxiety stops after closer relations with virtual communication are established. **In summary, there is a direct relationship between increased foreign language anxiety and professional distance from language sciences or foreign languages in general.**

Furthermore, no other significant factors, such as gender, language proficiency level, ethnicity or others, influence language anxiety.

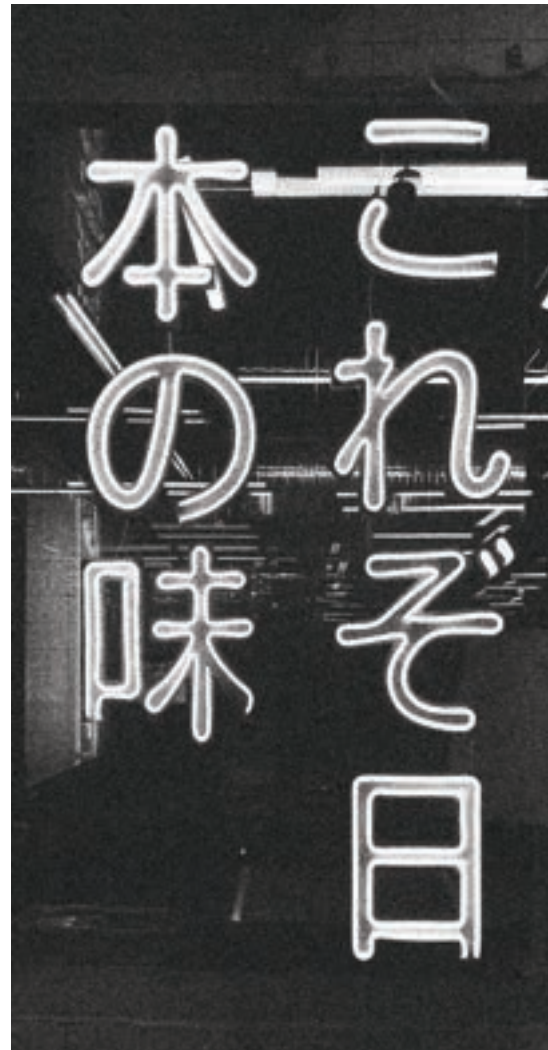
Therefore, **improving language skills can significantly reduce anxiety and increase critical thinking**, regardless of the educational and professional sphere. Looking more closely at **the most common causes of language anxiety**, we can distinguish:

Lack of vocabulary

This reason is not only for beginners in learning a foreign language, but also for those who have been learning the language for a long time.

The novice thinks he knows too few words to start speaking. And those who have been involved in this for many years, know many words, but not always those that are needed in a particular situation.

Or he has never learnt these words, or has difficulty remembering them.



Fear of making mistakes

The student is afraid to speak, because he does not want to make mistakes, **he is constantly trying to remember the rules of grammar by selecting the right words**. As a result, he eventually loses self-confidence and prefers to remain silent.

Fear of criticism

In addition to being afraid of making mistakes, the student is **also afraid of being laughed at, criticised**. He fears criticism about pronunciation, grammatical errors, the inaccuracy of the word choice or the lack of vocabulary in general.

Lack of knowledge of grammar

Many expats, especially at the beginning of studying a new language, do not have a thorough knowledge of grammatical basics and this can cause difficulties. For example, they cannot remember the correct form of the verb, they do not understand what kind of article or preposition to use, they cannot form an interrogative sentence, etc. Of course, **the conditions that influence language anxiety can be different and can range from very personal reasons** (such as low self-esteem) **to circumstantial** (such as the methodology of teaching the language).



EXPERIENCING CULTURE SHOCK

カルチャーショック体験



Questionnaire

3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE - ANALYSIS AD RESULTS

In order to best understand the dynamics and feelings related to culture shock, it is extremely important to *collect quantitative and qualitative data* on first-hand experiences. Following a preliminary research phase, a questionnaire and interviews were administered to selected samples.

The first activity carried out was the **administration of the questionnaire**, the aim of which was to find out how people cope with and experience encounters with new cultures and, in particular, how this encounter is reflected in their behaviour, emotions and everyday life.

A total of **68 responses** were collected, which were then analysed and deemed useful for the purposes of our research.

The following pages show the most relevant data that emerged from the survey.

58.8%
Europe

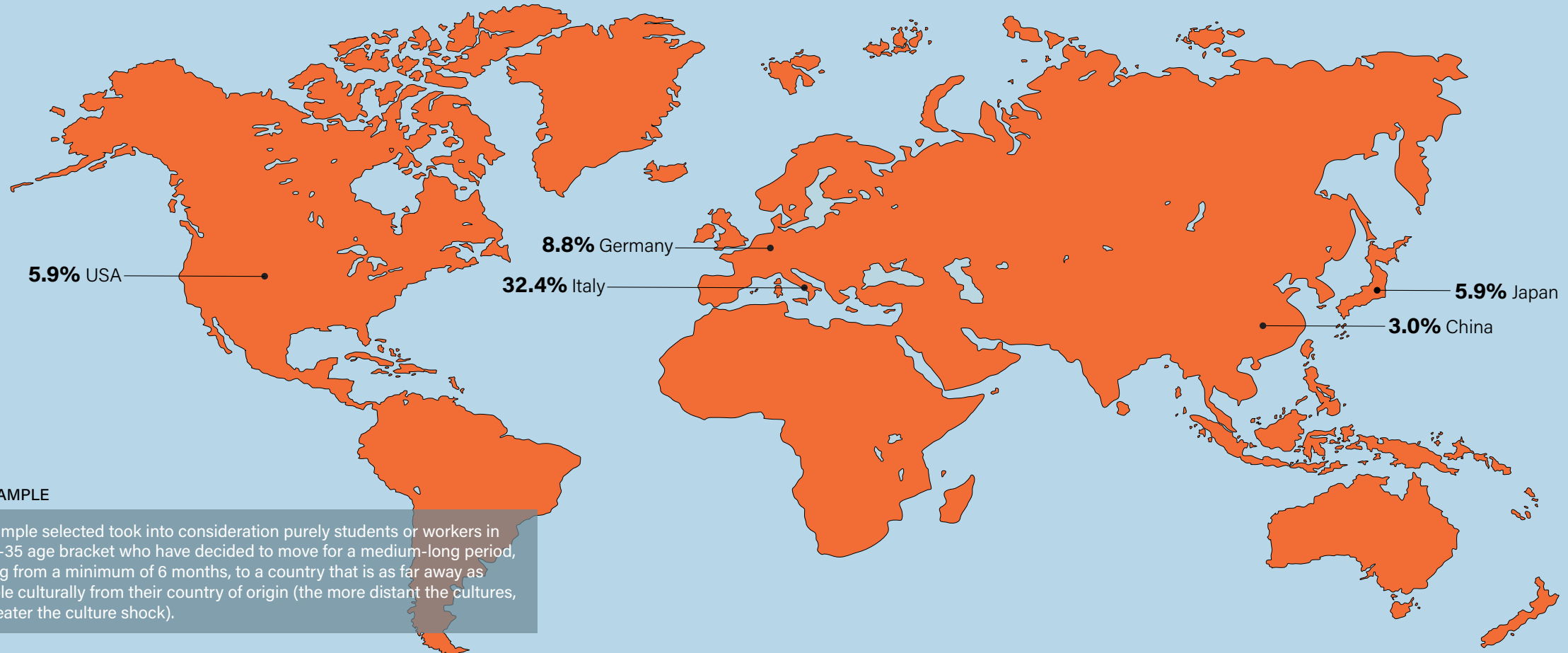
23.5%
Asia

11.8%
North America

12.0%
Others

• **Where do the interviewees come from?**

Of the 68 responses received, one of the first things that was identified was the country of origin of the people, so that we could understand how many came from European countries and how many from Asia. As culture shock is a universal dynamic, to better understand it, all responses were taken into account, regardless of the person's country of origin or where they lived. Responses from Italy and Japan, however, were given more weight as the project is oriented towards these two specific countries.



THE SAMPLE

The sample selected took into consideration purely students or workers in the 20-35 age bracket who have decided to move for a medium-long period, starting from a minimum of 6 months, to a country that is as far away as possible culturally from their country of origin (the more distant the cultures, the greater the culture shock).

Map representing in percentage terms the main countries of origin of the people to whom the questionnaire was administered

Questionnaire steup

The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions, which were divided into thematic sections.

It started with the collection of personal data (age, gender, country of origin...) and then moved on to basic questions oriented to the new country to which people moved (date of move, time of stay, evaluation of the experience...).

After this first part where more quantitative data were collected, we moved on to the collection of qualitative data through questions on: language barriers/difficulties, use of apps/online services to orient oneself and integrate in the new reality, interpersonal relations and relations with the local realities/inhabitants, lacks/nostalgia related to the country of origin, pre-departure preparation, support for the experience, expectations, difficulties and collection of positive/negative episodes experienced in the new everyday life.

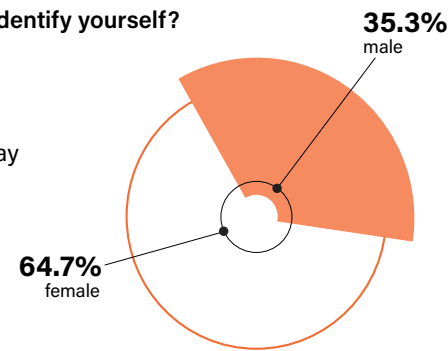
Question types

Four question types were used in the questionnaire:

single answer, multiple answer, numerical scale answer and open answer. The first 3 were mainly used for collecting quantitative data, while the open-ended question was used for collecting qualitative data.

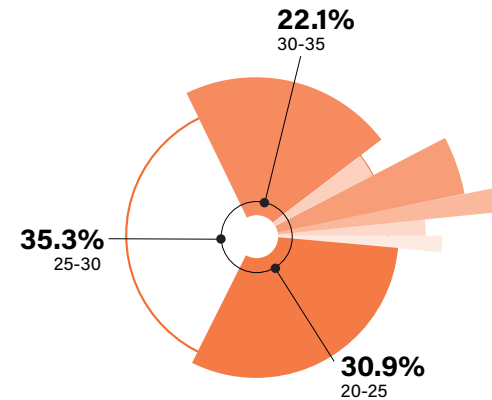
Q: In which do you identify yourself?

A: ■ Male
■ Female
■ I prefer not to say



Q: Select your age

A: ■ Under 18
■ 18-20
■ 20-25
■ 25-30
■ 30-35
■ 35-40
■ 40-45
■ 45-50



Q: Where do you live / have you lived?

A: Mainly people live / have lived in Europe (individuals who have lived in Romania, Belgium, France, Spain, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy, UK and Russia) and Asia (China, Japan and Korea). *The main 3 countries* where people live / have lived are Japan (33 people), South Korea (18 people) and last one Italy (8 people).

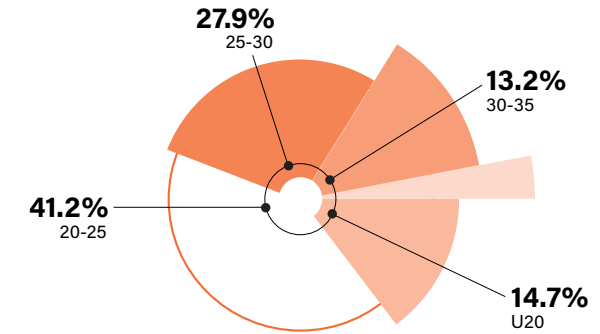
Then, extra Europe and Asia, there is USA (3 people), Australia (2 people) and Mexico (1 people).

Q: What do you do for living? what is your occupation?

A: 50% workers and 45.6% university students. Main reasons why people change countries are work or study/work in the university. In fact, regarding employments, the main occupations are: teachers / teachers in the linguistic field (e.g. English teacher), scientific / technological / engineering / business / economic and managerial field. In lesser presence then we find the literary / artistic / architecture field.

Q: At what age do you have arrived in the new country?

A: ■ Under 20
■ 20-25
■ 25-30
■ 30-35
■ 35-up



Q: Why did you choose to live in the new country?

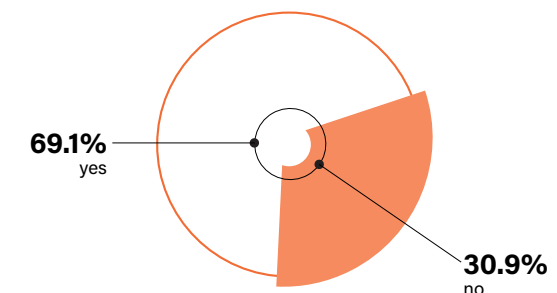
A: There are five main reasons why people choose to change country, these are:
52.9% possibility of studying there;
45.6% desire to visit and get to know this country;
30.9% had the opportunity to work in the country;
14.7% studied there and then decided to continue living there;
7.4% had friends/relatives to find.

Q: How long have you been living in the new country?

A: There is a very wide, lasting and variable range of 6 months to 5 years:
23.5% less than 6 months;
20.6% 3-5 years;
14.7% 2 years / less than 10 years;
10.3% less than 1 year but more than 6 months.

Q: Do you consider the idea of stay more and live longer in the country?

A: ■ Yes
■ No



Q: Would you stay in the country, if yes why? if no way?

A: There are four main reasons why people choose yes:
 57.4% like the country very much and it offers many advantages;
 29.8% have friends and relatives there;
 29.8% job is good;
 6.4% if school gives scholarships.

reasons why people choose no:

- Visa/problems with getting citizenship;*
- Language* (language problems are found in both Asian and European countries. In many countries, like Italy for example, there is a need to learn the local language in order to integrate);
- Difficulty interacting with local people;*
- Cultural differences* that lead to limited integration (those who have lived in Japan speak of **loneliness** in the long term) and very conservative social/cultural dynamics;
- Missing of home/friends/relatives.*

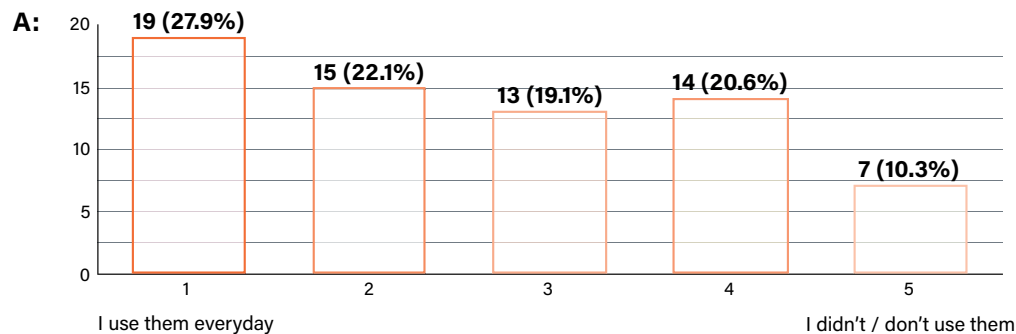
Q: In the country you have been what was your language experience?

A: English remains the main language used for communication. Despite this, most people have tried to learn the local language in addition to English.
 54.4% studied and tried their best to learn the local language;
 48.5% locals often don't know English well;
 30.9% studied many languages in the span of their life;
 14.7% did their best with English even though locals spoke it better;
 13.2% spoke English with locals with no problems.

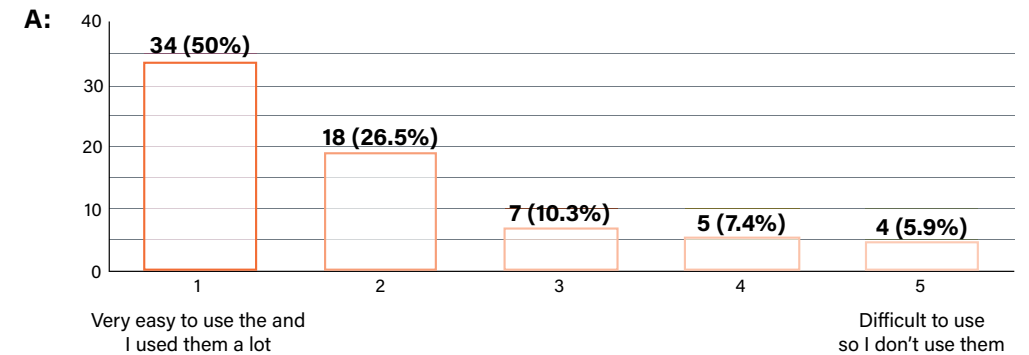
Q: What was your method to overcome language barrier in foreign countries?

A: 76.5% studied the local language;
 54.4% went out with local or non-local people who spoke English;
 17.6% in daily life think that English is enough for them survive;
 13.2% only dated people/friends who spoke their language.

Q: Form 1 to 5 how much do you used app/translators for helping with foreign language in your daily life? (ex. Google Lens or Translate)



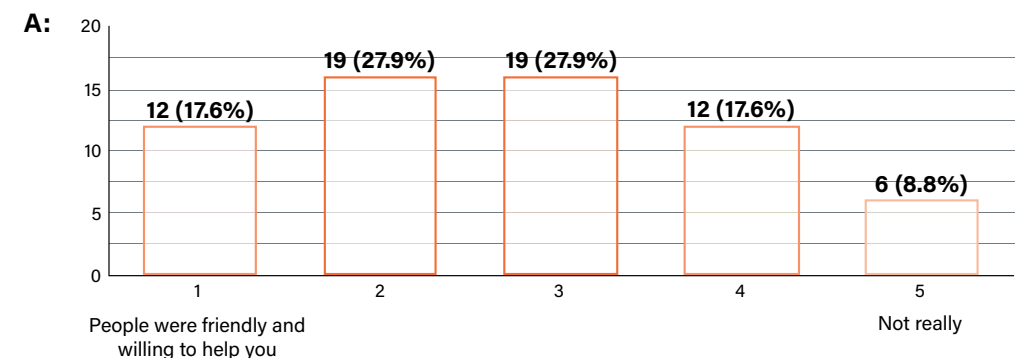
Q: Form 1 to 5 how much was difficult and how much do you used app to orient yourself in different foreigner cities? (ex.Google Maps)



Q: What is the main problem/obstacle you often faced in your daily life that the apps/services you were using failed to solve or failed to help you with?

- A:**
- help them understand people better and communicate better with them* (by referring to foreign language speakers). This is because there are often misunderstandings during conversations that current translators cannot cope with;
 - help with understanding the unspoken rules* that are present in a country and that as a foreigner one may not know before arriving in the new country (often habits and unspoken rules create disorientation in everyday life);
 - help in the social dimension and new acquaintances*, especially having a support that helps create lasting and not just temporary relationships and ties (resulting from the need to meet new people and create new ties);
 - better handling of documents and payments* (the bureaucratic aspect to date for a foreigner is often complicated and full of obstacles);
 - greater simplicity in accessing/learning about various types of events* (ex.museums , concerts...) to be able to have more activities to do and to be able to do in company to maybe meet new people.

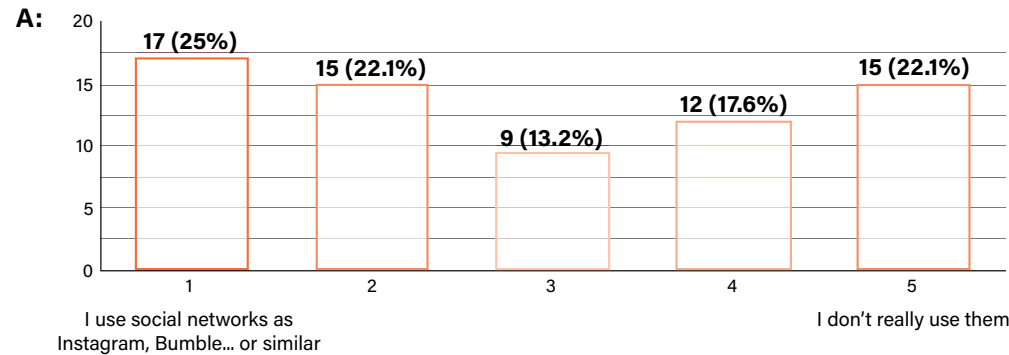
Q: From 1 to 5 how much was difficult/easy your approach with local people?



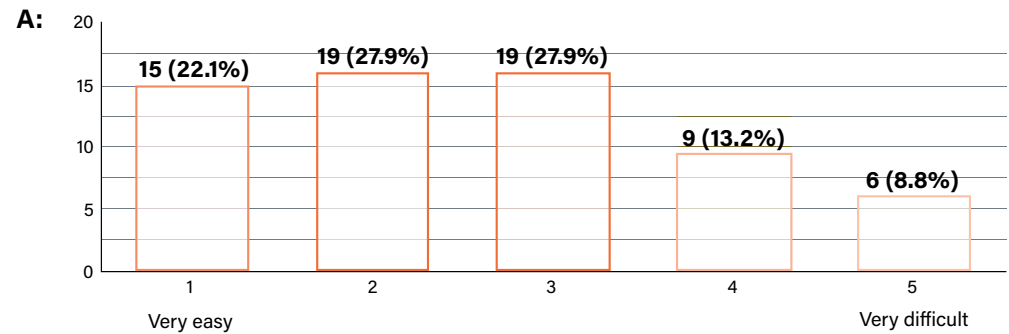
Q: Why? Tell shortly about an event that happend and what local people did.

A: From the answers received, a general overview was made. The opinion most frequently found by people is that often, in a first approach, people in the host country always make themselves very available to help those in need, even if they do not know that person. However, when it comes to deepening an acquaintance and creating a more lasting relationship, the first obstacles begin to emerge and sometimes almost forms of discrimination emerge.

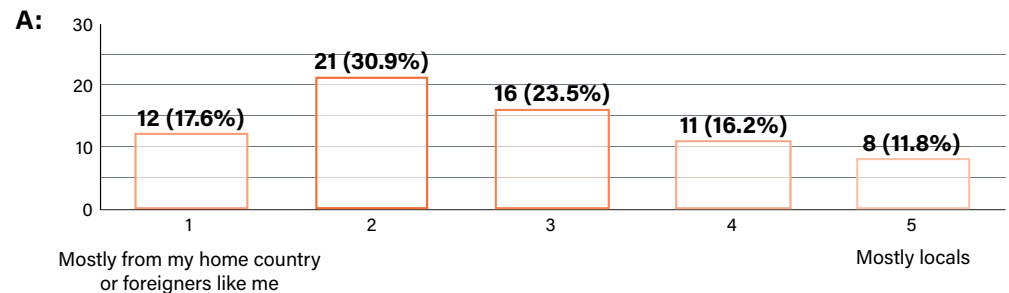
Q: From 1 to 5 how much do you use social networks to meet new people and embadding yourself in the culture?



Q: How easy was for you to make new friends and create new relationships?



Q: The people you met were...



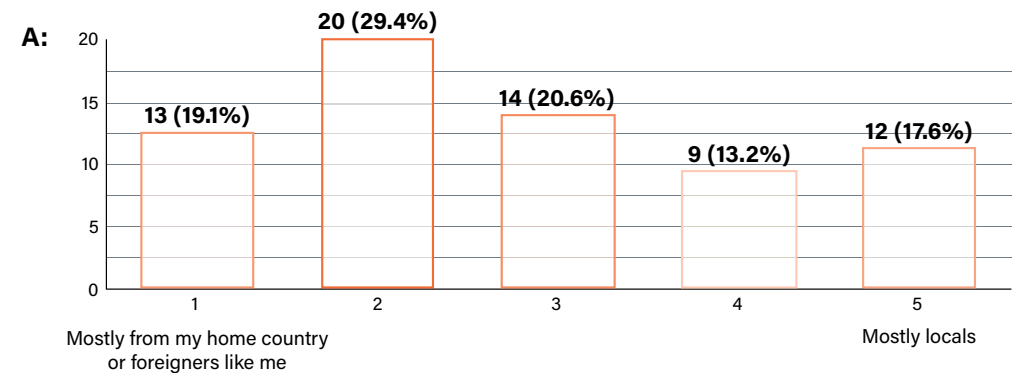
Q: How often are you in contact with your family and or friends in your home country?

A: 31.3% once or more times a day;
22.4% once every few days;
20.9% 2-3 times a week;
14.9% once a week;
10.4% less than a once a week.

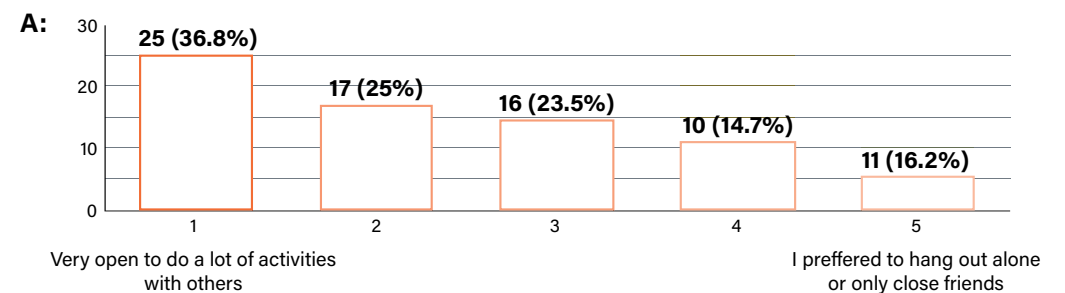
Q: In your moments of nostalgia, what did you miss most about home, culture and country?

A: The things that are mainly missing are family/friends/comfort zones, food (this lack was mainly found among Italians due to a cultural factor, in fact, they lack their own cuisine and especially the concept of eating together), culture, the idea of not feeling different but 100% integrated, not having social pressures and being fully themselves.

Q: The people you interact the most are...



Q: At the beginning / during your time abroad, were you more comfortable to do things/experiences/visiting with new people/friends or alone?



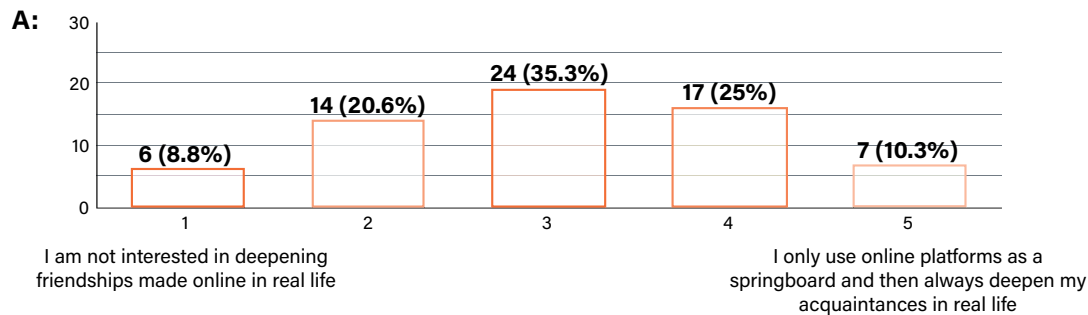
Q: referring to the previous question, why?

A: Main answers are:
 60.3% had the opportunity to meet new people and have new experiences;
 58.8% socialised a lot and shared thoughts and experiences;
 27.9% felt good on his own and with his company;
 19.1% did not know anyone yet;
 13.2% it is difficult to meet new people;
 11.8% the person and his friends do not share the same interests;
 10.3% he only enjoys himself if he is surrounded by people.

Q: What is an activity that would make you feel comfortable meeting new people?

A: 85.3% eating/drinking outside;
 73.5% events (concerts, museums...);
 48.5% activities or sports outside the home;
 44.1% city tours;
 39.7% taking part in cultural associations or groups;
 38.2% games (e.g. board games...);
 25% karaoke.

Q: From 1 to 5, if we talk about making new acquaintances, how much do you consider the digital world (social networks, apps...) to be a way to deepen your online acquaintances in person?



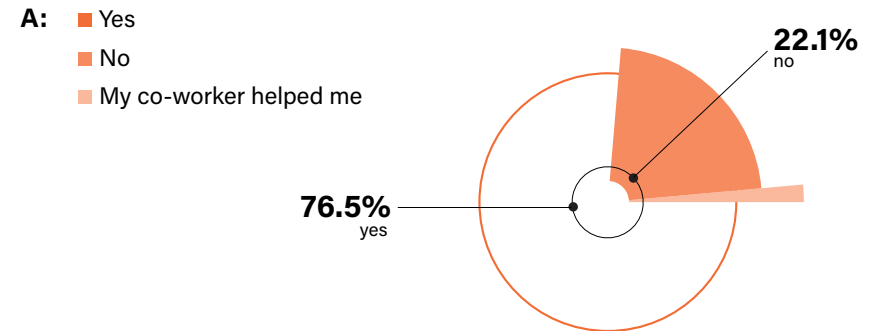
Q: What is the main problem/obstacle you often faced in your daily life that the apps/services you were using failed to solve or failed to help you with?

A: It emerges from the answers that the opinion of other people who have had the same experience (whether live or via the internet via blogs / instagram for example) is certainly very important, useful and above all comforting. It helps to prepare better for the trip.
 72.1% internet (YouTube, blogs...);
 61.8% opinions of people who had the same experience;
 44.1% social networks (Instagram,...);
 33.8% meeting people from the place;
 25% reading books or travel guides;
 13.2% podcasts;
 11.8% talking to groups/cultural associations.

Q: Talk shortly about the things you were not ready to deal or that you did not expect.

A: difficulties at the bureaucratic level, in fact, many people felt discouraged by the many obstacles they encountered with documents/visas/ other bureaucratic dynamics different from their home country;
 language barriers (some were even surprised that English was spoken well in the country they were in e.g. or how difficult it was to do things like send a parcel in another language);
 differences in mentality, which could be more open or closed, which greatly influenced relationships;
 difficulty or ease in meeting new people;
 racism or non-knowledge of the culture of origin leading to always being seen as outsiders and being treated differently;
 fast or stressful pace of life even at work;
 approach to different everyday attitudes (an example can be found in Japan, where there is a strong inability to deal with problems or to say directly if something goes wrong).

Q: Pre and post departure, were you helped / guided by anyone?

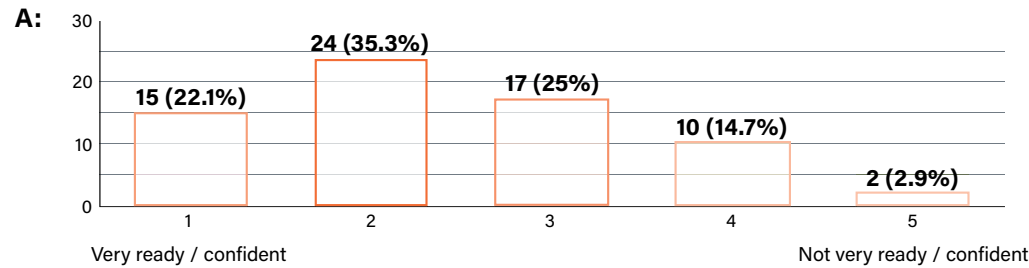


Q: he/she was? What were his/her tasks? Was he/she helpful to you?

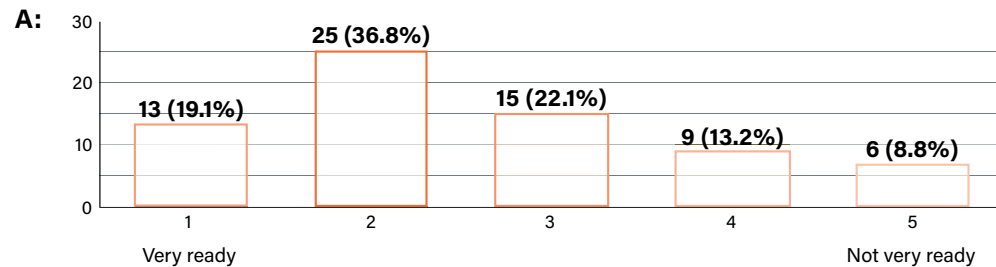
A: People were mainly helped by the following figures
 35.8% school/university tutor;
 23.9% friends;
 19.4% family;
 13.4% colleagues;
 11.9% associations.
 The help of these figures was mainly appreciated and found useful during the months preceding departure and during the first period in the new country (39.7% very useful and 23.5% fairly useful).

People requested the help of the above-mentioned figures for the following activities:
 41.2% helped with visa/entering the country/bureaucratic procedures;
 30.9% helped with finding a house;
 22.1% helped with the language gap;
 20.6% explained and helped with social behaviour and dynamics;
 19.1% helped to integrate at school / work / university;
 13.2% helped to integrate with new people.

Q: At the time of your departure, how ready did you feel you were to live in the new country? How confident were you with the culture you were about to deal with?



Q: Thinking about it now, how ready and prepared were you actually for the encounter with the new culture?



Q: Which are the aspect of the culture that you like the most and with whom you have integrated better?

A: 64.7% transport (safety, punctuality...);
61.8% cultural traditions (events, festivals...);
60.3% food;
47.1% city life (daily and night services);
45.6% people's behaviour (help, kindness...);
39.7% art (popular music...);
35.3% society (rules, interaction with people...);
33.8% customer care and attention (shops, restaurants...);
27.9% technology (less interaction with people, being able to do more things online...);
25% 'typical' interests and hobbies.

Q: Talk shortly about one episodes where you were very happy about the culture.

A: The things that amazed people most in a positive way were the organisation and efficiency in the country (in terms of means of transport, payment methods...), security (e.g. in cities at night), the kindness, helpfulness and politeness of the people, and finally the food.

Q: Which are the aspect of the culture that you do not like and with whom you have integrated worse?

A: 54.4% stereotypes (towards foreigners, women or the like);
36.8% society (rules, interaction with smaller or bigger people at work or in everyday life);
25% the behaviour of people in everyday life (e.g. rude, obnoxious...);
19.1% transport (unsafe and not on time);
16.2% food;
11.8% crime/danger on the street;
7.4% always behaviour of people in everyday life (e.g. noisy, not minding their own business) and lack of technology (not being able to pay smartly).

Q: Talk shortly about one episodes where you were very angry / sad about the culture and you did not like.

A: *hierarchy* (the fact that there is still an extremely hierarchical and patriarchal mentality in Japan)
 racism against foreigners who are seen as 'inferior' (ex. because of languages, appearance, different behaviour and opinions, people who only scold foreigners at work, who do not sit next to foreigners...);
 the very strong competition and social pressure in Japan in all spheres;
 judgement and appearance.

Q: It can often be difficult and stressful to manage new rhythms and habits in the work/study routine in a new country. What was the biggest change?

A: The main difficulties encountered in the new everyday life are different but with one element in common, namely the need to get used to new levels of stress and pressure at work and in society. In particular, those who have lived in countries such as Japan and Korea have suffered a lot from the 'speed culture' at work and at school.

- extreme respect for rules;
- difficulty in understanding unwritten rules;
- excessive and stressful working hours (always staying longer than planned in the office without being paid);
- difficulties in dealing with professors and significantly more work at school;
- difficulty getting used to long commutes to work or university; 'cultural insecurity' which makes it difficult to relate to other people (in Japan);
- stressful routine also at school/university level with very fast rhythms and different study habits/methods and many exams with little time to study (they are very proud in Japan and Korea of the 'culture of speed');
- in the work environment there are very few holidays and taking holidays is viewed badly;
- in Japan, there is a tendency to schedule a lot of free time, losing spontaneity.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

FOCUS ON FOREIGNERS COMMON PERCEPTION

Once all the answers in the questionnaire had been studied and the most relevant ones highlighted for each question, a *further analysis* was made, which consisted of dividing the answers by: Italians in Asia, Europeans in Japan and foreigners in Italy. For each section, common opinions regarding the country were highlighted, which were divided by: common feelings, common negative opinions and common positive opinions.

Through this additional work, it was possible to **better understand cultural and behavioural dynamics relating to specific countries** and how they were perceived and dealt with by people from different cultures.

Working with a greater focus on Italy and Japan, the subdivisions obviously took *Italy and Japan/Asian countries* as the main countries of interest.

To develop the following analysis, of the 68 responses obtained, **we only took into account those most relevant for the purposes of the research**, namely: 13 responses from European people in Japan, 11 responses from Italian people in Korea, 3 responses from Italian people in Japan and, with secondary but still useful importance, 6 responses from Asian people in Japan, 1 response from an Australian person in Japan, 8 responses from American people in Japan and 9 responses from foreign people in Italy.

FOREIGNERS IN JAPAN

Europeans people in Japan (13)

Feelings

Tired from the difficulties related to time management and amount of work in the work/student routine (stress, pressure and anxiety for exemple), difficulties with creating and maintaining family and/or friendship/relational ties, they feel the profound cultural differences and this feeling is reflected in everyday life (find it difficult to adapt to different habits such as paying mainly in cash), they are always seen different from others in body and this creates barriers with local people (sometimes is embarassing because they start staring), for them in japan it is more difficult to express themselves and behave in a natural way for them (this can get frustrating in long periods).

Negative opinion

Insecurity/shyness in speak english, misunderstandings, mainteining friendships over time, stress and competition at school/university/work (they spend most of the day at work or school and holidays are viewed culturally such a bad thing), they avoid to tell the truth and to talk about problems (widespread cultural dynamic in Japan), sexist society.

Positive opinion

Local people help a lot, are always nice and polite, there is a strong culture of respect, they are curious about what is different (for exemple people of different countries), Japan is a really safety country and there are conveniences of some food services.

Asian people in Japan (6)

Negative opinion

Problems of racism and integration in work field, problems in understanding non verbal language and missing home, home culture and food.

Australian people in Japan (1)

Negative opinion

Difficulty connecting and talking with people, also because they don't have initiative, difficulties to have friendships and problems with the stressful work routine.

North/south American people in Japan (8)

Negative opinion

Problems of racism, language and communication, discomfort using app for translations in everyday life, lack of confidence, difficulties in social interaction and integration.

Positive opinion

Punctuality, people there always say sorry, presence of good social rules.

Positive opinion

//////////

Positive opinion

Local people really try always to help, respect, safety.

ITALIANS ABROAD IN ASIA

Italian people in Korea (11) and Japan (3)

Feelings

Exited for the experience, loneliness, missing home and home culture (family, friends, cultural habits such as eating all together and more generally the feeling of "comfort zone" they have only at home.

Positive opinion

Punctuality / respect / availability of people, strong sense of organization and precision in services and in the cities, friendliness and education, safety.

Negative opinion

Difficulties in creating bonds of friendship/deepen knowledge (in particular the difficulty is encountered with local people), not being able to feel part of society and not being able to integrate 100% into the local culture/reality, problems understanding what is accepted and what is not, overcome language difficulties in general but above all in burocracy, overcome stereotypes/fetish over foreigners and other cultures, stand up over the social competition in work field.

FOREIGNERS IN ITALY

Chinese (2), Japanese (1), Iranians (2), Serbs (1), Bangladeshis(1), Egyptians (1), Americans (1)

Feelings

Accepted, helped, happy for the experience, loneliness, missing home and home culture, missing home organization and productivity (mainly chinese people).

Positive opinion

Integrated and followed in daily life (friendly people always willing to help them even if the english level is low and campus/association in university helped them with integration and daily life), the beauty of the country to be discovered (at a naturalistic, artistic and cultural level), the availability and warmth of the people, the goodness of the food.

Negative opinion

Low level of technology in burocracy and in daily life which is perceived as an obstacle, difficulties in creating bonds of friendship/deepen knowledge (in particular the difficulty is encountered with local people), problems with racism, overcome stereotypes/fetish over foreigners and other cultures, overcome language barrier and problems with a low english level (leading to communication difficulties), burocracy/work/daily routine too slow and too little useful and productive, higher level of danger in cities than in the country of origin.

The experience varies greatly depending on the chosen destination in general, however, it emerged that the more extroverted people (a fairly common personality trait in Italy) are able to integrate better in a new country.

Interviews

3.2 INTERVIEWS FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE

Parallel to the questionnaire, interviews were conducted in order to analyse and collect qualitative data on the experiences of people who have moved to a country culturally distant from their country of origin for a medium-long period.

Eight people were interviewed, six of whom are foreigners who have been living in Japan for medium to long periods and two of whom are foreigners who have been living in Italy for medium to long periods.

The interviews were conducted through the use of digital means (telephone and video calls) with an average duration of 40-50 minutes per interview. Like the questionnaire, the interview was divided into thematic sections in order to gather information about the person and especially about their experience abroad (and how it impacted on their daily life and emotionality). The first part of the interview involved the collection of personal data (gender, age, country of origin, etc.) and then the description of a typical day during the week/weekend, in order to construct a user journey and understand the person's routine and emotions/feelings. Through the description of a typical day, we also went on to investigate the impact of technology in the person's daily routine, through questions such as (do you use Alexa? how much and what do you use it for? how many hours on average do you spend on social media? how important do you think technology is in your daily routine? and the like).

Once this first section was completed, questions followed on: culture shock (first impact with the new culture, differences that affected the person the most and how these impacted positively or negatively, feelings, perception of the foreigner by the locals, impact on the new everyday life and how this was dealt with in order to feel more integrated), positive and negative aspects about the country/culture/habits/people, ease or difficulty in integrating and/or interacting with foreigners and locals, behavioural differences with locals, knowledge/use of new technological/app/social frontiers in interpersonal relations.

This section was the most relevant for the purposes of the research, since through personal opinions and experiences, which were analysed, compared and integrated also with the answers to the questionnaire, it made it possible to achieve a high level of knowledge related to the subject matter.

In addition, by cross-analysing data and answers, it was possible to obtain a general overview of the most common dynamics and feelings related to culture shock and the cultural/behavioural values prevalent in Italy and Japan.

In the collection of qualitative data, the two personal experiences of the interviewees were also counted, but not included in the list of interviewees.

All respondents have Italy or Japan as their country of destination, so that links could be made and common dynamics identified.



Becky Alp
from Turkey to Japan



Shea Layton
from USA to Japan



Leon Springsfeld
from Germany to Japan



Pietro Vecchi
from Italy to Japan



Masato Hibino
from Japan to Canada



Mitsuo Kushida
from Brazil to Japan



Mu Xuanqui
from China to Italy



Jingwen Li
from China to Italy

Becky Alp



Name
Becky

Surname
Alp

Age
34

From
Turkey

Live
Nagoya, Japan

Period abroad
She has been in Japan for 9 years

Personality
Exuberant Creative
Sociable Organised
Sizzly Precise
Extroverts Attentive to details

We ask her to describe her daily life routine to better understand the relationship she has with people around her, foreigners, locals, technologies and her interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

Work as
University Linguist
Teacher at Aichi Gakuin
University Nisshin

Tech skills
Social, Instagram,
Facebook, photo
editing.

We know that
Hobbies are
photography and art.
She likes to hang out
for coffee, relaxing and
talk, crime and horror
movies, fashion, trends,
luxury brands and
makeup.
She is single, has a
good relationship with
family in Turkey and she
has many friends from
all over the world.

Wants and needs
Continue to advance
her career, be admitted
to the PhD in the
UK, meet new and
interesting people and
cultivate her passion for
photography and art.

Frustrations
Being an outgoing
person and open to new
situations is frustrating
in a closed society like
Japan's.

ベッキーアルプ

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning
I wake up at **6:00 a.m.**, make coffee and have a quick breakfast. I get ready to leave the house at **7:00 a.m.** and take the train/bus to the university.

During the day
I have class from **9-10:00 a.m.** until **12:30 p.m.**, then return to the office and work until **4:30 p.m.**

Dinner - evening
After work I go home, make dinner, watch a movie or read. Sometimes I work on my research, and then I go to sleep.

Weekend routine

Breakfast - morning
I wake up later, around **9-10:00 a.m.** in the morning and devote myself to taking care of the house and myself. Saturday is my relax day, I free my mind and I do all stuffs I can't do during the week.

During the day
I go out with friends for lunch around **1-1:30 p.m.** and spend the day together going around the city, visiting and having fun together.

Dinner - evening
Friday and Saturday nights I usually go out with friends to free my mind from the work week. We usually go to bars, clubs or parties where we have drinks together, we dance and then ending up hungover at times. Sometimes it happens that we come home very late, around **2-3:00 a.m.**

Sunday I wake up "late" as saturday, around **10-11:00 a.m.** and usually I devote the all day to my research work and to chill a little.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: Very often I am stressed about work, especially when I have to prepare for classes at the last minute, also the boss's emails cause me anxiety and stress at times. On a social level, the foreign community in Nagoya is very small so there is not much privacy as everyone knows each other. As for friendships with Japanese people, these are very difficult to create as the Japanese population tends to be very reserved and they have a habit of keeping their distance, so this also discourages her in attempts to establish friendships.

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: The app I use the most is *Instagram*, in fact-checking the activities results in 17 hours of use in a week. I use *Netflix* or *Youtube* a lot to watch videos or as background sound when I'm at home.

Lately, I've been using *Bereal* a lot because I find it interesting how it is without filters so you show a more real part of your day, but I have few followers only close friends. Then, being passionate about photography, I use *apps* for editing.

Google maps for the road and *Alexa* especially for music when I'm at home.

Q: Becky you arrived in Japan 9 years ago, what was the biggest culture shock for you?

A: As soon as I arrived in Japan, I was living in a small town where the only foreigner was my co-worker, who helped me a lot in the beginning. I'm an outgoing person and I tried to say hello and talk to my neighbours, in Turkey, we are used to doing this but I realized it's different here. *My neighbours looked at me a little suspiciously* as I wanted to make friends and have more interactions. But a positive shock was the *kindness everywhere*, especially towards customers.

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: The aspect that still annoys me is *the lack of interest in others and the way women are seen and behave*. Done are *too submissive* here, *don't say or do anything*, and *don't yell* in case they need help. *Women are invisible* in this kind of society and treated as such. For example, the other day I witnessed this episode on the subway during rush hour, so there were a lot of people. Next to me was a caregiver and next to this adult gentleman who must have had some kind of mental disability. When I got up to get off at my stop, a girl was sitting in my seat, and maybe the sudden movement upset the gentleman who got up and started pulling the woman's hair. She didn't say anything, she didn't react, and she screamed as anyone would have but she stayed there while the caregiver tried to calm the lady down, laughing as a defence mechanism. *No apologies, no nothing, just a kind of nervous laugh, a kind of defence mechanism that the Japanese have in unpleasant and difficult situations*. But no one around said or did anything to help the girl.

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Japan? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: *With foreigners living here it's easier to make friends*, as I said before it's a small community and we all know each other, but in any case, *it's easier because we all speak English*. *With the Japanese the situation is different because they are afraid to speak English, to make mistakes* (they are not used to making mistakes) and *tend to know English grammar, but without putting it into practice*.

Another aspect that blocks the Japanese is certainly their *shyness* and the fact that they are *not very spontaneous*, everything (outing, meeting, a coffee) must be *planned well in advance*.

In Japan it is very common to use *Line*, but I don't use it much, I prefer *Instagram*, but in case *Line* is the second choice to keep in touch.

Q: In your experience, why don't Japanese people interact with foreigners? Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: As I said before, Japanese people are very shy and they are afraid to speak in English and to make mistakes because they are used to studying a lot and taking tests but not speaking in English.

At the same time *there are many Japanese who want to improve their English and meet foreigners, so they attend international evenings, without worrying if their English is not fluent or perfect*. But most people are not much interested in other outside cultures, but this also comes from geography and history in the end *Japan is an island and it has been closed for a long time*.

In these last 20 years, he begins to be more exposed to different cultures.

There are many Japanese, especially the *younger generation who are very curious and want to go abroad*, and see the rest of the world.

I have many students who would like to study abroad and I encourage them, but many are afraid of being discriminated against because they don't know enough English or they don't have much confidence, they are shy.

The *social factor also influences this a lot*, because for example some of them may not feel strong enough and also they have no experience of the world, *they have no idea of what happens outside*. It's as if everything passes through a *Japanese filter*, even movies, for example, know a lot about *Marvel* and *Disney* and stop.

Q: You told us the Japanese are very shy, so how do you relate to them?

A: For example, *it is easier to fight shyness in the workplace because you have a role to assume and respect, but in social situations, it is more complicated*. In *Japan there are different ways of approaching each other based on age, there is a different concept of respect and there are figures like senpai, sensei*, so you have to *repspect who is older than you, the situation is different with the younger ones that are not heard*.

In my case when I am faced with a shy person I try to put her at her ease, reassuring her about her English and you realize how curious they are and want to talk about your native country. However, a fundamental aspect is not to ask direct questions, this is not as common as expressing one's opinion or having discussions.

To ask direct questions you must have a very close relationship and have known that person for years, and even there it is not very easy to be direct.

The Japanese have two ways of doing things, a kind of self inside the house:

ohne (true feeling and desire) and the self wearing a mask outside, and *tatema*e (behaviours and things in public).

We must always remember that Japan is a collective society, everyone is inclined to behave in the same way, and no one wants to stand up, all the same, especially on the outside.

They want to be agreeable and in difficult situations want to play it safe and laugh in the face of problems. For example, even if they tell you that your relative has cancer, they laugh and it's their way of reacting.

It means that they are *getting too much information about you and don't want it, that you are showing your ohne too much*. But for me, for example, this is frustrating because you can never tell if people are real friends or are just being nice to you.

Q: We know you use Alexa a lot, what do you use her more? Is there something you need to do in your day to day that Alexa isn't smart enough or human enough to figure out?

A: *Alexa* speaks English, but Amazon Japan keeps many things in Japanese so when she replies some parts are in Japanese. Even for Amazon Prime very often I can't remove or change the Japanese subtitles. Sometimes *she doesn't understand katakana*. I can connect it to the lights, but I'd like to be woken up in the morning maybe with some music. Netflix is better because it translates and you can choose.

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: In Japan, as mentioned before, *interactions are different than in other places*, such as Turkey, where everyone reduces interaction and contact to a minimum. *Initially I was struggling, but now I'm used to this way of doing and indeed when I go home it's very strange because everyone is noisy, there's a lot of physical contact.* *Here in Japan you can not interact with anyone in places you generally have to, like restaurants and hotels.* To order food you don't need to talk to anyone, you have a tablet and very often restaurants for groups have rooms where you have your privacy at dinner. *Vending machines* are very common and there are all kinds. *Public toilets are clean throughout*, but there are no litter bins on the street. *Convenience stores* are amazing, they have everything you need night and day and you can pay the bills, buy concert tickets etc.

Q: Working in the academic field, how are foreign students arriving in Japan welcomed?

A: The students are generally *followed by a tutor* to help them in the practical things of the university, but as far as the students are concerned, *they generally do not interact much with the foreign students, always due to shyness and a linguistic gap.* I was also an exchange student in another country (UK) and *generally foreign students hang out with each other.*

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR? Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: Never tried, only know about it, only for games.

Honestly, I've never tried it, the only app I've tried was Pokemon go. I don't think I would like human interaction through robotics, holograms etc, mainly because in a *dimension of anonymity anyone can pretend to be anyone and lie.* Thinking about it, it's as if a person whose messages I'm reading has a double image: on the one hand the real person and on the other as they show themselves on social media. *Between one post and another a void is created that you fill with your imagination thus creating an image of that person who is not like that, a bit the same mechanism as when you read a book.*

Q: We know you prefer physical connections but do you consider it possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: Sure I think it's possible and *for the Japanese, it would be even easier because in an environment like the metaverse they would surely feel freer, without pressure and maybe could interact more.* On the other hand, however, as I said before, this way of interacting could not be real, in the sense that *people could lie thanks to the protection of anonymity.* Personally, being a very outgoing and socially open person, *I don't need a platform to express myself. surely for those who are introverted or shy it could be a help, maybe finding people with the same tastes and interests as yours,* would make it easier for you to open up and interact, but I don't know how much this can satisfy and be considered a real interaction.

Shea Layton



Name
Shea

Surname
Layton

Age
33

From
USA

Live
Nagoya, Japan

Period abroad
He has been in Japan for 6 years

Personality
Correct Precise
Loyal Organised
Empathetic Rational
Impatient

Work as
University Teacher

We know that
Hobbies are videogames, basketball, podcast, playing the drums. He's very sociable, he likes to hang out with friends. He is in a relationship, sometimes he misses home but at the same time he finds it more affordable to live in Japan (at the time being). He has a good relation with his family but he thinks he will not return to America.

Tech skills
Instagram, Facebook, podcasts, learning technologies

Wants and needs
Find a scholarship for PhD in biology and environmental field in Germany. Be a good teacher and inspire his students.

Frustrations
Long distant relationship, stereotypes, rude people and injustice around the theme of pervers and women in Japan.

We ask him to describe his daily life routine to better understand the relationship he has with people around him, foreigners, locals, technologies and his interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

シア・レイトン

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning

I wake up at **6:00 a.m.** Sit on the bed for 20 min and research on Reddit because is cold and I don't want to go out of bed. Then I wake up, I have a shower, breakfast and then I leave the house to go to school with the subway. Then 15 min walking and I arrive school at **8:00 a.m.**

During the day

I have class from **8-9:00 a.m.** until **13:00 p.m.**, then I have lunch and back to lessons/ extra-school activities. At school I have 3 classes every day. I use MacBook provided by the company, I teach by using Canva slide to my students. I use different apps that help me in teaching such as Kahoot (for quizzes) and Padlit (to upload projects by the students).

Dinner - evening

After work I do some reaction like gym club or some sport with students. Then I go home around **19:00 p.m.** and eat dinner already prepared on Sunday. After dinner I watch Netflix, play videogames or sometimes go to gym. Then I go to bed.

Weekend routine (Saturday and Sunday)

Breakfast - morning

I wake up later, around **10:00 a.m.**, I have breakfast and relax. Then I work on my podcast with friends (where I'm the main host), because during the week we haven't time.

During the day

I have lunch around **1-1:30 p.m.** and after lunch I go play basketball and sometimes I participate in tournaments. During the weekend I also usually cook for the week, do the laundry, go to the grocery store and all kind of staffs.

Dinner - evening

When I come back, If I'm in the mood, I go out with friends for the night. We usually go to clubs and parties (international parties). Instead, when I'm not in the mood or lazy, I prefer to stay home and chill.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: It's pretty easy for me, *the only stress is the one he puts on his-self.* For example, when I'm late or don't know my lesson plan. But in general *my life is easy, really easy there compared with the USA.* I have fewer problems or I don't have to care about different things such as health care. For example, in Japan if I break my arm I don't have to worry about the price of the hospital or to can't have care coverage. At the same time another example is *the distances: if I forgot to buy the milk, in the USA I have to drive for 10 minutes, instead in Japan I have to walk only 1 minute to find a Combini.* Japan take this for granted and is more convenient and foreigners appreciate this convenience. It's easy to live there and this removes a lot of stress.

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: I use *Google Maps* at least once a week. I also use *Reddit* a lot on a daily basis and less *Instagram*.
For work I use a lot *Canva* and different apps that help me teaching such as *Kahoot* and *Padlit*.

Q: Shea you arrived in Japan 6 years ago, what was the biggest culture shock for you?

A: I'm in Japan from March 2017 and my biggest cultural shock is a bit embarrassing.
I thought there was a dichotomy, I thought Osaka and Tokyo were super futuristic (and there you could find flying cars for ex.), and other cities more rural (and there you could find ninjas for ex.). This opposition was stronger and stupid, but it is not like that, both. This expectation was the biggest cultural shock for me, to understand that this kind of dichotomy doesn't exist.

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: Biggest hurtful and which i struggle more is that i address the problem directly, with colleagues or friends, instead Japanese people don't do like that, they like "ignore" the problem, they are "*shogunai*" = they can't help, nothing can be done, move around the issues, problems are not addressed and they work themselves out.
I want to talk about problems so this situation is frustrating for me, also because I'm not patient. In a personal and professional situation, this cultural habit is frustrating, because is very far and different from my culture. In the USA they use to talk when there is a problem. The main problem is with work because as a teacher I have to be strong but at the same time I can't. For example in the USA I would yell if a car hit me. In Japan I would not do it, I will do in my mind. Another example is if my child are not listening, I try to be angry but then I think about them, maybe their parents were too strict the night before or other classes were too hard, so I always tries to relax my mind in these kind of situation, try to see their point of view and approach them in a different way (more relaxed). But for him is difficult. I try to think also about their point of view, so I learn to think more and be more patient and empathetic.

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Japan? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: For me was *easy to meet people there* but at the same time was *difficult to form meaningful relationships/friendships*.
I keep in contact with Japanese mainly with *Line* and a bit with *Instagram*.
With foreigners he also uses *Facebook* or *Whatsapp* (add to *Instagram*).
A common thing is that Japanese don't try new things and they don't know other forms/ways of communication.
For this reason with foreigners I have more forms of communication, instead with Japanese people I have only 2 apps to communicate.
They are very limited and mind-closed.

Q: In your experience, why don't Japanese people interact with foreigners? Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: I could talk 1 hour about it.
In my opinion Japanese people could be interested to meet other cultures.
In big cities like Tokyo, Osaka or Kyoto it could be possible to meet a lot of courteous people. Mainly because in these cities you meet open-minded people due to the fact that these kind of cities are international (such as London in UK: this city is located in UK but at the same time is not UK). In the other hand in Nagoya or smaller prefecture they are more close, mainly because they are omogeneous, they are almost all the same and they don't have opportunities to meet different people. In these small cities they have like "fear" of the unknown, they are nervous and scared in front of this unknown. The main thing that make them feel nervous is that they know they have to speak English. In Japan they have a bad English study experience or usually a bad relationship with teachers, so they non speak the language very well and it's a limit for them. Probably English is the main reason of a lack of opportunities. For a cultural reason they are very hard with themselves and this characteristic is reflected also on languages. They don't want to speak English also because they don't want to make mistakes and they are afraid to make mistake, they don't understand that mistakes are part of the growth process and they can learn from them. Mistakes are failure. Talking about this, teaching can be very helpful, I always tries to encourage them to speak and make mistakes to grow.

Q: You told us the Japanese are very shy, so how do you relate to them?

A: In Japan I met a lot of people from all over the world and also from the LGBTQ+ community, cause I'm from Montana (which is a very homogeneous country) and this helped him to open my mindset also to a new way of life. The main approach that I have with Japanese people (both children and adults) is like this:

1. Only "yes or no" questions, very simple ones (ex. do you like K-pop?)
2. Speak very slowly
3. During the conversation try to use Japanese expressions to make them feel more comfortable and relaxed (ex. I understand, yes of course)
4. No asking opinions, personal things: it's uncomfortable

Approaching them in this way they feel relaxed and you can have a conversation with them. In particular, as a teacher, I have to learn their kind of social interaction, especially with foreigners, and I put a lot of effort into trying to be funny and make them feel relaxed (this in both languages: English and Japanese).

Probably one of the main problems they have with their interaction with other people is that they don't ask or express their opinion for a cultural thing. They are polite, don't talk about their lives, never ask, and it's rude to ask questions (in particular, private questions). They don't express their opinion about an issue or they don't develop a think about the issue (that could be for ex. climate change, death), for this reason is difficult to go deeper into a conversation and to know deeper a person. They are not culturally able to have a discussion and they don't know how to

express other / they point of view or deeper thoughts.
They don't expand their mind but at the same time new generations and children are slowly starting to have new points of view.

Q: Do you know what is AI (artificial intelligence is)? (Alexa, Siri...) have you ever used it? If not, do you will use it and for what?

A: Not really, *they have a robot in school for greetings and basic information. It's cute and you can ask some questions but at the same time I feel too old and I don't use it a lot because I get annoyed and I'm not patient. I think that AI could be interesting at home and in the everyday life for exemple to clean the bathroom (because I hate it) or for meal preparation.*

Q: Is there something you need to do in your daily life that technologies or your phone are not smart enough or human enough to figure out?

A: In my opinion, *phones are almost too smart*, it has too many ads for what I like or need, I don't need more than that.

Q: Do u have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: The electric-shower makes me so spoiled when I come back to the USA. I love also the *kotastu* (is the heater table) and all these facilities that are very convenient.

Q: Working in the academic field, how are foreign students arriving in Japan welcomed?

A: I had some students who lived abroad and a student with special needs that was half Japan and half-Italian. Now I have some girls from Thailand and Danemark.

For the foreigners integration is difficult, mainly if they don't speak Japanese or they are learning the language. If they speak the language they are integrated with others pretty well.

At the same time if there is a person that sticks out from standard Japan, he is ignored by the others. *With those who are different Japan people are strong and bully. It's very common to hear about bullying for, for exemple, hair colour, but at the same time schools are very strict and severe about it.*

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR? Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: I played pokemon go when I first arrived.

I recently get to know it (the Metaverse) and I think *that the idea is good it will get be successful.*

For me in the metaverse you can do a huge quantity of things such as meetings, work, accountability. A lot of people don't know micromanaging and mac, meta they work on it and a lot of studies show how work at home is efficient.

There are people really happy about this shout down of interaction due to the smart working.

At the same time I think that human is a social specie and so we need connections and in a way or another we are happy of it (concerts, events). *People desire physical interaction and metaverse or VR will not take over. So for me metaverse and VR bring huge opportunities but they will never can be compared with real life and with the physical interaction.*

For ex. he respects so much that there are old people club that help old people to hang out and make them go out of home.

Q: We know you prefer physical connections but do you consider it possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: *For Japanese people can be more comfortable to have digital connections but at the same time at high school you can see more and more physical interaction between student (cuddle, physically touch, especially between same sex). Also in elementary school there are interaction between kids but of course not as teenagers.*

Then in adulthood they start to have fear of what other people think, younger generation are showing so much more.

In general, Japanese people want physical interaction but they are too worried.

For me, *living in the metaverse could be really funny, I consider it as a good escape.* In my own experience, when my parents get divorced very badly, they didn't talk and Forme was for me a good way to escape from reality. Getting older, I don't want to escape anymore.

A lot of people think that virtual can be very realistic, an avatar can make escape an identity from reality but for me there is not satisfaction in it.

Virtual can deal with your trauma or problems and create some happy moments but it can't be compare with real relationships.

There are games (ex. coffee dog) where you are the barista and you watch a story of people narrating to you, and the game is relaxing and makes me feels good.

For me is better to live the moment and not to spend the time of the event recording everything and sharing everything. I prefer to enjoy the live festival instead of using a VR or stay with thephone in hands all the time.

I prefer real life and physical objects (ex. I prefer the physical menu instead of scanning it, for him the QR code is too impersonal and cold, I want the menu in my hands).

For me virtual reality can be useful only for some kinds of experiences such as trying basketball with famous people or learning how to do something in real life (for exemple travel virtuality for tetraplegic people).

Leon Springsfeld



We know that

Love nature and animals, he's vegan and he has a goth style. He appreciates art, architecture and he cares about environmental problems. He likes to hang out with friends and have open talks and discussion in various topics. He likes to cook, loves tekno music and go to party (very sociable and friendly). He had an open relationship in Japan, bisexual.

Tech skills

Instagram, Facebook, Adobe Pack, Rhino, Autocad and other architectural programs.

Wants and needs

Continue to discover the world and slowly manage to grow professionally doing something I like.

Frustrations

The low attention to environmental issues I experienced in Japan, the social pressure and the difficulty in integrating with the local people.

Name

Leon

Surname

Springfeld

Age

29

From

Germany

Live

Nagoya, Japan (before USA)

Period abroad

He has been in Japan for 6 months

Personality

Curious Loyal

Explorer Calm

Rebel

Chatterer

Work as

Master student, Leipzig University

We ask him to describe his daily life routine to better understand the relationship he has with people around him, foreigners, locals, technologies and his interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

レオン・スプリングスフェルド

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning

I don't have a precise time to wake up (between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.) but when I do, I also take care of my apartment (like doing the laundry, preparing breakfast...). Then I go to university and I stay there the hole day.

During the day

I work also in an architectural office. On Tuesday I wake up earlier because I have to go there at 8:30-9:00 a.m and I work until 18:30 p.m. I do not have so much time in my routine.

Dinner - evening

At noon I meet colleagues/ friends for working on thesis for researching, reading, sketching, drafting until 8:30-9:00 p.m. and then I will have dinner at university (kebab) with friends. After working, I go back home, chill and go to sleep.

Weekend routine (Saturday and Sunday)

Breakfast - morning

During the weekend I wake up later, around 10-11:00 a.m. This is my time to focus on reading and writing.

During the day

I spend my time usually hanging out with friends and I love going to different libraries.

Dinner - evening

For the evening I usually participate in some events but I don't drink or party to much, I prefer movie night and stay with friends in our places.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: A bit tired and stressed for the deadline of the thesis because I don't sleep enough. At the same time I'm happy for where I live and what I do, also because of my new job offer, so I don't have to worry about work also after graduation, so overall I'm happy with everything.

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: Mostly I use communications apps, *Telegram* with family and friends, *Whatsapp* with someone, *Sigma* for work and colleagues. *Local transportations app* for buses and trains and because I'm working on a Japan related thesis I use also *Google Translate* for *kanji* and other similars. *Instagram* and *Tiktok* a lit of bit for getting lost, *Netflix* too to cool down. *Firebox* for researching, *Line* also to stay in contact with Japanese friends. *Spotify* all day long, a second hand shop as *Vinted* and *Craigslist* but with a german version of it. Also company website for national trains.

Q: Leon you have been in Japan for 6 months, what was the biggest culture shock for you? and in USA?

A: In japan the biggest shock was when I arrived in my hotel after flight in Shinkansen and I tried to open the window of my tiny room and the window was not able to be opened completely for safety measurements and it was faced a wall. I was 11th floor, for seeing the sky I had to turn all my head outside there. I was also struck by the absence of heating.

In the USA I was so confused when everyday every cashier or random people were asking me "hey, what are you doing?" and because I didn't want to be rude I tried all the time to answer it even though I knew they were not interested at all. In my campus, located in the middle of nowhere, was weird to see this desolation around and completely not sight of houses. Both countries shocked me so much with the *overuse of single use plastic/ wrapping for everything* that saddened me most of the time.

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: *I adapted quite quickly.*
I am sure I have done a lot of things weirdly for Japan standards but at the same time I feel comfortable in the country and I don't have anymore fear to be lost or doing something wrong.

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Japan? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: In USA it was very easy, we had so many social interactions organised by university and subclasses. People were super willing to be helpful, especially at the beginning even if you then lost contact very easily and quickly (i do not know the majority of people in facebook).

In Japan it is much more difficult to get in contact with people, especially at university. *It is very complicated to interact with Japanese people because it is difficult to understand when something asked/said is okay or not and they tend to feel uncomfortable right away.*
During my experience, I only managed to bond with the Japanese man who welcomed me into his home. He treated me very well, with affection and kindness. He always tried to understand my difficulties and was interested in learning about my culture and my country.

Apart from this experience, however, I always had international friends because it was much easier.
To keep in touch with people I have met I mainly use Instagram, Line I would also like to try using couch surfing apps (for community building) but I have not had time so far.

Q: In your experience, why don't Japanese people interact with foreigners? Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: There is a lot of difference between the US and Japan. In the USA everyone is very interested in getting to know you and your background, also the concept/model of education is different.

Also in Japan people (including elders) try to be welcoming to tourists, try to make you comfortable and if possible try to speak your language even if poorly. Unlike in the USA, however, no one wanted to create more lasting relationships or offered to show me the country.

Maybe because they thought there was already someone who could do it for them.

Internation connected people and who is generally interested in other countries, and/or is raised like this are totally interested in see different perspectives and behaviours.

I tried to talk a lot also with other Japanese people about this theme, sometimes they agree, sometimes don't seem to be interested enough.

Another interesting thing is that most of Japanese people who have not connections with me found me exoting in a way.

They have 5% foreigners in japan, so at their eyes we look always different, almost "special".

Q: You told us the Japanese are very shy, so how do you relate to them?

A: In university *shy people don't want to talk in english*, they want to be helpful but at the same time they are unsure about their english, so they don't speak.
A perfect example is my tutor. She understood everything I said but couldn't answer, so she started using Google Translate to translate from Japanese to English. I then started to do the same to understand what she was saying. It was not easy.

Q: How were you received in the US and Japan?

A: In the US, we had an opening ceremony.
We international students arrived a few days early on campus along with the freshmen.
We had an international orientation which made me feel integrated and comfortable, it felt less unusual and 'strange' to be a foreigner on that campus.
We were also very well looked after, in fact, the university had a programme for international students which included: international coaches working and following you throughout the semester, list of events/things to do and meetings to talk about experiences and problems.
In short, we were more integrated and there was also more interest in our

home culture.

In Japan, at NCU on the other hand, *there were only two people to welcome us (besides our tutor): Ono sensei and Neda sensei, two teachers, the former Japanese and the latter Macedonian, with whom we had no communication problems because they had both worked in many countries.*

The students, on the other hand, had/have a curiosity to get to know you because it is more unusual in Japan to have foreign students.

There was much more *disorganisation* than in the US but the situation can vary from university to university, *you cannot generalise.*

Q: Do you know what is AI (artificial intelligence is)? (Alexa, Siri...) have you ever used it? If not, do you will use it and for what?

A: The only situation where I used it was for fun.

A friend of mine has Alexa and we use it for fun together (we turn on lights, ask her what her favourite colour is, what's the big hit of the moment...). Sometimes she finds it almost creepy, in fact, sometimes the lights go on/off without them saying anything.

I honestly didn't know much about these technologies, in my opinion they have a lot of potential and can probably do a lot more than how we use them.

On the other hand, *most of the time I don't need it, the technology I use is phone, pc, speakers, headphones and all these devices are connected to each other, and I am happy with that.*

Q: Is there something you need to do in your daily life that technologies or your phone are not smart enough or human enough to figure out?

A: *In my opinion, technology today is still not human enough, in the sense that it often fails to fully understand what I need and thus satisfy me (for example, one day I was looking for a certain symbol but it was difficult to find it because I didn't know how to search for it and Google found the wrong thing or something disconnected from my search every time I did a search). Also, I prefer talking than writing, perhaps because I am a bit dyslexic.*

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: In Japan I have seen a lot of innovation, for example, in the payment methods in museums / public transport, the presence of intelligent toilets, robotic systems that control the temperature of the bathtub (nice but uncomfortable), robots for security and similar things.

At the same time though, despite being very innovative as a country, it has many shortcomings regarding the language (many limitations related to English).

Visiting Japanese gardens I was usually frustrated with the lack of information available in English, or if there was any, with the difference in quality and quantity compared to the Japanese ones.

Even in tour guides I have seen people asking for more information about a specific thing, so in this case what I needed was not a virtual tour or an audio guide in English, but a simultaneous translation of what the tour operator was saying.

There are many things that language hinders.

In the US in 2017 I was very happy with the cashier and check up, it was so comfortable not to talk to anyone since everything was done automatically (especially after work, I just wanted my vegan fast food, my beer and go straight home and relax) but on the other hand with human interaction I felt better at times.

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR? Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: I know because I had a lab in my university.

In this lab we used VR to work and draw but I never used it, for me it's not very common.

At the same time *I think VR could be very useful.*

About the Metaverse, I feel like it's like a different world of worldcraft.

Digitally interaction in games can be really fun, like listening to the voices of our friends while playing.

I don't know so much more of it, use your own cam with blurred background seems more natural than use avatars or icons but at the same time *I'm so tired about zoom.*

I need the change of place, I'm more efficient to work in different places.

Probably I need to read more about it.

Q: We know you prefer physical connections but do you consider it possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: I don't have a profound knowledge about it and also I didn't put myself so much in games and similar in Japan but there is a high risk to lose control with everyday things and this scares me.

Spend a lot of time online with online people and then struggle to leave your house, seems not normal to me. I know a person like this, but then he decided to leave everything and everyone to visit an online friend in person, and this happened three times before he started to live there as well, so becoming an offline friendship. This also is possible, but for me is not a possibility.

Share topics and have comments is normal through social media but at one point I will need to move into a more real way of communicate, like at least audio messages, and only that way will not be enough. It can be a starter point, or like for us a way of keeping in touch after we met in person.

With friends from USA is difficult to continue this, because you need to plan to see each other in person again.

Pietro Vecchi

古いピーター



Name
Pietro

Surname
Vecchi

Age
32

From
Italy

Live
Nagoya, Japan

Period abroad
He has been in Japan for 4 years

Personality
Gentle Intelligent
Witty Helpful
Old inside Talkative
Curious

Tech skills
Instagram, Facebook, architectural programs.

Work as
teacher in high school, work part-time in an architecture firm, university tutor an NCU.

We know that
He enjoys chatting argue about various topics, reading, playing the guitar and engaging in cultural and volunteer activities/events. When he can he likes to visit Japan and go on trips. Working as a tutor he likes being around people and helping them when they need it. Helping people makes him feel fulfilled.

Wants and needs
He has several jobs that take him and focus on different things, so he would like to devote himself on one to have a more stable routine.

Frustrations
Fear of not devoting enough to his thesis and work because he has several.

We ask him to describe his daily life routine to better understand the relationship he has with people around him, foreigners, locals, technologies and his interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning
I get up around 7:30 a.m. and have breakfast with my two roommates (being the last one to leave the house) I shower after my roommates and then leave.
I don't use Google Maps anymore because I know the city and don't go to new places, but I use to check train times on Yahoo Japan.

During the day
On Mondays I teach in another prefecture 3 hours away by train to get to and from home. My class runs from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
On Tuesday mornings I prepare class and then teach from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
On Wednesdays I am on the faculty from 9-10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., so also on Thursdays (the only difference is that once a month I have the Rotari scholarship meeting).
On Fridays my day is similar.

Dinner - evening
Usually after work I go back home and I eat with my roommates.
On Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. I have a weekly meeting with Engyo Japan and then afterwards we all have dinner together.
On Friday night once at home, I cook dinner for everyone.

Weekend routine (Saturday and Sunday)

Breakfast - morning
//////////

During the day
On weekends I am busy with cultural or charity activities with 'The Others' group, so I generally never have a free weekend.

Dinner - evening
//////////

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: I would like to dedicate myself to something specifically, I feel a little fragmented.
For the thesis, I commit only 3 days and gather info and then for half a week I have to stop for other commitments.
When I teach I only see the students once a week so I feel like I neglect them and I feel bad because they don't deserve it.
I think I would be happy if I could devote my whole self to teaching.
The frustration I feel is toward 'dissatisfaction' with the work I am doing.

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: I use *Line* a lot to communicate with Japanese people and *WhatsApp* with Italian and foreign friends. I use *Google Maps* to look up phone numbers and stores, but not for directions. I use *Gisho.org*, which is a Japanese vocabulary for writing *kanji* by hand. I use *Spotify* from pc to listen to music and *DeepL* to translate complex Japanese sentences.

Q: Pietro you arrived in Japan 4 years ago, what was the biggest culture shock for you?

A: The first time I came to Japan I was 26 and stayed for a month but at 27 I moved permanently, so for 4 years.
The biggest obstacle was the language, I didn't think I would be so unable to communicate. I knew that the Japanese don't speak English, but neither did I, so I wasn't prepared.
For the first 4 months I felt like an incapable child who didn't know anything and I didn't have any person by my side.
Here there are a lot of *mental problems* (depression, anxiety, stress, there are a lot of advertisements for clinics etc...) and *so many people I know have suffered* of tics, social disturbs, so many get stressed, and from there I recognized how *society is harder and meaner, especially for men*, because women are not required to be what society wants in the world of work. Men have to obey the boss all the way, if you are a man you must absolutely *sootost* everything they tell you, and if you do not accept you are not "worth so much".
I would have liked at first to work as an architect and open a practice, but the working conditions made me not want to do it.
Working system is too old, honour-bound, and you work yourself to death.

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: *I have changed especially compared to what I thought of Italy.*
Before living abroad I was more rigid-minded and inclined to say what was right and wrong in absolutist terms. For example, studying architecture, I thought that everything that is ancient is beautiful, but in Japan it is the other way around, and this way of thinking is part of the cultural heritage.
I realized some simple things by being here and when I go back to Italy I see many things with irony and detachment and I can judge well.

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Japan? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: I came to Japan because I knew so many friends here who helped me a lot and I didn't realize how much they worked for me.
After graduation I was in Nagoya for a month and tried to learn Japanese, talking to other foreign people in the Japanese course, most of them don't have real friendships with Japanese people, but with internationals.
For example, an Italian boy married to a Japanese woman and the people he knew were through his wife or relatives.
I don't understand people who don't learn the language by wanting to live here, that way you'll never be connected.

In terms of perspective on foreigners, the Japanese tend to differ. Americans and Europeans are viewed positively as a way for them to learn English; while other Asian peoples are seen as inferior, however, there is distrust.

I keep in contact with them by using *Line*, because almost everyone has it and uses it, *but it's a bit difficult for me to keep in touch with those who leave because Line needs the card.*

I maintain relationships with older people via *email* and *Whatsapp*.

Q: In your experience, why don't Japanese people interact with foreigners? Japanese are very shy, how do you relate to them? Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: *Culturally it must be understood that we tend not to think of hurting others with words, of giving a certain impression if I say this or that, while they do it. Furthermore, there is also the question of age which leads to relating and speaking differently. For me, it's easier to interact with younger Japanese because I can speak more naturally and I try to make them feel at ease.*

About the interest in other cultures yes, curious but perhaps more superficially, for example only about cooking or certain specific things.
Overseas Japanese try to blend in a lot and become experts in that culture. The Japanese say they are similar to the Jewish people, that is people created by God and that it is impossible for them to stop being Japanese as long as they live abroad.

Typical Mexicans have a big inferiority complex. From other poor countries, when they come to Italy, they struggle not to make comparisons, and they don't pay compliments. The *Japanese people consider themselves superior economically, technologically* and perhaps for this reason they have a different comparison.

Q: Do you know what is AI (artificial intelligence is)? (Alexa, Siri...) have you ever used it? If not, do you will use it and for what?

A: With voice command I don't use anything, but I use *DeepL*.
I've read about machine learning being able to make frameworks.
At last year's tonale summer focusing on artificial intelligence, *I heard about it but personally I don't want to be told what to do by a private firm, I don't want my life to be controlled, I value my privacy and I turn off all the settings that they record my location.*
Instead from an artistic point of view I find it fascinating, that is, through big data they are able to give you info on thousands of people, and if they have to make a poster, they put random meaningless writings because they are unable to formulate them but use images, therefore use AI as a means not an end.

Q: Is there something you need to do in your daily life that technologies or your phone are not smart enough or human enough to figure out?

A: I would like to have something that turns off my phone when I watch too much youtube.

In general in everyday life I wonder how much technology has improved our lives, those my father's age have done a lot in culture, politics etc without all the technology that there is today. Of course, technology is of great help for utility, but very often we use it to distract ourselves and we waste hours looking at a screen when we could read or watch people, I find it exhausting.

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: For example, a robot for nursing homes that has a few expressions, has no legs, and has a screen with which you can write and interact, made to keep you company but no one used it, indeed it was a bit shocking and useless. Sushi with shinkansen stopping at your seat I find amazing.

The thing I don't like about technology is the replacement it makes of things that already exist and work just fine the way they are. I think it's not related to the matter of time and effort, but only annoyance.

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR? Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: I've never used a viewer or even AR, I only know of thesis research to create augmented reality models of things that don't exist. I don't play and don't know of any other than the one that recreated dinosaurs on your table.

About the Metaverse, yes, I know but I've never even used apps to meet people, occasionally I exchanged opinions on sports blogs etc. but never contacted people online before and then met them in reality then.

At the university where I teach, I have tried to get my pupils to talk about contemporary issues and a girl raised the issue of relationships during the pandemic and that zoom etc... is a good way to stay in touch.

However, I pointed out to her that an interaction is true, but at the same time it is different to talk to a live person and perhaps to face a discussion/ quarrel. On zoom you can go out and avoid confrontation, and this aspect was positive for her. At this point I wonder if the technology is to avoid discomfort, to avoid being a real person with real problems.

The metaverse seems like a place to take refuge in order not to be oneself, to be less human.

Q: We know you prefer physical connections but do you consider it possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: *Otaku* and *Hikikomori* are realities here in Japan, there are those who think they are happier in virtual relationships than in real ones.

I wonder if interaction via an avatar is real communication and the happiness from this online relationship is real or not. I do not think so.

Online relationships are not a solution to shyness and meeting people. I think

this leads people to withdraw further, and I understand the difficulties of social interaction and fear of judgement, so maybe *I try to be the person who takes the first step, accepts the other without creating barriers even between real/virtual.*

Q: What do you plan to do, stay or go away?

A: I came here for friends, and I would stay here for them, but at the same time I would go back to Italy for the friends I have there.

It wasn't easy to enter, but for now and in the near future I want to stay here.

Masato Hibino

日比野正人



Name
Masato

Surname
Hibino

Age
29

From
Japan

Live
Canada

Period abroad
He has been
in Canada 5
months ago

Personality
Inclusive Reflective
Traveller Curious
Flexible Open-minded
Quiet

Tech skills
He only uses social
networks

We ask her to describe his daily life routine to better understand the relationship he has with people around him, foreigners, locals, technologies and his interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

Work as
warehouse worker at
Wismettac

We know that
He really likes travelling and meeting new people. He loves being in contact with nature and always having new experiences, perhaps in the company of friends. He considers important to be friendly and respect any culture and people. He would like to have some license for teaching or after care of kids.

Wants and needs
He needs more time for his passions, and therefore, more time to travel.

He considers emotional ties to be very important, so he would like to have more time and be able to do more things together with the people who are important to him.

Frustrations
He feels stressed in his daily life and he would like to have more time for him. More freedom and better management of his life.

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning
I get up at **8:00 a.m.**, go for a run, stretch, take a shower and prepare breakfast. Once I'm ready I leave the house around **10:00 a.m.** and go to work with the metro.

During the day
I start work at **11:00 a.m.** and finish at **7:00 p.m.**

Dinner - evening
After work I run a few errands and go home. I prepare dinner, relax a bit watching TV or reading a book and go to sleep.

Weekend routine

Breakfast - morning
I wake up at **9-10:00 a.m.**, I have my breakfast and usually I chill a little bit with Netflix. Then I take care of my apartment and I do all the things I can't do during the week.

During the day
During the weekend I hung out with friends to some public event or, if we have time, we organise short trips all together. Sometimes we go shopping and we love eat together at home or at the restaurant.

Dinner - evening
Friday and saturday, depending on the mood, we go out. As I said before, we organise dinners together, go out for drinks or sometimes go to pubs, clubs or parties. On the other hand, there are some weekends where I prefer to stay at home and rest because I'm tired from the week.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: *It's really feeling fresh because everything here is different from Japan, also people and food are different and Japanese food is expensive in here. Every time I can easily hear many languages and different English accents. Canadian people say always "team work team work". I've never heard of this when I was in Australia and New Zealand so I think they are kind of like a warm people. In Canada they also have different public holidays like "thanksgiving day, Black Friday, Boxing Day" and more.*

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: In my daily life I use social networks (*Instagram, Facebook...*). I also use *Line* and *Whatsapp* to communicate with friends and family. At times I used *Tinder* to meet new people and "*Poparide*" for short trip sometimes.

Q: Masato you arrived in Canada few months ago, what was the biggest culture shock for you?

A: Mostly many Montreal's people speak French and some of them have French accent when they speak English (so they are difficult to understand). In addition, there are Canadiands who don't speak English fluently, so it's *difficult to communicate with them.*

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: Cities have not much hostels and expensive compared to Australia and New Zealand. No subway in Vancouver and trains are avoiding rivers and mountains. *It's take long time to go to another place unlike in Japan.*

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Canada? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: *Hostels helped me a lot* because sleeping for many days/weeks with other people makes it easier for you to get to know them. Thanks to my experiences in hostels I was able to create several friendships. In this way, I was able to meet local people but also people from other countries, I was able to get to know new cultures and make my culture known to Canada.

With the people I met I kept in touch using Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and classic phone number.

Q: You are Japanese and you like to meet and get to know people from all over the world, but we have noticed that this is not a very common way of doing things. In your experience, why Japanese people don't interact with foreigners?

A: I think mostly Japanese people are shy and we didn't have much to talk with non Japanese in Japan. *Onestly I don't know much about how we communicated with them.*

Q: Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: *Who is living or studying another language, they are interested in another culture and some people knowledge about another culture.*

Q: We noticed that Japanese are very shy, so how do you suggest relating to them?

A: I think who doesn't know much about non Japanese culture, they don't know how we can communicate with non Japanese. *They know English but they wouldn't make time and chance to speak english to non Japanese, so when they gonna talk with foreign people, they'll get shy.*

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan/Canada? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: In Japan there are hotels where the receptionist is a robot. Japan is known for innovation and technology.

Q: How were you welcomed in Canada?

A: By working holiday.

Q: Do you consider possible, especially in japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: We can go to "meet up's event", use HelloTalk, Messenger and visit in hostel.

Mitsuo Kushida



Name
Mitsuo

Surname
Kushida

Age
28

From
Brazil (Japanese origins)

Live
Japan

Period abroad
He has been in Japan 5 months ago

Personality
Open-minded Creative
Sociable Hard worker
Extravagant Precise
Calm Unconventional

Work as
Tattoo artist

Tech skills
Social and drawing programs.

We know that

He's open-minded friendly character, loves to hang out with friends and have fun (he loves going to clubs, especially international ones). His passion is drawing, in fact he turned it into his job, and he likes to play the guitar. He loves to travel, when he gets the chance, and often does so alone. He is engaged to a Japanese boy he met in Japan.

Wants and needs

He would like to change country and open his own tattoo studio.

Frustrations

He misses his home country, as he cannot have a defined identity in Japan. Aesthetically he looks like all the other Japanese but inside he does not feel like them. Moreover, he does not speak the language, so this does not allow him to integrate 100%.

We ask her to describe his daily life routine to better understand the relationship he has with people around him, foreigners, locals, technologies and his interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

串田みつを

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

Breakfast - morning
I wake up at **7:00 a.m.**, I have a shower, I drink coffee (fast because usually I'm late) and I go to work around **8:15 a.m.**

During the day
Since I work as a tattoo artist in a private studio, my working hours often depend on the number of clients in a day and appointments. On average I start work around **9:00 a.m.** and finish around **6:30 p.m.** to **7:00 p.m.** (it all depends on the tattoos to be done, though).

Dinner - evening
After work I usually go home, even if sometimes I stop for a drink with my friends. Then I prepare dinner for me and my boyfriend and before sleeping we usually watch series.

Weekend routine

Breakfast - morning
I wake up at **9-10:00 a.m.**, I always have my coffee and I prepare to go to work.

During the day
I also work on weekends, so my routine is similar to that of the week, only I spend fewer hours at work. I also use the weekend to do the house cleaning and all the errands that I can't do at other times (having fewer clients).

Dinner - evening
If I don't have clients the next morning, in the evening I like to go out with friends and go clubbing all together.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: I would say that I feel ok, I'm not super excited about anything, but I'm not super depressed either.

Q: What apps/digital services do you usually use in your daily life?

A: *Instagram, Google Maps* and *Facebook* are the apps that I use most. For a period I also used *Grinder* and *Tinder* to meet new people.

Q: Mitsuo you arrived in Japan few years ago, what was the biggest culture shock for you?

A: The *language* is really something complicated, I tried to study it three times and I still intend to go back. *Security* is also something absurdly pleasant.

Q: If you think about it now, things have changed or there are still some things that bother you?

A: The only thing that bothers me is the difficulty in communication, the difficulty in solving problems (the Japanese tend not to deal with them) and the high level of bureaucracy that there is in the country, in fact, they have regulations for everything and they never go outside the box.

Q: Was it easy to meet people here in Japan? How do you keep in contact with them?

A: For me it was quite easy, yes, as I am Latin American (so open and not shy). Here you have to make the first step, the *Japanese never make the first step* but then they open up and have fun together.
I think that's why a lot of them like foreigners, Japanese culture is very strict.

With the people I met I kept in touch using mainly *Line*.

Q: In your experience, why don't Japanese people interact with foreigners? Japanese are very shy, how do you relate to them? Do you think they are interested in other cultures?

A: Firstly, I think very few people speak English, and secondly, as I said in a previous question, Japanese culture is very strict, so *they have this 'don't want to bother' thing*. However, if you break the ice, they do manage to loosen up a bit, *sometimes they offer you a drink as a thank you for including them in your little group*.

They are shy, so you have to break the ice, make a joke, invite them to your table, things like that.

I am referring to informal settings, bars, clubs, barbecues, etc.

As for *interest in other cultures*, I think so, it is human nature to be curious about what is different.

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction design in Japan? think about robotics, applications, and services that are unique and useful for you.

A: I don't think so, maybe tablets where you can order food in a restaurant without human interaction.

Q: Do you know what is AI (artificial intelligence is)? (Alexa, Siri...) have you ever used it? If not, do you will use it and for what?

A: I have a Alexa at home, I use it more as a speaker, or to know the temperature of the day.
I don't explore all the possibilities of the device, *I could live without one*.

Q: Is there something you need to do in your daily life that technologies or your phone are not smart enough or human enough to figure out?

A: I don't think so, I can solve everything with just my phone.

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR? Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: I've heard something about it, but I don't have much knowledge about it.

Q: Do have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

A: Yes, I've heard about metaverse, would it be almost like a global sims game? I didn't understand right.
I love online interaction, when I was a teenager in the early days of the internet I loved IRC chats, it's a shame they're gone.

Q: Do you prefer physical connections over digital ones? Do you consider it possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: I certainly prefer physical interactions. For the Japanese I find it more difficult, they are trained *since school to be equal to have the same behavior*, so I think this prevents them from developing their own personality. According to this, *I think technology helps them mainly in love matters* (just this week I was reading that most couples nowadays in Japan meet through apps).

Mu Xuanqui

穆玄奇



Name
Mu

Surname
Xuanqui

Age
23

From
China

Live
Italy

Period abroad
He has been in Italy almost 2 years

Personality
Sweet Clever
Sociable Friendly
Funny
Stubborn

This interview was carried out in pairs, therefore for each question the answer of both girls will be inserted.

Tech skills

Mu Design programs, games and social.

Li Design programs, games, social and painting.

How they met

Mu They met in an app similar to Wechat before arriving in Italy and then found themselves traveling together.

Work as

Mu Systemic design students at PoliTo

Frustrations

Mu Environment, cleaning of city, taxes and healthcare.

Li In Italy there are too problems related to healthcare, education and organization in general. They love Italy for the culture and the art but at the same time they want to live in a country where they can live relaxed (even if they say that every country have their own different problems).

Wants and needs

Mu For her inconvenient to study in Italy. She wants to continue studying here or in another country for continuing PhD, but she doesn't know which one to go to.

Li She wants to degree, she needs the master title because in China a lot of students have it to have a better salary. She has to come back to China for the government type of deal for special students. She has only 2 years, then she has to start searching for a job.

Jingwen Li

李景文



Name
Jingwen

Surname
Li

Age
24

From
China

Live
Italy

Period abroad
He has been in Italy almost 1 year and a half

Personality
Determined Imaginative
Introvert Sweet
Creative Precise
Calm

USER JOURNEY

Describe your daily routine (week and weekend)

Week routine

During the day

Mu/Li Study and homework all day. They usually stays at home during the week.

We ask her to describe her daily life routine to better understand the relationship she has with people around her, foreigners, locals, technologies and her interactions. We divided the user journey during weekdays and weekends.

From the user journey we were also able to understand the level of stress present in her daily life. To go into more detail on the emotional aspect, the user journey was followed by a question on feelings/feelings experienced in the routine.

Weekend routine

During the day

Mu She usually plays videogames (Mu likes to see k-dramas, anime and cartoon like One-Piece), eats special food and organizes trips to other countries or places with friends to visit.

Li She usually stays home with her boyfriend. When it's cold she prefers to lie on the couch. She usually plays videogames/games (Li plays the Chinese version of League of Legends). If it's not so cold she goes outside and visits the city.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Q: How do you feel?

A: **Mu** She really likes Italy, from when she was a child she had the dream to live in another country.
For her is very different from home, *she feels free, and nobody says anything about her.* Italy is very different from China.

Li At the beginning she hated it, her dad was a painter and she wanted to go to Italy for that, so she loved the art, it was a dream, but no time enough for it. She wanted to have more time for oil painting and finally now she has it. Probably she will take a class next summer.
The second year for her was literally a drama, she had a lot of dramas. *She thinks that Italy is very nice but she had bad experience with some people, like her home owner (she doesn't speak English nor Chinese and she continues to talk with them in Italian even if they don't understand, she calls them during classes and she didn't want rent them the house).* Another problem is that for the lawyer are so slow here in Italy in dealing with everything, in China in 1/2 month they can deal with everything. *Here in Italy people is too slow, also with bureaucratic things.*
In China they have a lot of people so things are made faster and they are more organized (ex. for the residence permit they waited 6 months to do it and during the process they lost the documents of Mu and they didn't say anything about it).

Q: What apps do you use? Do you use still your Chinese app? is there anything you wish an app could do in your daily life?

A: *Instagram* for sharing lives, *Wechat* to contact Chinese people, *Whatsapp* to contact Italian people, email to contact the professor.
A very important app for them is *GoogleMaps*, they use it all day.
In China they can't use Google so they have a Chinese version of it.
The only thing that they changed when they came here was the telephone number.

Mu Her dad can neither speak nor understand English, her mom understands a few words.
English is a language that is studied in China.
At the same time they have a lot of tests and are very much oriented towards writing rather than speaking.
It depends a lot on the person, some can speak very well and some can write very well.
It also depends on the education model, for example in the case of Li in his region you can choose the extra language to study in school and not everyone chooses English because it is very difficult.
For example, her sister chose French and Li chose Japanese.
Many times here in Italy the problem of communication with the Chinese is related to the fact that they are often very shy, so they actually understand English but are ashamed to speak it.

Li *She doesn't like to use the phone so much because it is a distraction. When she's focused on something it's a continuous distraction for her.*
The main obstacle for them is the language in their daily life.

For this problem they use *Google Translate*, it's very impo to translate some words they don't understand but *sometimes is useless because the wifi is not good* (for ex. In the market).

For them it is very impo understand and speak Italian because people usually don't speak English and for them this is a big obstacle in communication.

At the same time they don't speak Italian and they can understand only a little bit.

It's true that in Italy there is a problem with the English language but for them this is not a problem for Italian people but for foreigners that don't understand. They say "it's our problem", because they don't understand and come here. At the same time they think that *is a problem mainly of old generations, new generations can speak English and have more opportunities to learn it.* They noticed that in Florence, Rome and Milan's people speak better English.

Her dad can't speak English and her mom a little bit. When they need to speak English or someone asks them something in English they let Li speak. Her dad understands Japanese because he continued to study because they have an aunt who lives in Japan (the words in Japanese are similar to Chinese but the pronunciation is very different).

Q: First impression of Italian people

A: **Mu** *Really friendly, warmy people* (ex. often at the bus stop they stop them to ask **Li** the time).

Q: You are living in Italy now, what is the most significant cultural shock for you? If you think about it there are some things that bother you?

A: **Mu** They had a bad experience with drunk people (probably homeless or **Li** alcoholic).

Compared to China, going out here at night is a little more dangerous. Teenagers make a lot of noise in buses (in particular in Naples). The thing that struck her positively were the landscapes, especially Taormina. If she is ever rich, she would like to live there.

Italy is very similar to China on a cultural level according to her: we both love culture and family.

The main difference is that *in China there is much more technology* and there is a difference on the level of buildings, of 'historical beauty', in the cities they have much more of a mix of old and new beauty.

Q: How do you keep in contact with friends/family here and at home?

A: **Mu** They feel very much with their family through *video calls*.

Li They hear each other every day. When they visit a place they always video call their family to show them the place and the beauty of the place. They miss the food a lot.

Chinese restaurant can be good, but very normal, basic, they have things specific to each place, not typical things.

Here they cook Chinese, they can find the products but of course they are

expensive.

The thing that bothers them is that the vendors are not real Chinese because they were born here and all their family is here, so they don't know the real Chinese reality (accents, linguistic influences, traditions...).

They can't feel the real China because they are second generation Chinese. This is because China is a language, a culture that you have to live to be part of.

An example is a language: Chinese is very difficult, mainly because it is an ever-changing language. Very often there are words that merge together and new words/new idioms are born all the time. It is also difficult for them to keep up with the language.

Q: You are Chinese and you like to meet new people, but, in your experience, why Chinese people don't usually interact with foreigners/Italians?

A: Mu She really doesn't know the answer because her family (cousins, brothers...) study in Canada, Australia, the UK... so consider that they are more open-minded.

Li Her grandparents don't like immigrants, they want to die in their hometown, but it is nice, they are old and they live in a comfortable place, no need to speak another language, surrounded by friends. New generation wants to immigrate to America, and Australia, before the lockdown because they wanted to find a new job. 60 years ago for 2WW family members lived in America, Taiwan and Japan and the family was divided a lot and they now want to come back to China.

Q: How do you suggest relating to Chinese for us Italians?

A: Mu *She will suggest to her friends Italy for a trip or a short period but not for study. You wouldn't recommend it for a long period because you would have to study Italian and that's very difficult for Chinese people. According to her, the easiest thing to understand is body language.*

Li *She would recommend coming for a short time, maybe for summer camps or exchange programmes. Her father would like her to do an oil painting course this summer. For her pencil and express with hands is very useful.*

Q: Do you ever been to other Asian countries? Are you interested in these cultures?

A: Mu Italy is the first foreign country she visits. *She has never gone to another foreign country because it is time-consuming and she spends a lot of time studying and behind homework or dancing, for example. After this experience she would like to travel more because she feels it is very liberating.*

Li *Her parents are very open, they travel a lot in the summer, especially with her father. She was never a good student in high school, she was very focused on painting. She did not have good grades and this was not seen well. At the same time, however, she was very good at art and painting.*

Q: What do you think about China?

A: Mu She loves her country very much.

It is a very beautiful and fascinating country according to her because it is full of culture.

The dream is of a perfect country and they work very hard. They work long hours, have a lot of pressure and have little time for themselves.

The thing they love about Italy is that holidays are real holidays, whereas in China they have not real holidays because they always have to either study or work.

Education and work are two very important things in Chinese culture and they also lead to social judgement, but things are changing now.

Nowadays they are still very focused on the result and that judges whether you are a 'good' or 'bad' person. The older generations are very focused on the results rather than the process.

Li According to her, China is a product. It is very old and is made up of many pieces which are the *culture, the people, the traditions.*

Q: Do you have experienced some very clever interaction designs in Italy/China? think about robotics, applications, and services for example.

A: Mu She doesn't remember any particular technology but in her daily life she uses a rice cooker a lot and here in Italy it is very different, you find very few of them and they work badly.

Li At her university they study art and have seen many artists combine art with tradition.

For example, a sculpture in the shape of a face (where you have to put your head inside the nostril of the face) that scans your face into a computer, reads the physiognomy of the person and tells you things that maybe older people would say, like you have a big nose then you are lucky.

(The experimenter stands in front of a large glass fiber reinforced plastic face statue made with 3D printing technology, and can obtain his own face analysis through the face recognition technology in the device, with words such as "eating apples" and "avoiding holes in socks" etc.)

Every year they have exhibitions by the designers/artists at the university.

Q: How were you welcomed in Italy?

A: Mu Li's boyfriend arrived in Italy first and so it was he who guided her/helped

Li her and taught her things in the first few months. At the same time Li helped Mu when she arrived in Italy.

Before arriving in Italy, they studied at an Italian language school that has several locations in China.

Q: Do you know about augmented reality and VR?

A: Mu Never used.

Li *She used AI in a workshop to figure out which materials to use for the project. They used it to understand how materials fit in a place and how people*

perceived them.

Now AI has the visor and being smaller it is much easier to use.

According to her, *it is a technology that has become fun and useful over time, especially with the emergence of the Metaverse, which has led to a lot of new opportunities.*

Q: Have you ever heard about the metaverse and what do you think about virtual interaction with people?

Do you consider possible, especially in Japan a reality where people know each other only from the net?

A: **Mu** It is convenient, *it is a good invention because it facilitates acquaintances, especially for shy people.*

Li Nowadays, however, there are problems with dates and especially problems with children. In general, however, it is nice and so cool.

To communicate, for example, with people abroad they have never seen the metaverse as a medium, they have always preferred to use social media.

They think that today many people are always trying to design new things.

This, however, is not always useful for our daily routine.

Personas

3.3 THE PROJECT PERSONAS

After careful analysis of the results of questionnaires and interviews, personas were developed.

They are the result of common opinions, feelings and dynamics and represent the **four types of person most frequently encountered in the research phase**, and therefore, those to whom the project will potentially be directed.

The personas that were identified belong to 4 different categories and are as follows:

Aki Kushido - *"Multi-origins/open-minded Japanese"*; Usagi

Tsuchiya - *"Open-minded Japanese"*;

Denbe Tankashi - *"Traditional Japanese"*

and Sara Fronzina - *"Foreigner in Japan"*.

//////////

They are described in detail on the following pages.

AKI KUSHIDO 串戸亜希

Age
28

Sex
M

Origins
Japanese-Brazilian

From
Rio, Brazil

Live
Nagoya, Japan

Week routine

During the week he has a very hectic, tiring and stressful routine. He wakes up at 6:30a.m., gets ready, has a quick breakfast at home and leaves for work. Distances are very long, it takes him about 50 minutes to get to the salon in the morning (between walking and subway). He arrives at work around 8:30a.m. He works all day until around 7:00p.m. and then go home and do few necessary services such as grocery shopping (taking advantage of the stores near his home). After the day is over, he has a quiet dinner at home and relaxes with hot tea and Netflix. He goes to bed around 10:30/23p.m.

Weekend routine

On weekends he gives his spirit free rein and just follows what he feels like doing. He tends to sleep first. He wakes up quietly, has a nice breakfast maybe watching Netflix while sipping coffee. Then he often does cleaning and services (washing, cleaning the house...). He always tries to carve out time for his interests, so if he can he goes out and takes pictures, draws, tries to hang out with his friends as much as possible and enjoy the moment. If he is not too tired from the week (or lazy) he loves to go clubbing and experience the night, it makes him feel free. Being a hairdresser, however, he often has to work on Saturdays.

From how many time he's in the country

He arrived in Japan from Rio when he was 16 years old with his family for work reasons.

Occupation

Hair stylist

Character

He is mainly very sunny and sociable in character. He likes to make new acquaintances but at the same time he is a bit selective. He can occasionally be a little lazy, grumpy and disorganized but he has a big heart and is always ready to help those he cares about.

Wants and needs

He would like to be able to feel more at home there in Japan. He would like to feel more welcomed by society and enthusiastic about his life there.

Social life

Just because he doesn't feel 100% integrated and because

of the cultural gap he tends to have mainly international friends, so people who come from other countries and have a more open and relaxed approach to life and relationships. He tends to want to be with people who are sunny and up for things, in fact he really likes to go out with people and have group experiences/activities (parties, dinners, outings...).

He tends to be a free spirit, consequently he surrounds himself with like-minded people and this is also reflected in the way they experience Japan. On weekends he really likes to express this freedom of his, and with friends they experience the night and always go out to discover new clubs.

Experiences abroad

He really loves to travel and as soon as he has a chance he does. The only long-term experience he had

abroad was in Brazil before coming to Japan. Having been born and lived for many years in a country very different from Japan, the arrival in the new country was a bit "traumatic" for him, especially socially and culturally. Precisely because of this, although he has Japanese ancestry, he identifies for all intents and purposes as a Brazilian and does not fully find himself in the new culture since it is very closed. He likes Japan but sooner or later he would like to try to live at least for a couple of years in another country or return to Brazil.

Reasons of the experience

The reason is his parents. They had to move from Brazil for work reasons when he was still a teenager. the truth is that he was fine in Brazil but still a small part of himself was intrigued by the new experience.

Interests and hobby

Photography, travel, drawing, cultural events and clubbing.

Frustrations

The difficulty in communicating and relating with the Japanese (he often feels a wall in front of him), the language gap (Japanese is very difficult and he has not yet been able to learn it, consequently he speaks English but because of this he is never seen as a "real" Japanese) and the strong bureaucracy and regulation of the country (there are rules for everything and Japanese are very square, they never tend to go outside the box).

What is happy about

He is happy with his work, the people around him, and the security and certainty that Japanese rigor can give him. He is also fulfilled by the natural and historical sights of Japan that inspire his creative/artistic side.

MULTI-ORIGINS/OPEN-MINDED JAPANESE

USAGI TSUCHIYA 土屋うさぎ

Age

23

Sex

F

Origins

Japanese

From

Osaka, Japan

Live

Osaka, Japan

Week routine

She wakes up around 7:30a.m., gets ready and goes to university. It takes about 30-40 minutes to get to the university on the subway. Once at the university she has breakfast and begins to follow the lessons. At lunch she always eats with his friends and then they rest a bit in the relaxation areas or in the university park. In the afternoon, after lessons, she studies in the library or does group work and in the late afternoon she attends painting lessons or other extra-curricular courses. In the evenings she comes home around 7:30-8:00 p.m., has dinner with the family and relaxes watching Netflix or family tv.

Weekend routine

On the weekend the first thing she likes to do is sleep a little more than during the week, so she wakes up around 10:00 a.m. She takes her time for breakfast and then usually starts studying and working on university projects. In the evening she usually goes out and spends it in the company of friends. Try to find time to relax and do what she likes, in fact, sometimes she likes to stay in bed and read or invite friends over to play board games (or they go to playrooms). Fortunately she lives with her parents so she doesn't have to clean the house or have chores done, although she often helps out her mother.

From how many time he's in the country

From birth

Occupation

Graphic design
university student

Character

She is very quiet, sweet and smiling. Despite being very composed in mannerisms she is actually really sociable and is always happy to meet new people. On the surface she may seem a little shy but then she is always happy to talk and socialize.

Wants and needs

Now that she is young, she feels the need to have other experiences abroad and perhaps return to Italy. She wants to broaden her knowledge of Italian culture and above all of art and painting in general.

She would like to grow artistically, in fact her dream is to attend a summer art school in Italy. In addition, she would

like to know more people with similar life perspectives.

Social life

Being born and raised in Japan she mostly has Japanese friends with whom she does a lot of things.

They like to spend the evenings playing board games or at the weekend they go dancing, karaoke or dinner out.

The peculiarity is that there is little spontaneity in their going out, in fact they strictly organize their agenda 1/2 weeks before.

Having been abroad, she occasionally likes to go to some international party/event where she can meet people from other countries to make friends with and experience Japan from another point of view.

Experiences abroad

She studied abroad 1 year in Italy thanks to the Erasmus program. Now that she has seen

what it is like to live abroad she would like to have more experiences and she came back to Japan with another mentality.

After the experience she sees Japan and the Japanese with different eyes.

Reasons of the experience

She has always been very open-minded and fascinated by the world outside Japan.

She has always had a particular attraction to Italian art and culture, in fact as soon as she had a chance she went to study there. Before she left, she was looking forward to visiting Italy as much as possible, eating Italian food and especially seeing lots of museums.

Interests and hobby

Reading, travel, boards, paintings and hang out with friends.

Frustrations

The thing that makes her feel most frustrated is that after living

abroad and being in contact with another culture, she now feels like she is in a bubble. Japan is her home but at the same time in some ways she doesn't feel it is her home, she always feels a bit blocked from being able to express herself 100%. She would like to be herself without feeling judged by social pressures.

What is happy about

She is happy in general with her life because she knows she has the opportunity to travel and learn about new realities. She feels satisfied with her course of study and has a very active life full of friends to have new experiences with. The thing she is most happy about is her family who always supports her, even though they do not always understand her choices and do not always agree 100%.

OPEN-MINDED JAPANESE

DENBE TANKASHI 伝兵衛短刀

Age
26

Sex
M

Origins
Japanese

From
Nagoya, Japan

Live
Nagoya, Japan

Week routine

His day starts very early, around 6:00 a.m. in the morning. He wakes up, takes a shower, gets ready and has a quick breakfast at home. Around 7:00 a.m. he leaves the house to go to work. It takes about 40-50 minutes to get to work by bus or subway.

Around 8:00 a.m. he is in the office and can start his working day which lasts until around 18:00 p.m. At work, he has many things to do and therefore he spends most of his time at his desk. Usually during the lunch break he goes with colleagues to grab a quick take-away and then goes back to the office (this is the only time he has to socialize).

After the working day, he leaves the office and goes to play tennis with some friends, after which he returns home, cooks something for dinner and relaxes by playing a few video games or simply watching TV. When he's not playing tennis he usually does chores and then dedicates himself to cooking.

Weekend routine

On weekends he wakes up around 9-10:00 a.m., takes his time for breakfast and then dedicates himself to services and house cleaning.

When things to do are finished, he has so much time to devote to friends and passions. He goes out shopping, takes care of his plants and above all loves organizing dinners with friends.

In the evenings they often go out and sometimes they even go dancing.

In short, it regenerates from the stress of the week.

From how many time he's in the country
From birth

Occupation
Office worker

Character
He is very composed, shy and closed in on himself. He does not tend to externalize much feelings, sentiments or frustrations, as if he puts up a wall in front of people. It does not mean that he does not have a kind and friendly soul, only he often tends to be overwhelmed by shyness.

Wants and needs
He would like to have more free time to relax and dedicate himself to his passions.

Social life
His friends are all Japanese and are mostly like him, ie quiet and friendly. They are not party animals, on weekends or when they organize to see each other they

prefer for example to go out for dinner / for a drink or prepare dinners at home. This doesn't mean, however, that every now and then they don't go dancing at discos or clubs. They are all passionate about video games, in fact often one thing they like to do is play some game together. When they have more time, they usually organize short trips. Basically they get on well with each other, they always like to meet new people and have a conversation but it is more rare that they deepen their knowledge.

Experiences abroad
He has never had medium- to long-term overseas experience and has never felt the need to leave Japan. Despite this, he likes to travel and when he has the chance he does.

Reasons of the experience
He has never

experienced outside because he is very attached to his country and culture, consequently he does not feel the need. Elsewhere he would feel like a fish out of water and this does not make him feel comfortable. He prefers to just travel and stay and live in Japan.

Interests and hobby
Videogames, tennis, plants/gardening and cooking.

Frustrations
The thing that weighs on him the most is the constant daily stress. Every now and then he feels like he is in a whirlpool of stress and social anxiety, mainly related to the tendency to always have to give his best and prove herself. Against these feelings, he has found escape valves that make him experience daily life with a little more lightness.

What is happy about
He is happy with his life as it is. He is surrounded by friends with whom he is comfortable and has fun, he has a family that makes him feel happy and loved and a job that is fulfilling for him (although stressful). He finds happiness even in the simplest things and does not feel the need to seek it in extra-ordinary experiences/activities, he is fine as he is (although occasionally doing different and unusual things brings him joy and enjoyment).

He is very respectful of people and other cultures. At the same time, however, when he happens to meet a person from another country or culture, he feels he has nothing to share with him. The first obstacle he often encounters is the language, in fact he doesn't feel very good with English and this limits him a lot in conversation. He is also shy and almost "afraid" of making mistakes.

Another obstacle is linked to unshared behavioral dynamics that lead him almost to put a wall in front of the other person for cultural and privacy reasons, in fact he doesn't like it when they ask him too much about his life or about things he considers private.

He often perceives people of certain cultures as a little too "intrusive" and libertine, which makes him uncomfortable.

Furthermore, he prefers acquaintances in more formal and rigorous contexts, where the conversation can be controlled.

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE

SARA FRONZINA サラ・フロンジーナ

Age

22

Sex

F

Origins

Italy

From

Rome, Italy

Live

Tokyo, Japan

Week routine

She wakes up early because of class, around 7-7:30a.m. She gets ready and goes down to the canteen to have breakfast, then heads to class with her friends.

She has class until 13:00p.m., then goes to lunch with her friends in the canteen and after lunch they all rest together a bit in the garden (if it is a nice day).

In the afternoon, if she doesn't have class, she goes to study or meet with her classmates in case she has to do projects. At 18:30 p.m. she goes to play tennis until 20:00p.m., takes a shower, has dinner and then goes back to her room and relaxes with some music or watching Netflix.

Every now and then in the evening it also happens that after dinner they meet in someone's room and spend some time together among friends (playing something, drinking tea...).

Weekend routine

At the weekend she wakes up later than usual, also because she usually goes out with her friends on Friday nights, so she gets up around 11-12:00a.m.

She eats something, gets ready and, depending on the amount of studying she has, either goes out or goes to study.

The weekend for her is made for visiting and discovering, in fact, if she can she organises trips with her friends to other cities, while if she cannot they go out to dinner, go out to clubs, go to museums...

From how many time he's in the country

From 3 months

Occupation

Economy university student

Character

She is somewhat insecure and anxious but these two characteristics take a back seat compared to her "adventurous" side and curiosity. She is always eager to meet new people, she is sunny and always wants to be in company (although there are bad moments, when she tends to be a bit isolated). As a last thing she's determined.

Wants and needs

She would like to feel more integrated into the local reality and to be able to have closer relations with local people.

Social life

She is very sociable. There are a lot of guys on the university

campus and she has managed to create a nice group of friends from all over the world. Since they are all from abroad, when they have some time they take the opportunity to visit Japan together (organising trips, outings...). Thanks to the lessons, she has also managed to get to know some Japanese guys but has found it difficult to bond with them.

Experiences abroad

Japan is her first real long-term experience abroad. She left for Japan with the Erasmus program and the duration of the trip is 6 months.

Despite initial difficulties she is having a good time and would like to return in the future, but always for a limited period of time.

Before Japan she always traveled and the longest trip she took was 1 month in Valencia in the summer.

Reasons of the experience

Japan has always fascinated her as a culture and she has always wanted to visit it. When she applied for Erasmus she actually put a European country as her first choice. Then she entered the rankings for Japan and decided to accept even though she knew it would be more difficult. She was driven by the idea that that experience would never happen again and curiosity about the country.

Interests and hobby

Tennis, music, reading, hang out with friends, art & drawing.

Frustrations

First of all, she struggled (and still struggles) to get used to her new daily routine. The stress and hecticness of everyday life is very high and she often struggles to keep up with it. The stress of the daily

routine is compounded by frustrations related to the social sphere. In fact, she still finds it very difficult to relate to local people. In her opinion, they are very closed, unsociable and strict. She regrets this as she would like to expand her circle of friends with locals as well, so that she can experience Japan in an even more immersive way. She would like to be able to break down this wall between the two cultures.

What is happy about

She is grateful for the experience and every day she is happy to learn and discover new things. She is happy to have a group of friends with whom she can explore the country and its history and share experiences that she will carry with her for the rest of her life. She is trying to live every moment to the fullest and is really happy about that.

FOREIGNER IN JAPAN

EXTENDED RESEARCH

拡張検索



Game and Society

4.1 BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY

One of the project parts, as we shall see later, is based on the desire to create a game. Games represent tools through which various kinds of skills can be developed: from reasoning and cognitive, didactic to social skills. Board games in particular are excellent tools for creating confrontation and relationships between different people. In addition to respecting the rules of the game, one must respect the times of others by creating empathic relationships between players.

Gaming as a behaviour is something that exists before the formation of culture, it is a voluntary action that is not compulsory or necessary for survival, but people choose to play for the sake of it and for what they can learn or simply to spend time in each other's company.

What brings different people to play together is the desire to be part of and create a community, just think of the various meetings and conventions that have sprung up around the world of games or the various venues that create tournaments, where all enthusiasts, more or less experienced, can get together and play. There are different methods, ways and tools to play a game.

In the book *Reality is Broken*, Jane McGonigal states that "a game has four components: **goal, rule, feedback and voluntary participation**"⁹

Rules

They constrain how players can achieve the goal, by eliminating or limiting the obvious ways, **they prompt players to explore previously unexplored options:** they unleash creativity and foster strategic thinking;

The feedback system

Helps players realise how close they are to achieving the goal (through points, levels, etc.): real-time feedback acts as a promise that the goal can actually be achieved and **provides motivation to continue playing;**

Goal

It is the specific outcome towards which the players' activity is directed, it focuses their attention and participation in the game:
it gives the players a sense of purpose, a goal;

Voluntariness of participation

It requires that those who play know and willingly accept the goal, the rules, the feedback system. **This awareness establishes the common ground that allows several people to play together, and the freedom to enter or leave the game** when one wants ensures that an activity that is intentionally full of tension and challenges is felt to be safe and enjoyable.

⁹McGonigal, J. *Reality is broken: Why games make us better and how they can change the world*. Penguin Press, 2011.

These are defining characteristics, everything else goes to enhance or strengthen these **four core elements** (attractive story more seductive objective, multiplayer and massively multiplayer experiences less predictable and more enjoyable prolonged play). In some cases, games may seem unproductive, but in reality they are useful activities with meaningful outcomes.

In fact, many games involve trial and error, prompting players to do various mental processing and conflict resolution. In fact, games are an effective and powerful way to push people to change perspectives, create empathy and overcome barriers. One of the most common reasons why people play games is **to make an imaginary contribution to problems that cannot be solved in real life.**

Within the game anything can happen and you can be anyone, **you can be a hero ready to save the world.**

For example, in the game *Pandemic*, players take on the role of leading scientists and are tasked with saving the world from a pandemic. This game is very heartfelt, having experienced covid-19, during which even health figures felt helpless in the face of this invisible enemy. **In this type of game, each player is valued and each has the power to change things.** Thus, confidence and hope are increased, as well as the desire to be worthy, and the players' hard work is also rewarded.

Research shows that when people work hard, the positive stress that comes with it is more enjoyable than fun for its own sake, in practice the games that require more effort are the ones that reward the player more and make them happier. For example, there are games where you have to search for various objects, solve puzzles and puzzles, and games that stimulate healthy competition.

These types of games, whether digital or physical, take time and skill to complete, and the effort involved instills confidence in the player as they realise their capabilities. **Games have the power to motivate players, to push them to work hard and change their perspective, developing lateral thinking.**

Games include a clear objective and an action plan on how to achieve it, which of course indicates the fact that the objective is actually **achievable.** In fact, a game with a clear objective but no action plan is unattainable. When the player achieves the goal, he obtains a prize that recognises his qualities. The reward may be an improvement in one's self-esteem or the world around one, either way the player has achieved something significant in the game.

Achieving the goal in the game, helps players feel more productive in their daily lives. A recent survey shows that 70 % of senior executives play casual games during work to feel more productive. Casual games are those low-intensity games that have low impact, require little skill and have simple tasks, but are not always easy work, but their characteristic is that they present clear objectives and immediate action plans.

Players often use casual games to relax and regain motivation in real-life work, as these allow them to quickly see the results of their work in a short time, which is not usually the case in real life.

They give players hope that the work they are doing is meaningful.

Very often, however, the game results in failure, statistics indicate almost 80% of attempts, but this does not prevent or discourage players.

It represents an additional challenge to keep trying, to keep trying.

The expression '*Art of Failure*' is the paradox of failure leading to success. Although many players hate to lose, they keep trying until they achieve victory.

Failure is an important part of the game of success. Research shows that a positive failure creates a strong will to succeed; in fact, players do not give up easily when faced with failure in games, because there is always room for improvement and the goal can be achieved, for example, with the help of another person, with practice or a better strategy.

What makes games attractive is that they, unlike real life, leave room for trial and error; this is why players are more likely to experiment with their strategy in games than in the real world and show a strong sense of optimism in the game.

When games provide appropriate failure feedback, it motivates the player to continue playing and helps them set more realistic and achievable goals.

On the other hand, however, when failure is unfair, players are more likely to lose motivation, take away their control over the outcome and question whether the action plan is really executable.

The results of games do not usually translate into success in real life, but games help players set realistic goals and build them the confidence to overcome challenges.

There are different types of games that can act as **mediators** in different social contexts and situations. For instance, there are numerous games that are used in schools or workplaces to increase sociability, empathy and inclusion.

For example, there are numerous games that **stimulate and increase empathy** among players.

Empathy is the ability to understand the emotions and perspective of others and is also associated with sympathy, compassion and alliance.

Empathy games are a genre of games developed to understand the emotions of others, leading them to be more aware of others' emotions, not only during the game but also afterwards. These games **aim to prompt players to feel emotions** and leave them with a call to action; in fact, they often use different types of affordances to convey emotions.

Affordances are the usability of different tools or actions to achieve a certain goal.

For example, one way to design an affordance is to declare the player's avatar in the game, which represents the player's direct connection with the game world. The avatar can act as a surrogate body, an identity or a toolkit, thus giving the player certain abilities. Taking the example given earlier, in *Pandemic* the player takes on the role of a scientist and expert to save the world.

Each role has its own special abilities, such as building research stations, preventing the spread of disease, etc. The player's skills are defined and not interchangeable, and this surrogate body also offers the player unique perspectives.

For example, a game that aims to **develop and increase the feeling of empathy** in players is:

'Sea of Solitude'¹⁰

Sea of Solitude is a narrative adventure game designed by German studio Jo-Mei Games to share Kay's emotional journey.

Kay is a young woman struggling with loneliness, broken relationships, anger and fear and who in this inner struggle ends up becoming a monster.

The objective of this game is to identify with Kay and free her from a painful past, all of which is reflected in the avatar's outward appearance. Indeed, her inner loneliness is visualised through this dark plumage on a slender figure with bright red eyes. **At first it is difficult for the player to identify with Kay, because she looks very different, but after listening to the woman's monologue, the player understands her thoughts and doubts about the world.** In the course of the story, Kay meets other monsters who are actually friends and family, and the player understands from their characters and speeches that the relationship between Kay and them is broken. During the game, the players come into **contact with Kay's deepest feelings, doubts and fears and develop empathy** for her by trying to support her and help her feel better.



¹⁰Electronic Arts Inc. "Sea of Solitude", 2019. <https://www.ea.com/games/sea-of-solitude/about>.

Games are an excellent way to **eliminate barriers of all kinds, including age, gender, race, social status and cultural difference**, by creating an imaginary world that differs from the real world. By giving players a new objective and a new identity, they immerse themselves in new and different situations and follow the rules of the game. This boundary separating the players from the others is called the **"magic circle"** and is not always a predetermined space, but changes from time to time. In this dimension, each player has a new identity and mission, so the previous identity is forgotten. In the game of charades, **players have to recite a certain word or phrase using body movements, thus breaking down the barriers of verbal communication** and allowing players to share their understanding of words. Furthermore, games have the power to **connect players from different backgrounds**; in-person games allow for face-to-face interaction, while online games connect distant players. The connectivity of games breaks down many barriers of social interaction; for instance, online games allow players to play at different times and in different places. There are numerous games with the purpose of creating interaction between people with different backgrounds and education.

In this way they can create a kind of **unique community without barriers**, and they also promote a collaborative and team-building environment. For example, a game designed with the aim of **breaking down gender barriers** and stereotypes is **'Awkward Moments'**. Awkward Moment is a card game created by the Tiltfactor workshop at Dartmouth College. The aim of this game is to use awkward moments in social situations to **reveal gender biases about women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)**. Awkward situations include associating women with science, responding to prejudice, and taking a perspective. For example, questioning women's ability to complete a task using the phrase **'like a girl!'** The rule of this game is very simple, it consists of playing the best card as a reaction to an embarrassing moment, and the game allows the various players to decide which of the various reactions is the best. Each decision-maker has a different criterion, based on personal experiences, prejudices and preferences. **Difference also helps players share their understanding and break down the barriers of gender bias.**



Smart tourism

4.2 WHEN TOURISM MEETS TECHNOLOGY

Cultural tourism is that form of tourism that brings tourists to get to know and get in touch with the culture of a specific region or country, paying particular attention to history, art, architecture, food, religion. In recent years, however, tourism has turned into a digital activity, this progression started around the 1990s with the first digitalisation, the first smartphones and the first IOTs applied to tourism. After adopting these technologies, tourism turns into e-tourism. E-technologies are applied to tourism services and are particularly concerned with various information and the booking/purchase of services. In recent years, however, social media have led to the creation of networks among consumers, so e-tourism continues to evolve and enters a new phase: smart tourism.

Smart tourism refers to that type of tourism in which technology is applied and exploited, and in which much attention is paid to the sustainable dimension and the quality of that segment of life in which one is a tourist; as well as taking into account the consumer dimension since the tourist is essentially a consumer.

Smart tourism in particular has the peculiarity of considering technologies that directly connect a physical and virtual infrastructure through sensors, QR codes and free wifi that allow the user's location or preferred trajectories to be seen.

Smart tourism therefore makes it possible to collect and aggregate data on the consumer, and on his or her consumption habits; in fact, once this data is aggregated, it serves the supplier to intercept and understand the consumer's needs so that it can improve its offer.

Generally speaking, the ideal smart tourist has certain characteristics: **he/she is a young person between 20-30 years old who experiences travel as a need, especially after those years when he/she was unable to travel due to covid-19; he/she uses technology before, during and after the trip.**

In fact, this type of tourist is a person who is used to using technology and who knows that he or she is being tracked and is used to leaving feedback. The smart tourist while visiting a place uses his smartphone a lot to search for information of various kinds or to scan QR codes; he represents a consumer who lives the **'smart city'**, the city that informs the consumer through technology.

The particularity of this tourist is especially the desire to live exactly as a local citizen lives, and therefore to make the cultural habits of the place his own: travelling by local transport, eating in local places, not going on overly touristy visits, but going in search of more **hidden places** that convey the true soul of the city in which he finds himself.

To support this type of tourism, many smart objects are flourishing on the market.

One example is the **Google Glasses**, which, thanks to augmented reality systems, are able to transport the virtual tourist to the desired places.

This turns out to be a very effective method for people who cannot travel and move around for personal, physical, work-related reasons, etc.

In addition, smart tourism has found further fertile ground in these last few pandemic years where travel and socialising have been restricted.

The tourism sector has had to cope with this blockage by finding alternatives quickly, and smart technologies have not only helped suppliers to become competitive but have also allowed them to diversify their range of offerings through, for example, **virtual tours and webcam travel,**

enabling them to forge new relationships with new tourists. What seemed to be slowing down has actually accelerated. It is now possible to visit new places, cities, museums from home or in structures created with this objective, as in the case of **'Tokyo First Airline'** for example.

First Airlines is a Japanese company based in Tokyo where it is possible to book **virtual trips without having to travel from Japan.** Travellers take part in a **110-minute flight simulation** and can choose between Paris, New York, Rome and Hawaii, and each destination includes different activities. Customers sit in a room designed to look exactly like a plane, on real airbus seats salvaged from an airline, and in an effort to make flying a complete **multi-sensory experience**, First Airlines offers in-flight meals specially designed by a dedicated chef. Each menu changes depending on the destination of the flight. Upon arrival at their virtual destination, guests can take 360-degree tours and visit famous landmarks. **Many customers are elderly people who struggle with long journeys or people with children.**



Discovery the city

4.3 NEW WAYS TO 'VISUALISE' THE TERRITORY

In recent years, applications for discovering cities, places of historical and cultural interest have become increasingly popular.

As seen above, smart tourism is on the rise and thanks to this type of application, it is increasingly easy and engaging to visit a new place. There are numerous mobile applications used to communicate and visualise the territory, real interactive urban guides, and on Google one encounters projects that are still in the development phase, a little developed literature on the subject, and some discussion, on personal blogs or forums, on products that can be ascribed to the categories of entertainment or games.

Analysing the field of mobile applications, on the other hand, one denotes a greater presence of Apps with the most diverse characteristics, but before dealing specifically with the ways in which they represent the territory, it is important to identify the sphere to which they belong.

The concept of the **interactive guide** as a complement and support to the visit, capable of communicating large amounts of information, has changed radically, especially compared to 'twentieth-century' models such as the traditional analogue audio guides still in use.

The audioguide with headphones, which offers the possibility of selecting an audio track to listen to, appeared in 1952 and remained unchanged for a long time. Over the years, the development of technologies supporting the personalisation of information and its localisation, such as geo-referenced systems with GPS, has strongly contributed to the evolution of the audioguide concept itself, leading to a **freely customisable visit offer**. On the basis of what has been said and developed in recent years, contemporary mobile cultural communication is based on the personalisation of modes of use and geographical localisation.

A classification of such guides has been proposed by M. Kenteris, D. Gavalas and D. Economou, who divided projects of this type into **four groups**:

Mobile guide applications

projects that make use of mobile devices to provide the user with a platform where he or she can obtain useful information of a different nature and parameters for using the various services offered by the guide promoter;

Mobile navigation systems

pedestrian navigation systems that help provide the user with geographical information by generating a graphic description of the itinerary;

Web-to-mobile type applications

projects that transfer data and information from websites to mobile applications installed on the user's device;

Mobile web-based type applications

applications that refer to web portals that provide information to the browsers of mobile devices via client - HTTP server interaction.

The four categories should be considered as a **fluid guideline**, as many projects for mobile cultural and tourist use and communication can in fact be regarded as hybrid products, as they integrate several technologies and platforms in a single device. These go far beyond the simple visual-acoustic intermodality of traditional audioguides, as **they allow for an integration of real world and virtual context**.

In this regard, it is crucial to remember that these applications are closely linked to the development of the mobile Internet, the growth of which has depended, and continues to depend, on a number of factors such as the spread of smartphones and the various mobile devices, broadband, and Internet connections via mobile devices.

The communication and discovery of cities and the various cultural and landscape heritages must refer to the contemporary categories of globality and complexity, as:

"Only a global approach makes it possible to deal with the complexity of cultural and landscape heritage: communication will be all the more effective and engaging the more it is able to combine the full possession of the contents of one's specialisation with a global vision of the subject."¹⁴

It is generally thought that the use of various technologies represents a security of success, but in reality a number of problems can arise.

For instance, when visiting a city, the enormous amount of information routes and suggestions on the net **could lead the visitor to get lost and end up choosing content not so much according to what it really represents but how it interfaces with us, via our devices**.

In fact, the most interesting challenge of apps is that of the preliminary choice, on the itineraries to follow, the areas to discover, the literary texts from which to take cues or reflections on the territory, the stratifications of the urban and rural landscape, etc. In this sense, communication is fundamental and must make use of **innovative tools and techniques, so as to optimise the fruition of an asset or a place** and make it **"multi-readable"**.

These objectives can be achieved through the application of **certain key concepts** to the products to be developed in this field:

Narrativity:

construction of an interesting and **engaging cultural discourse** for the user, who should feel part of the story he/she is reading or listening to.

Interactivity:

i.e. the possibility for the user to dialogue with the product they are using, so that they can **personalise the offer** and direct the type of use according to their own tastes and needs.

Dynamism of the information:

constant updating of the contents as much as of the technologies used, thus **making fruition easier**, more useful and complete.

Multidisciplinarity:

an important aspect and to **guarantee a complete reading of the object** under consideration, both in the approach to its representation and description and in the construction of the product itself.

Adopting this type of approach to the development of innovative methods for the valorisation and dissemination of territorial heritage should therefore lead to a complete and perfectly usable product. **The use of new technologies in the narration and visualisation of a territory leads us to a new way of thinking about these actions.**

Interactivity, sharing and ubiquity are essential characteristics of the digital age and therefore also central to the relationship between culture and territory. There are numerous applications that exploit these concepts to **make the discovery of cities, artistic and cultural centres accessible and interesting**. In recent years, there has been a widespread use of **Augmented reality**, which allows the visitor to obtain information by superimposing digital indications in real time on the physical world that is recorded by the phone camera.

AR enters everyday life, allowing one to search for places and orientate oneself with a **visual aid beyond the normal maps** from above or through photos of intersections, simply by pointing the camera at them and with an overview that offers real-time information for moving on foot through arrows and icons visible on the phone screen as one frames the streets.

This method is widely used, for example in **museum tours, which creates an immersive and interactive visit during which the visitor experiences the history of the place** first-hand through digital reconstructions of the historical site.

Two examples, with regard to what has been said now are **"Augmented city"** and **"Ag to preserve hidden vestiges"**.

Augmented city is an application that exploits augmented reality to give tourist information on what the user sees around him or her, very similar to Google's Live View, but it also **allows the user to scan the monuments around him or her and collect and display them in a 3D model version**, as well as place other 3D models from their database on the streets. It was born as a tourist support tool and is associated with Tripadvisor to get info on eating places.

AG to preserve hidden vestiges is an application created to **discover historical sites**. The team created on Blender a **3D virtual model of a castle that can be navigated from a telephone to interactively discover and study the architecture of the past and visualise how it has changed over time**. The user is given tasks and puzzles that are presented as multimedia content related to the salient features of the archaeological site. This type is especially popular in museum and history centres, thus creating involvement and discovery.

¹⁴Patrimonio al futuro, Giuliano Volpe 2015

Sensory Communication

4.4 LANGUAGES AND HUMAN RELATIONS

Haptic communication is one of several types of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is a **silent language that underlies human relationships**: in fact this depends on the body and contrary to what one might think it is our greatest means of communication, much more than the voice.

This type of language **reveals intentions, thoughts, attitudes and potential in an automatic and ungovernable way**, but very often it is neglected both by those who produce it and by the recipient.

In fact, there is generally a belief that it is better to listen to the word than to intuition.

Non-verbal communication is characterized by **four different forms of expression**.

Below we will see what they are and how to recognise them.

The proxemics

Proxemics is the discipline of non-verbal communication that **studies how man unconsciously structures his relationship with the surrounding space**. Men, like animals, have a tendency to establish their own territory: home, office, train, school desks, etc. The distance through which man regulates interpersonal relationships is called **“vital space”** or **“proxemic space”**.

Very often we are jealous of our living space and when someone crosses the border it causes us tension. For this reason, when we find ourselves in crowded places we experience stress, frustration and oppression, becoming particularly intolerant and impatient. On the basis of the relationship between people, it is possible to consequently identify **four proxemic distances**.

The perception one has of one's living space is not the same for everyone: women, for example, are more inclined to accept a frontal approach rather than a lateral one, while for men it is the opposite. A shy person has a wider proxemic space because he does not like to get in touch with others, while an extroverted person maintains smaller interpersonal distances with others.

The kinesics

By kinesics we **mean all those movements performed by a single part of the body** such as gestures, movements of the neck, trunk, nose, etc. and **which therefore support the speaker in order to express himself better**.

Most kinesic movements are involuntary and represent the consequence of an emotion or the completion of a speech that they accompany. Researchers Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen propose **five classes of signals**.

Physical and Virtual Reality

4.5 CONNECTED WORLDS

In recent years, information technologies have made it possible to accentuate the capabilities of the human being, thus leading to a **sharing and accessibility of information in a short time**. This of course has led to several impacts on our personal and work life.

The use of Virtual Reality, i.e. the use of computer technologies that allow users to live and navigate in a **parallel and alternative world** that simulates the real environment in which we live, is increasingly widespread in everyday life and at work.

This interactive and completely digital reality leads to a **highly immersive experience** characterized by visual and auditory feedback.

Emblems: these are **non-verbal acts that can be immediately translated into a verbal communication**, these can also replace the word. For example, the gesture of rolling the index finger in the cheek to express that a food is particularly good is an emblem.

Illustrator: illustrative gestures usually serve to illustrate what is being said, as it is being said. These are gestures that can **accentuate and emphasize the speech**. For example, to indicate a television, lines are drawn that draw a rectangle.

Affect display: affect displays are emotion displays and **involve facial and body muscle movements associated with primary emotions** (surprise, fear, anger, disgust, sadness, and happiness). Facial expressions, therefore, effectively communicate what a person feels, while body movements give an indication of the intensity of the emotion felt.

Regulators: regulatory gestures maintain and regulate the **alternation of conversation turns**, or the moments in which the word is taken or passed.

Adapters: these are gestures that express **an effort to adapt to satisfy psychic or physical needs**. For example, removing a cotton thread from the interlocutor's jacket, cleaning up non-existent crumbs in the corner of the mouth, moving a glass away in front of him for no real reason. Their function is basically to **provide relief**.

Paralinguistics

Another form of non-verbal communication is paralinguistics. Clearing the voice, changing its volume or pitch, keeping quiet are some examples. These are behaviors that **can be manifested both unconsciously and consciously and transmit attitudes, emotions and sensations**.

The haptics

The latest form of non-verbal communication is haptics, i.e. all those ways that **express an engaging and intense form of interpersonal relationship**. Caresses, hugs, pats on the back are some examples of this type of communication. Physical contact is not perceived in the same way by all people: **character, gender and interpersonal relationships can influence perception**. In any case, physical contact has a persuasive power, through this type of communication very often bonds are created with people.

These types of non-verbal communication are present in various fields of study and research; there are numerous design devices that are based on these theories.

For example the **"Neotouch"** project is a speculative design project that imagines the future of technology in the form of a haptic communication device. **This device allows people to interact and touch each other from a distance**. The design of this device creates a stage for a larger narrative that speculates about the social and ethical implications of such technology. By extrapolating current trends and projecting them into the future, we can ask: **what are the ethics of future technology?**

This can help us question what is given to evaluate the kind of future we want to create.

In the context of haptics, this raises questions such as:

What is digital intimacy?

Who can touch me?

How might haptic technology influence our perception and conception of privacy/consent?



Users are able to **immerse themselves in three-dimensional and dynamic virtual worlds in a completely realistic way**, through the aid of information devices or peripherals such as visors (helmets or simple glasses) for sight, touch gloves that replace mice, earphones, etc. . In fact, one of the first fields in which this technology spread like wildfire is the **world of gaming**. The viewer is completely immersed in the action that takes place on the screen and engaged in real-time interaction with everything that is reproduced within this imaginary, parallel and plausible world.

Actually, the term "**virtual reality**" can be applied to two different types of simulation, which are divided into **immersive and non-immersive**:

In the first case, (**immersive**) **the user is isolated from the external environment, transported into the reproduced parallel reality** and completely absorbed in it thanks to a complex set of accessories such as the use of particular 3D view glasses. In this case there is a reversal of the typically frontal use of the user to a control unit; in fact, sight is considered the dominant sense.

In the second case, (**non-immersive**) however, the digitally recreated environment has a lower emotional impact on the subject since helmets, goggles or gloves are not used, but **the user finds himself in front of a monitor that acts as a window onto the three-dimensional world with which he can interact through special joysticks**; the effect is of course different.

All of this is deliberately developed to allow the user to interact and "live" within virtual reality. **Virtual reality is an exclusively digital environment created by one or more computers or applications that simulate actual reality. Augmented reality AR exactly instead represents the real world enriched with virtual objects or details that lead to improve or "increase" the experience .**

In fact, this is based on the expansion or integration of the surrounding reality with computer-generated 3D graphic images, which modify the original environment without affecting the possibilities of interaction. So augmented reality transforms huge masses of data, images and animations into a **digital level** that is superimposed on the physical world and integrates with it.

The essential technology for both virtual and augmented reality are headsets. Over the years, different types have been created for different purposes, a famous model is certainly the one created by Google.

Google Glass is a brand of smart glasses developed by the Mountain View company, **Google Glass are smart glasses, a head mounted display that has the shape of a pair of glasses, equipped with augmented reality through which it is possible to view information without the use of hands.** The Glass operates through the **use of voice** commands so it fits intuitively into your workflow and helps you stay engaged and focused by eliminating distractions. It can connect colleagues in an instant, and you can invite others to "**see what you see**" through a live video stream, so you can collaborate and solve problems in real time. Perhaps due to the too high price, perhaps because they arrived too early (with the official debut in mid-2014), the Google Glass has met with a rather lukewarm reception from ordinary consumers, also for issues related to usability, as well as protection of privacy.

Virtual reality has found more and more space and diffusion even in areas other than gaming. **There are numerous and interesting uses of virtual reality both from an experiential and medical point of view.** For example, a team of doctors decided to use virtual reality to deal with **eating disorders**.

The Casa di Cura Villa Santa Chiara, a center for the treatment of mental disorders, **is the first clinic in Italy to offer a therapeutic protocol that uses Virtual Reality to combat eating disorders.**

There are three stages:

Build the **avatar** based on how the person sees himself and at the same time the **therapist draws a realistic figure of the patient**. Then the two designs are compared;

Address, through the avatar, the situations that are **more problematic and stressful**;

Learning to **recognize and manage one's emotions** by immersing the avatar in significant situations for the patient. Thus, it is possible to face difficulties but in a protected and structured environment.

From an experiential and interactive point of view, virtual reality is widely used in **museums or in artistic/perceptive projects**.

In recent years, interactive exhibitions have grown and developed exponentially, leading to a deep involvement of the user, as well as immersive perceptive experiences.

For example "**Holboon**"-Interactive installation is an interactive art project that pushes to **create connections**. When people communicate, they create new relationships that change themselves in some way. **Holboon displays this atmosphere, in fact the system reads people's movements: the closer they are to each other, the brighter their silhouettes become.**

Also, quatrains are generated on the screen. It is the result of a random selection and cutting of Buryat source texts from different periods: myths and legends, 20th century poems and modern texts. It is possible to manage the quatrains, change the selection and the language (Buriat or Russian)

This type of experience is one of the many examples of **how AR is used in the artistic field**. A further perceptive artistic use of AR was made by the artist Mattia Casalegno, through the creation of this **Aereobanquets**, a real multisensory journey. **Aerobanquets RMX is a series of immersive dining experiences focused on taste perception.** Loosely based on the Futurist Recipe Book, an Italian book of surreal recipes and fantastic dinners published in 1932, the project is a multi-sensory journey experienced in Mixed Reality.

*How will augmented technologies revolutionize food consumption in the future?
How do embodiment and memory affect our experience of food?*

These are some of the questions that the artist asks himself and on which the diners reflect. Part art installation, part dining experience, at Aerobanquets RMX guests explore, eat and engage in a whimsical world that alternates between **dystopia and hope**.



Meet in the digital age

4.6 HOW TECHNOLOGY HAS CHANGED INTERACTIONS

Creating relationships and interactions with other people, in the digital age, has become something easier and faster; over the years, numerous apps with different purposes have been born and spread. There are applications born to create friendships, for romantic encounters, for casual sex, to talk to people from all over the world and so on. However, regardless of how they are used, all of them lead to an exchange and meeting between people, in an era in which creating friendships and meetings in everyday places has become increasingly difficult.

One might think that the birth of these applications is something extremely recent, but in reality it was born from **the idea of two students from Harvard and Cornell** who in 1965 gave life to **"Operation match"**. A program created to create matches through the use of computers, people who were looking for a partner paid \$3 to receive a list of potential compatible candidates in return. This list was derived from a previously completed questionnaire which included 75 questions and was used to find possible affinities with other users. Of course, **in the 90s with the spread of the Web, the first real dating sites were born which then gave way to the applications** that we all know. With **Facebook**, the world of online dating and meeting undergoes an evolution, as users begin to share their personal data online. What then led to the spread of apps is the advent of the iPhone and the Apple store in 2007 and 2008.

The first app to gain visibility in the online meeting was Grindr and since 2012 Tinder.

The online meeting and dating applications are based on the use of the internet and on geolocation, in this way it is possible to immediately know who is nearby unlike the old MSN or Messenger which indicated the presence of an online user. **In this way, physical distances are shortened and the possibility of meeting in the real world is more direct than in the past.**

Many studies have examined the motivations that led people to use this application specifically (Tinder). The definitive scale for measuring these motivations is the **Dating App Motivation Scale** (DAMS; Sumter & Vandenbosch 2019) which derives from a previous study.

The original measurement included **six motivations (love, casual sex, ease of communication, validation of self-esteem, thrill of excitement, trend/fad)** which were subsequently divided into three broad areas: **relationship motivations, interpersonal motivations and entertainment motivations.** These three themes identified by Sumter and Vandenbosch can effectively summarize the results reported by the different scales built over the years.

Within relational motivations we find **the search for love or casual sex as a drive that leads to the use of dating apps.** Studies have shown that what motivates people to use dating apps is the desire

to find a loving relationship, rather than looking for casual sex partners. Analyzing interpersonal motivations instead we can find within them reasons related to the concept of ability and approval, to recognition by peers. In the first case we refer to the improvement of social skills such as the ability to socialize or the ability to **"flirt"** with someone.

In fact, by eliminating the real component, at least initially, **online places turn out to be safer for those with relational and social insecurities.**

Another factor that emerged with the Tinder Motive Scale has to do with **social pressure**, in fact very often one joins the dating app community in such a way as to feel integrated, in line with society, rather than excluded because they are not used.

On the other hand, however, it has also been seen that subscribing to dating apps is due to one's own sense of belonging: one does it to feel part of a group. It is particularly interesting to note that, on all three scales, **socializing is one of the most popular reasons when it comes to online dating apps.** Finally, focusing on the motivations related to entertainment, the desire to "pass the time" and to amuse oneself is central, very often Tinder is used in company as a source of entertainment.

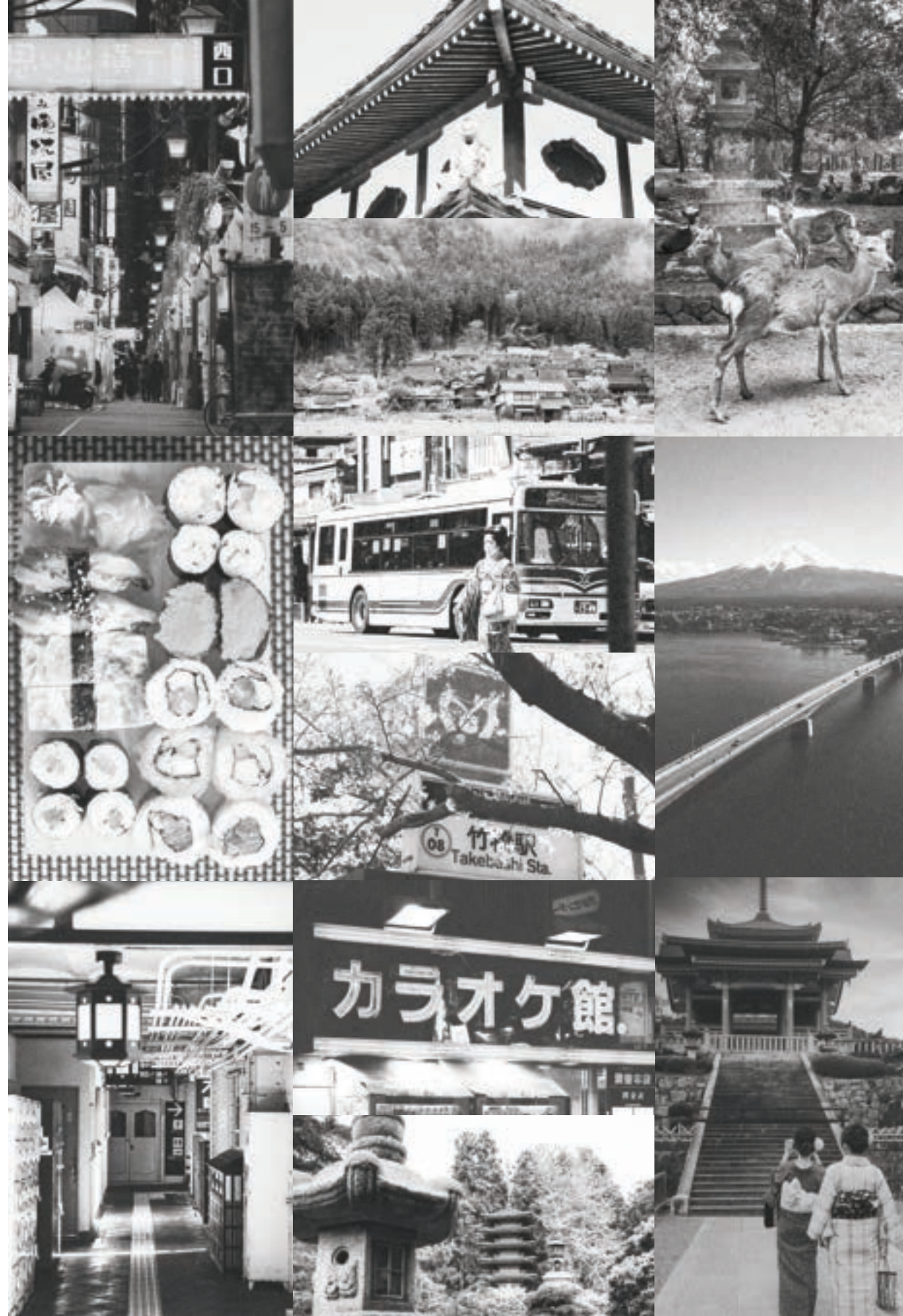
In addition to this type of applications that are based on a direct impact of attraction, as they do not use complex algorithms that take into account interests and compatibility.

There are other applications born with the aim of creating lasting friendships and relationships based on one's tastes and interests. Very often they are installed by people who move to a new city or a new country, with the aim of meeting local people and making friends.

An example of an app that create connections and relationships, between people with **similar culinary tastes** is **Meetin**. This application looks like a facebook and tripadvisor where **users talk and rate restaurants or bars.**In addition to sharing the places they liked the most, users also offer events so that they can go and try them or meet each other based on location and personal tastes, thus **creating groups of friends and then, if necessary, even love affairs.**

BEFORE THE PROJECT

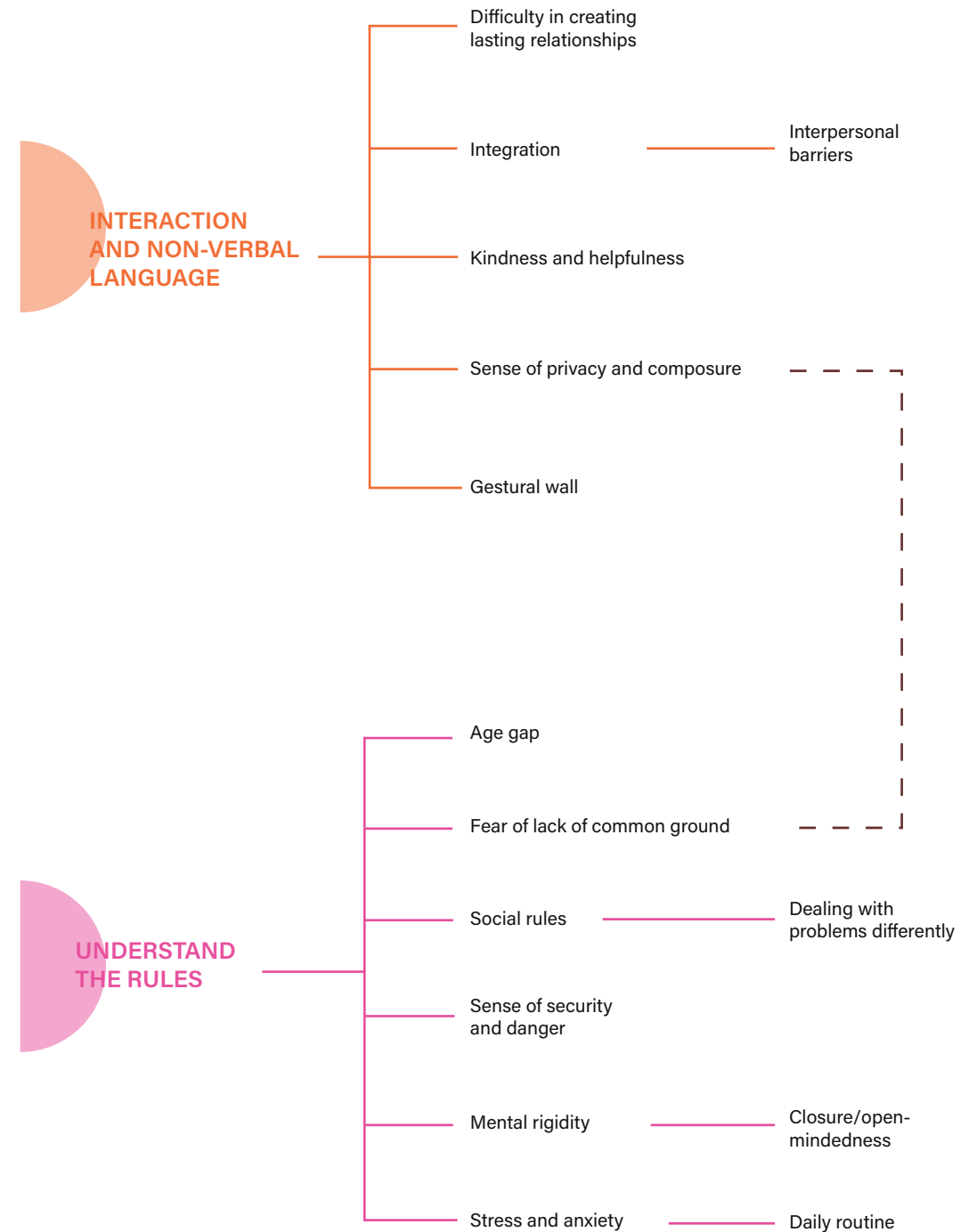
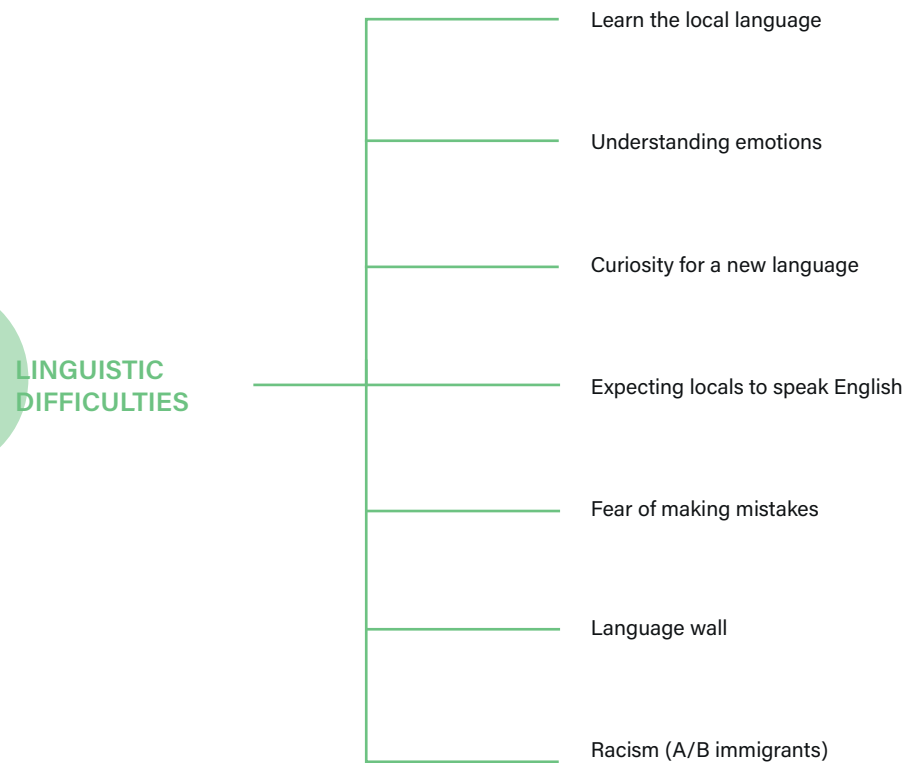
プロジェクト前



Conceptual Maps

5.1 BRAINSTORMING

The first thing we did to bring the project phase to life was **brainstorming**. We started thinking about our experience in Japan and what could be of interest for the design.



Conceptual Maps

5.2 POTENTIAL PROJECT AREAS

After the brainstorming phase, we started to group the various ideas and identify areas in which it would be possible to work. We identified two possible areas and started to analyse them in detail.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Creating a cultural bridge between Countries

Physical bonds through digital

Meetings between cultures

Talking to people with shared interests

Technology as a tool

Obtaining information about people, so as to facilitate interaction

Community with people from around the world

Reflecting Japanese culture exploiting technology

Videogames

Service for getting to know the city and tips from locals

Robots as daily help

Transmedia platform

Discovering places through the 5 senses

Useful device for discovering a new Country/Culture

Hospitality/ Respect

Exploiting fictional characters to sell/publicise services

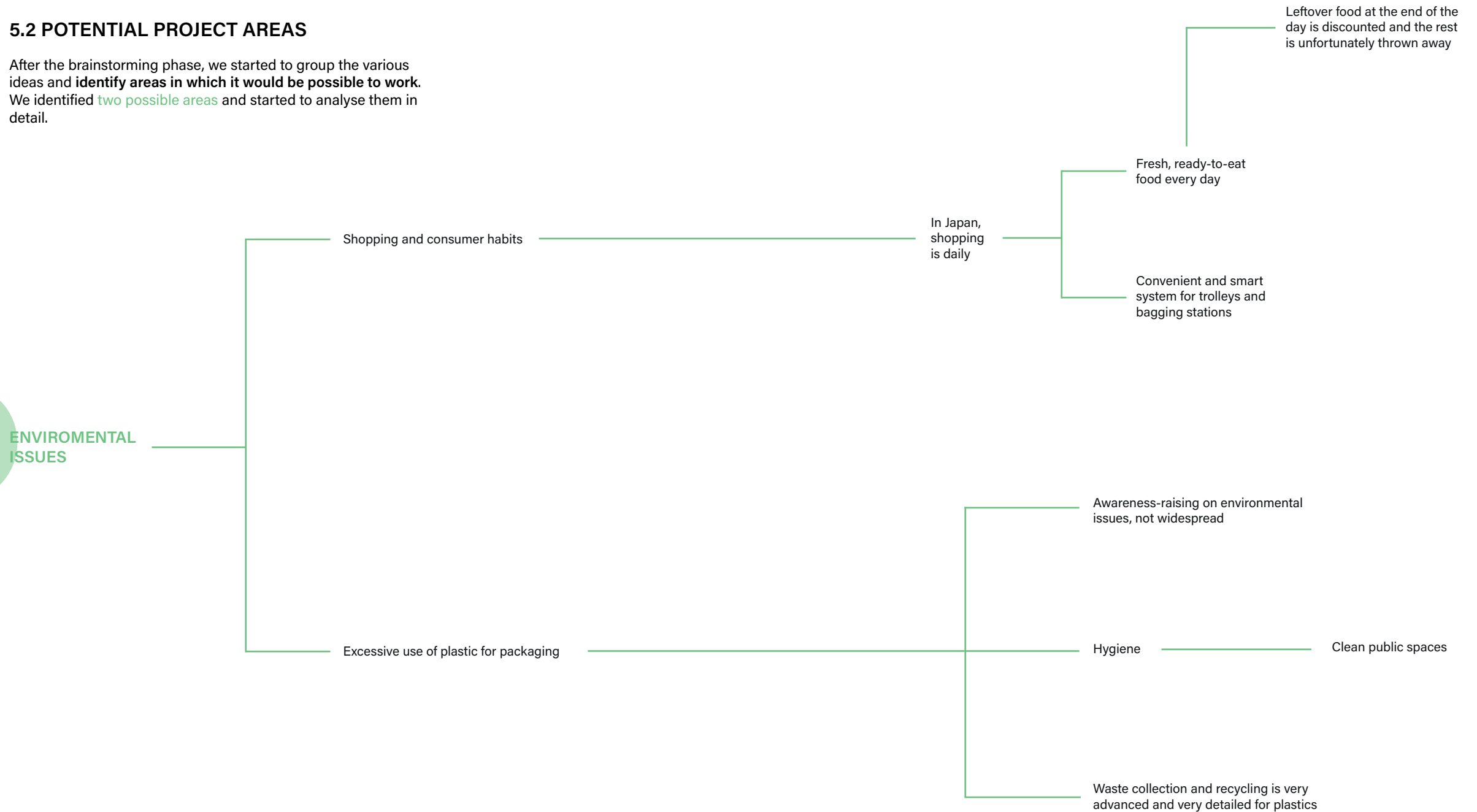
But when does this become counterproductive?

Anxiety, stress, loneliness

Conceptual Maps

5.2 POTENTIAL PROJECT AREAS

After the brainstorming phase, we started to group the various ideas and **identify areas in which it would be possible to work**. We identified **two possible areas** and started to analyse them in detail.



Conceptual Maps

5.3 CONCEPT BRAINSTORMING

After analysing the possible project areas, we decided to focus on the **Social sphere**, deepened our research and started brainstorming on various ideas. We identified our objective, declined it through **three macro areas of action** and for each of them we started to think about possible outputs.

ENVIROMENTAL ISSUES

The aim is to create a **SYSTEM** to understand each other and facilitate interaction between locals and foreigners without eliminating culture shock (an essential component of travel)

To create a tool that mediates on an emotional level in the dynamics of new acquaintances/ meetings between people from different cultures

Wearable device that gives signals/input of what to say/do in interpersonal relationships

Experience simulator, e.g. a robot to which you talk and change expressions to help you in relationships

Pictograms to understand the other and overcome the language problem. Figures help to communicate with the other, to convey emotions, to be empathetic

To create a service that allows one to integrate knowledge of non-verbal languages and unspoken rules of the country's culture into the travel experience

Creating a game in which different interests and knowledge are not an obstacle but a starting point for new friendship

Interactive board game/digital game to help people adapt to everyday life in a new country. Assuming everyday situations, the person will have to figure out how to behave and discover habits of the host country. Through the use of extensions, the game can be adapted to different cultures of different countries.

Encyclopaedia of behaviour: a kind of Italian-Japanese guide to better understand how to behave and manage a new everyday life

Create a survival kit designed for the foreigner arriving in a given country (e.g. map, useful language phrases, mask, sun cream, phone sim with internet) to be handed in at the airport

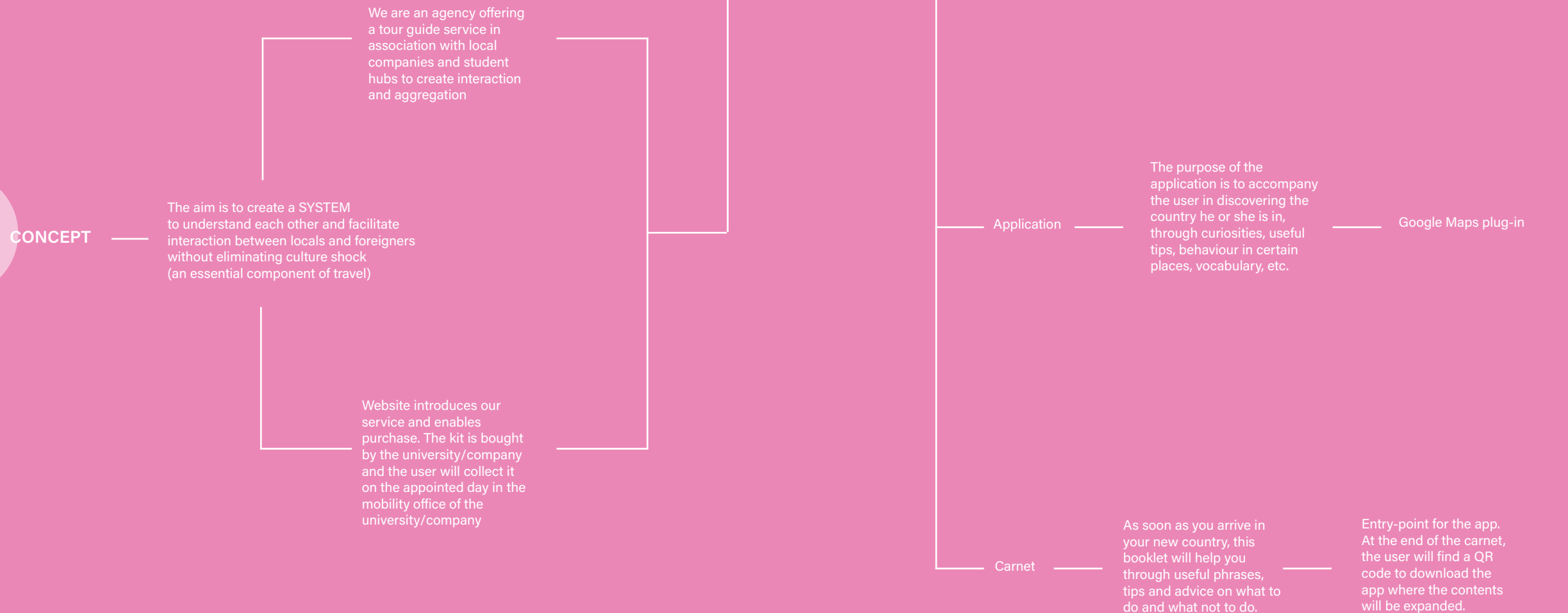
Interactive advertising campaign (like stickers for the city/pictures)

Website/app where there is the encyclopaedia of behaviour and tips about Japan

Conceptual Maps

5.4 CONCEPT

We then defined our **Concept**, building on the analyses we had previously done and trying to focus the various ideas to bring our service to life. The objective is to **support people going to a new country, helping them in this new experience by trying to facilitate their integration without eliminating the culture shock**. We want to make sure that through our kit the experience, especially in the first period, is not so difficult and that users can get to know and appreciate the peculiarities of the place.



THE PROJECT
プロジェクト前



Project

6.1 WHAT WE WANT TO DO

The experience of living and studying in Japan, although for only six months, **has greatly influenced our lives** and the way we perceive different situations. We came into contact with a **reality that was totally new** and far removed from what we were used to, and this consequently led to changes. Living in a foreign country influences a person in so many ways, and in the previous chapters we have researched the subject from both a **psychological and social point of view** through the study of numerous research papers; but the fundamental part of what has been said so far is definitely the fruit of our experience.

Studying the subject of **culture shock** over these months, we realised how everything we read was now part of our being.

Initially we were not sure what the direction of our project was, but we were sure that we wanted to use our experience in Japan, so that it could be a support for other people.

As seen in the research chapters, we focused a lot on the social aspect of living in a country different from one's own and what that entails.

Coming into daily contact with different customs can **be frightening at first, or simply difficult to adapt to**. We saw how, although the countries may be different, the culture shock that follows has common characteristics that return, and in Japan we had the opportunity to experience them.

After a long phase of research and analysis, we started to think about possible areas of research and what we could achieve.

The area that we found most interesting and with many research ideas was the **social area**.

We wanted to channel social and relational habits into something that could be a help or at least a source of interesting information on the Land of the Rising Sun.

Japan presents a series of social rules, behaviours, ways of addressing people that for those who come from Europe or America are really unsettling. You realise already at the airport that you are in a totally different place, for example seeing patrol robots controlling the airport is certainly not common in Italy.

Japan is a country where people are **extremely kind and helpful, but at the same time shy and have many rules to respect**; living there you realise how there are implicit behavioural rules that

you yourself, as a tourist or a person who has just moved there, begin to respect.

As you have already seen, physical contact is not common, and respect for other people's and public spaces is fundamental, no talking on public transport and no smoking in the street.

These are just some of the **'unspoken' rules** one comes across. Starting from these and everything else in the social sphere, **we wanted to design a service that could help tourists or those moving to Japan for study or work, to settle in more easily without completely eliminating the culture shock**, which is an essential part of the experience. We thought of everything that would help us as soon as we landed in Japan, and channelled these ideas into a **Survival Kit**.

This physical kit aims to help people integrate more easily with the locals as well as being a sort of souvenir of the experience.

In the next paragraphs we will look in detail at all the work done, and what the project consists of.

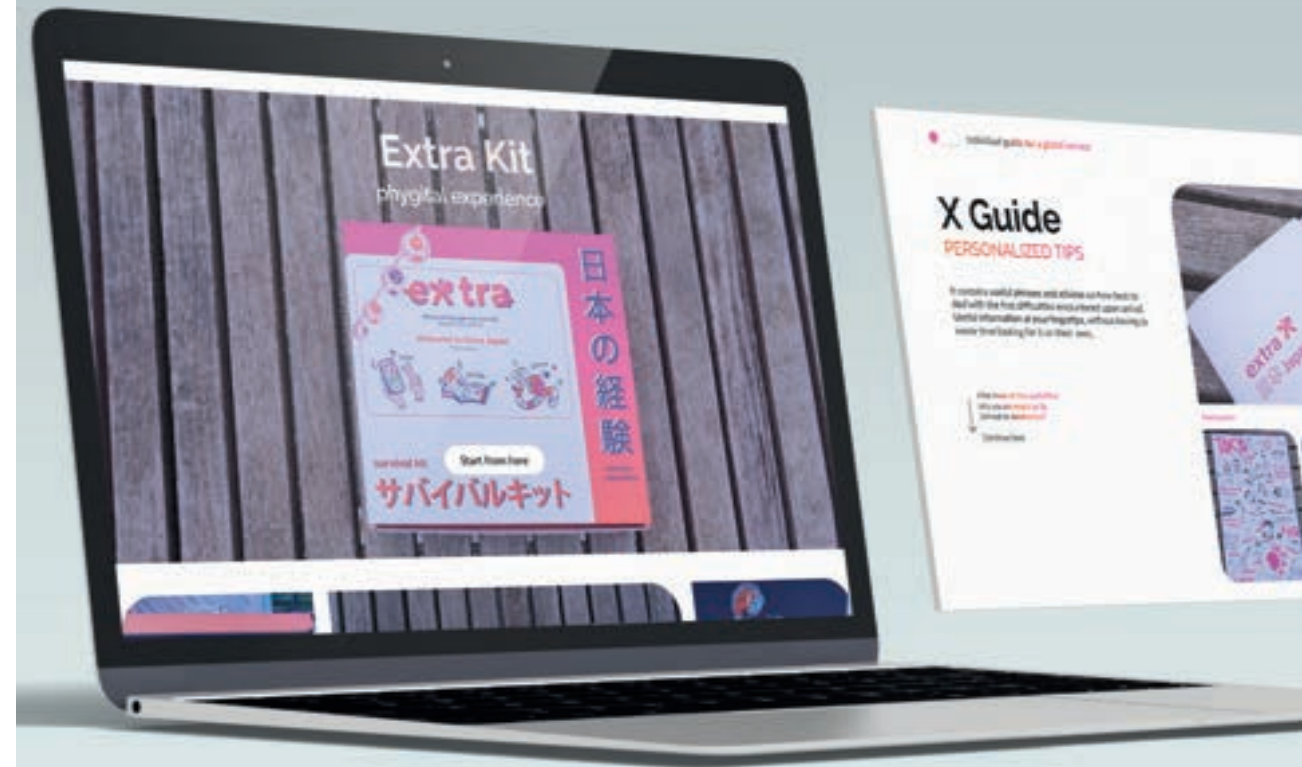
Extra

6.2 THE AGENCY

As seen in the previous section, the aim of our thesis work is to create a **service that can facilitate interaction between foreigners and locals through constant support**. This project system is based on experience in Japan, but has a wide range of application. The **EXTRA agency** wants to help anyone moving to a country other than their own, whether for tourism, study or work.

EXTRA represents that something extra, that extra you need during your new adventure. As seen above, moving to a completely different country can be frightening and difficult at first; you don't know anyone, you are unfamiliar with the city, the customs, etc., and that is where EXTRA comes in. EXTRA offers a **service/product** that supports the user who has just arrived in a new country, this is possible through collaboration with student hubs and companies, who can purchase the **Survival Kit** via the website.

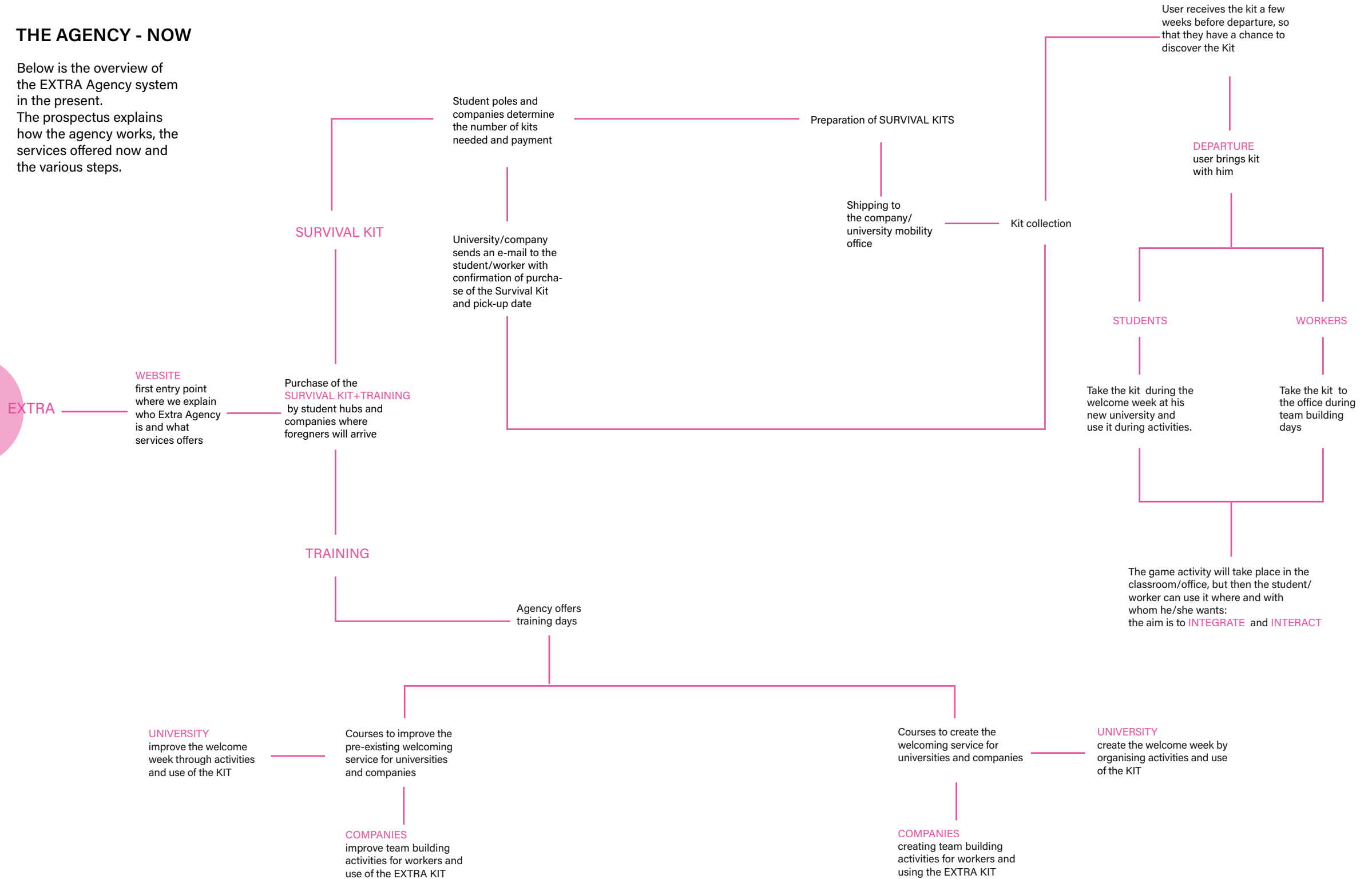
The agency offers a Survival Kit, in this case aimed at Japan, but which has the characteristic of being scalable. Inside the kit, the user will find a board game to break the ice at university or with colleagues, a booklet with the first useful information/phrases, a fake means subscription (which reminds you what to do in the immediate future) and the application that will accompany him in the **discovery of the country and the language**, through tips, manners, rules to respect and curiosities.



Extra

THE AGENCY - NOW

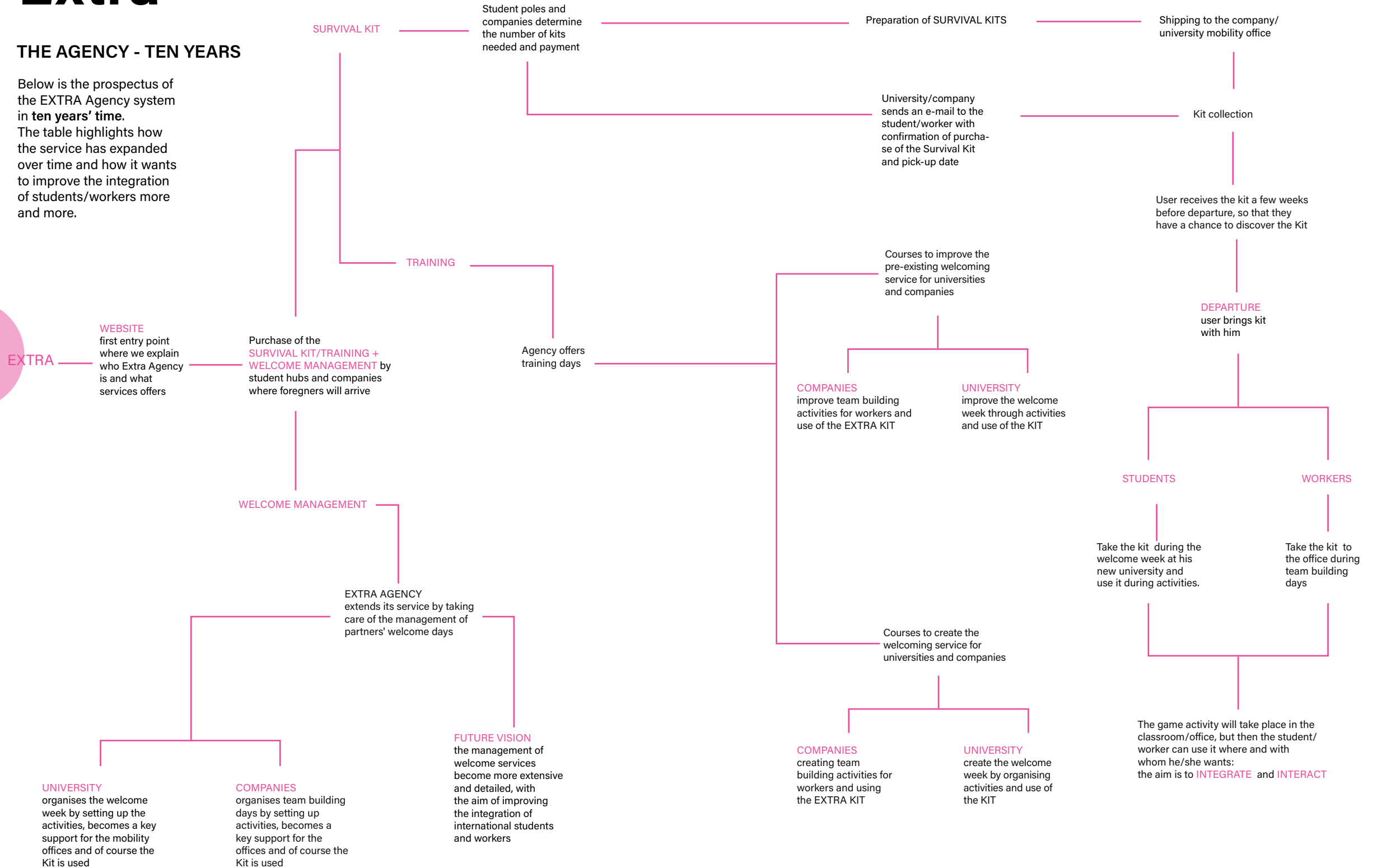
Below is the overview of the EXTRA Agency system in the present. The prospectus explains how the agency works, the services offered now and the various steps.



Extra

THE AGENCY - TEN YEARS

Below is the prospectus of the EXTRA Agency system in **ten years' time**. The table highlights how the service has expanded over time and how it wants to improve the integration of students/workers more and more.



Extra

THE AGENCY - PROJECT START-UP COSTS

The economic evaluation of the Extra project, which offers a support service to universities and companies with students and workers travelling to Japan, is crucial in determining its **feasibility and potential for financial success**.

Initially, several initial costs were identified as necessary to start the project. These include **production costs**, which relate to the creation of the kits that will be provided to the students and workers leaving for Japan. In addition, costs were considered for the **development of the application and website**, which are key tools for providing information and support to customers.

The production of the kits could include costs such as the purchase of materials, design and the production itself. App and website developments require technological expertise and might involve costs associated with developers, designers and servers.

Below is a table with a forecast of the initial costs to start the service, as a reference we have looked for cost estimates of other similar activities

INITIAL KITS ASSUMPTION : 130

Partnerships Japan



KITS PRODUCTION : 10.400 €

Box	30 €
Carnet	8 €
Poster	2 €
Cards	10 €
Scoreboard	18 €
Pawns	6 €
Tokens	6 €

OFFICE-WAREHOUSE COSTS : 10.612 €

Office rental	600 €
Rent warehouse	1000 €
PC workstations	8000 €
Office bills	800 €
Warehouse bills	200 €
Stationery	12€

APP DEVELOPMENT : 60.000 €

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT : 10.000 €

SHIPPING COSTS : 1.300 €

TOTAL COSTS : 92.312 €

In addition, a **SWOT** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the Extra project was carried out. **This approach provides an overview of the project's main internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats.**

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

STRENGTHS

- Service that prepares the person all-round for the new adventure
- Help in critical moments
- Platform where you have everything at your fingertips
- Extra insights and curiosity, because the feedback is from those who have already been there
- Integration
- Interaction
- Getting to know new cultures
- Insights into what to see and do
- Support for students during welcoming days
- Support for companies during team building
- Overcoming language/social/cultural barriers
- Incentive to make Japanese companies more international
- Curiosity related to the experience

WEAKNESSES

- Abandoning the kit and app once integrated
- Articulation of the app
- Game more educational than engaging
- Superficiality of the service
- Genuine need for business and/or senior university tutors in major hubs

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

OPPORTUNITIES

- Scalability
- Open-mindedness
- Incentives to new experiences abroad
- More comprehensive kit because it has extended use over time
- Creation of communities for foreigners
- Connecting various companies through company events and internal transfers

THREATS

- Mental closure
- No willingness to invest on the part of companies and universities
- Difficulties in involving locals
- Experience only with other foreigners

Extra

6.2.1 BRAND IDENTITY

Extra's brand identity is designed to reflect the core values of **empathy, sharing, curiosity, adventure and discovery**. Every aspect of our brand is carefully crafted to convey our message and values clearly and effectively.

LOGO

The EXTRA logo represents the core of our brand. It was created using INSERTIRE NOME FONT a sans serif font to convey a modern image with a digital soul and a clean feel. This typographic choice underlines our willingness to **embrace innovation and technology in our approach**.

PICTOGRAM

The X pictogram is a distinctive element of our brand. It represents the end point of a journey, symbolising the goal that our customers will reach thanks to our support. The presence of an arrow within the 'x' indicates the digital dimension of our service, highlighting our expertise in the field of online solutions.

The combination of the 'x' and the arrow, combined with a dot, creates the little man representing our target customers. This symbol embodies the idea of **people ready for new adventures**, eager to explore the world and integrate into new contexts.

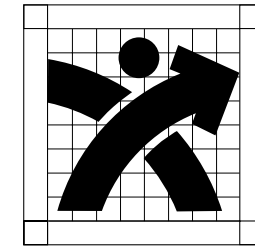


CONFIGURATIONS

VERTICAL LOGO



PICTOGRAM



HORIZONTAL LOGO



DESIGN

Our goal is to make customers feel **comfortable** but also **excited about the adventure** that awaits them. Overall, our brand identity is carefully designed to communicate our mission and values. We want customers to be inspired and confident in relying on us to fulfil their desires to study or work abroad, creating an unforgettable and enriching travel experience.



MINIMUM SIZES

VERTICAL LOGO



HORIZONTAL LOGO



TYPOGRAPHY

Geological Bold

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTU-
VWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy
123456789

Geological Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTU
VWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrst
vwxyz
123456789

COLOR PALETTE

The choice of colours for the Extra agency's brand identity was made with the values we represent in mind. We selected three main colours: **blue, orange and fuchsia**, each of which conveys specific meanings and emotions.

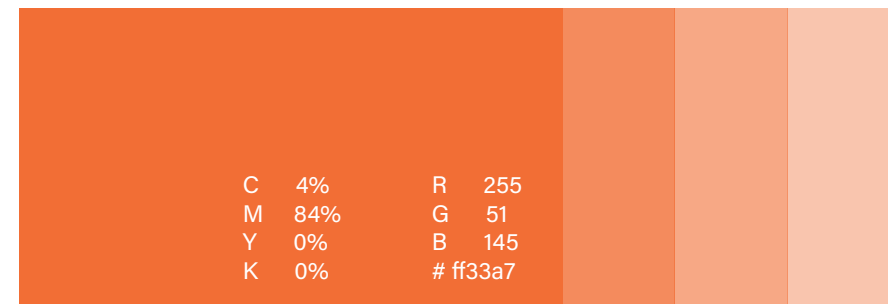
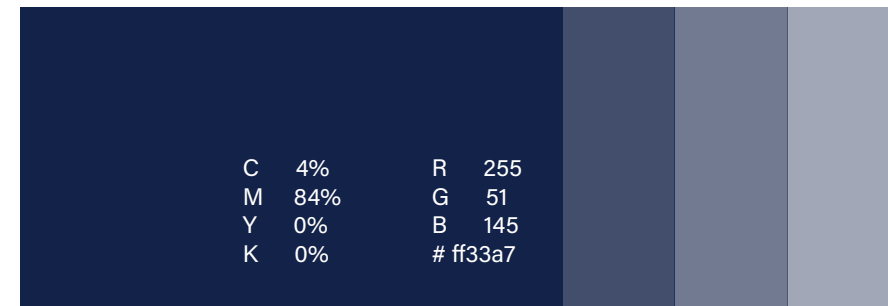
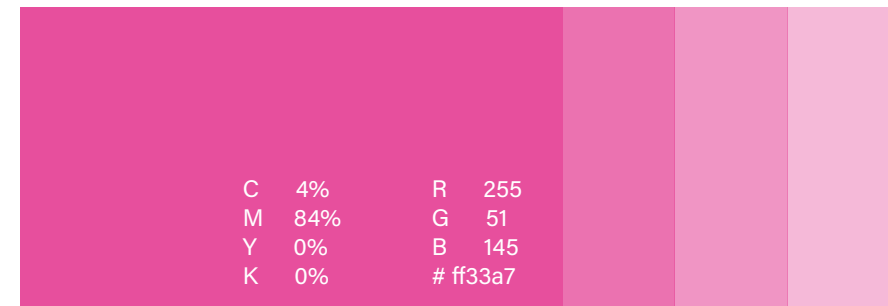
Orange is the **main colour** representing the agency. This colour evokes energy, enthusiasm and vitality. It also represents creativity and imagination, which are core values for us. Orange **invites action and purchase**, attracting attention and stimulating the interest of our clients.

Blue, on the other hand, is associated with concepts of peace, tranquillity and loyalty. This colour is often used by corporate and business brands, as it conveys a **sense of professionalism and reliability**. In the context of the Extra agency, blue represents the serenity we want to convey to our customers, emphasising our dedication to providing a high-quality service.

Fuchsia, finally, is the colour of self-affirmation and decisiveness. It symbolises determination and passion. The use of fuchsia in our brand identity is meant to express our desire to **encourage our customers to make courageous decisions and embark on new adventures**.

It is important to note that in addition to the main colours, we also have **country-specific colour palettes**. This allows us to adapt our visual communication to the different cultures and traditions of each destination, creating a personalised and relevant experience for our customers.

Overall, the combination of blue, orange and fuchsia in our brand identity reflects our values and our desire to offer a **dynamic, creative and reliable service**.



COLOUR VARIATIONS

extra

extra

extra

extra

extra



Extra

6.2.2 WEBSITE

PURPOSE OF THE SITE AND WHO WE ARE ADDRESSING

Extra's experience starts from the site, designed from a **B2B perspective** to make our service known and offer it to visitors and potential customers, enticing them to buy. In particular, we are aimed at **companies and universities that want to integrate or improve their welcoming service** and grow with a view to internationalisation.

TOPE OF VOICE

The tone in which you communicate to the visitor is important. First of all it must **reflect the brand identity**, so that there is linearity and consistency between the various levels of communication used (visual part, copy,...). Secondly, it has to be **reassuring and engaging**, so that the person feels part of the brand and draws closer to it, building loyalty.

The tone of voice used in the communication of Extra and its related service starts from these two fundamentals. It is based on a **friendly type of communication**, but considering the fact that it is aimed primarily at companies and universities, especially as regards the site and with the aim of enticing them to purchase, the tone used cannot be without a captivating and reassuring component. As far as the application is concerned, it presents a tone of voice that includes **nuances of seriousness and playfulness**, so as to represent through the copy what are the two main purposes of the service, namely, learning and exploring while having fun.

SITE STRUCTURE

The site consists of **five areas**, all easily accessible and navigable using the header. The first is the **home page**, identified in the header by the brand logo, which serves as an overview page on the essence of Extra and the service offered. This is followed by the pages **'Extra kit'**, focused on the detailed story of the kit with its components and related services, and **'About'**, oriented instead to the knowledge of the history, development and values/capitals on which Extra is based. Finally, we find **'Contact'**, the contact page, which allows the visitor to ask questions and/or doubts about the service. In the header, next to "Extra kit", "About" and "Contact" is a label that visually catches the visitor's attention the most, namely **"Join"**. This refers to the purchasing area, and therefore, must be clearly visible so that the person never loses sight of it and has the immediate possibility of purchasing if necessary.

The customer area cannot be missing from the site, in fact it can also be found on our site in the top right-hand corner of the header next to 'Join'. **The pages must always be easily reachable and navigable by the person**, in fact, labels can be found both in the header and in the footer, so that it is always possible, at any point of the page, to move to other areas of the site. Finally, all pages are also linked by the use of CTAs placed at strategic points between the contents. This is intended to create **further dynamism and strengthen the narrative in navigation**.



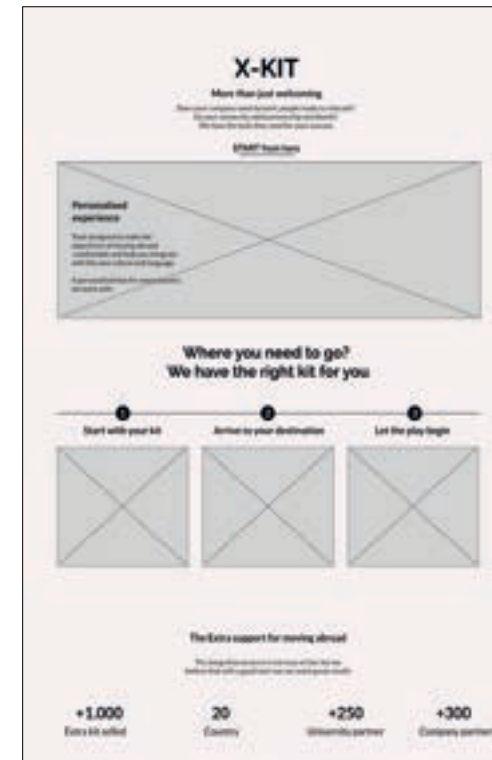
HOME PAGE

The home page was developed from a clear narrative and with the aim of **intriguing and attracting the visitor's attention** by providing a general overview of Extra and the service it offers.

HOME PAGE STRUCTURE

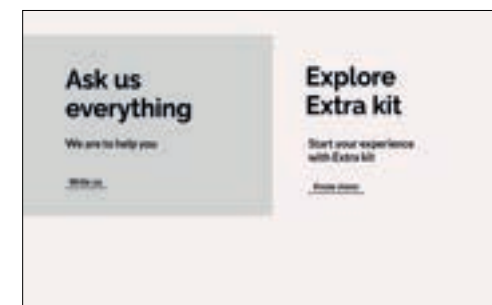


Starting with an **impact sentence** about Extra, the aim is to immediately capture the visitor's attention so that he or she continues with the content. This is followed by a short but captivating introduction to the service, so that the reader can immediately understand **what it is all about** and, if necessary, read further by going to the 'about us' section via the CTA below the description. In terms of content, this part is mainly focused on **explaining why Extra was created, the potential of the service, such as the concept of travel buddy** (understood as constant support in settling into a new country), collaboration and scalability, and the values on which it is based, so as to communicate the pillars of the project directly and transparently to the visitor. Once the essence of Extra has been recounted, highlighting its cornerstones, we move on to a brief account of the actual service, and thus, of the kit with its delivery and use procedure.



Here, the intention is to entice the visitor to further **discover the x-kit** in the appropriate section, via CTA, with the ultimate goal of leading him/her to purchase. Therefore, an exhaustive explanation of the service is not given, but its strengths are emphasised, i.e., **the possibility of providing students/workers with a complete, customised and unique experience and the possible prospect of growth for companies and universities with a view to internationalisation and the creation of connections with foreign realities.**

To support the promises made and to create trust in the visitor, there then follows a series of data on the past and current status of the service, focusing mainly on the number of kits sold, the number of countries in which Extra operates, and the number of universities and partner companies with relative hypothetical logos to give greater realism to the information.



The home page closes by giving the visitor two possible options using CTAs. The first allows the person to **contact us** for any type of information or clarification regarding the service, while the second gives him/her the possibility **to continue with the exploration**, and thus, delve into the Extra kit in an exhaustive manner so as to then entice him/her to purchase.

HOME PAGE UI



SITE DEVELOPMENT

Of the site, only the home page and the 'Extra kit' page were developed at UX and UI level, as they were useful for the narration of our project in the examination.

EXTRA KIT PAGE

The Extra Kit page has been developed following the process of use of the service by the person. Its purpose is to entice the visitor to purchase it by means of a detailed account of all the components of the kit, starting with the box, passing through the welcoming service and the various elements of the kit, and then arriving at the application.

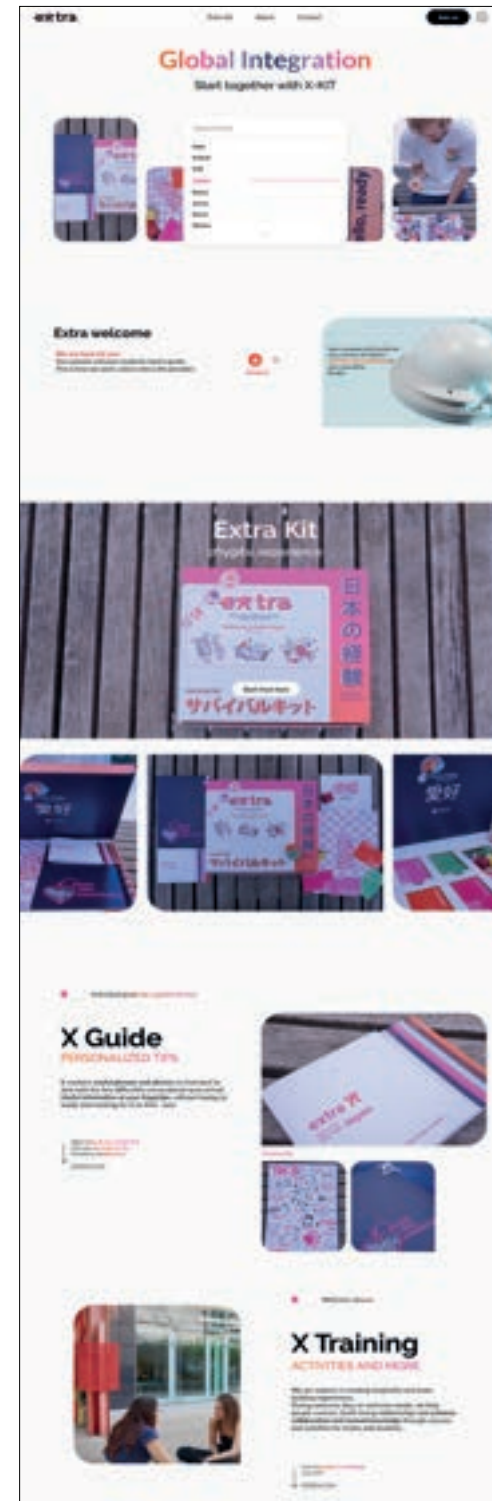
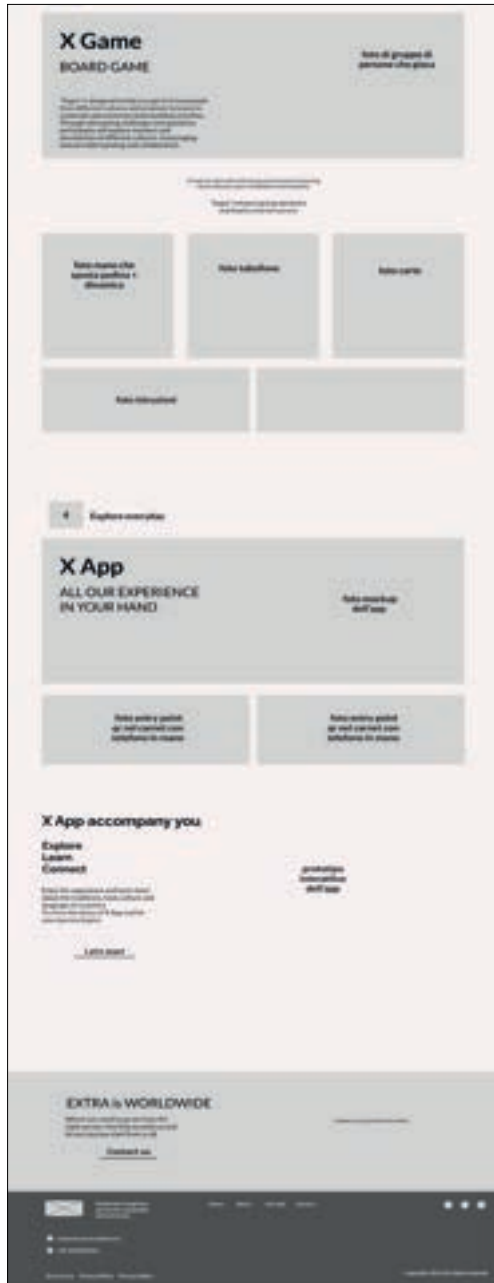
STRUCTURE OF THE EXTRA KIT PAGE



For the story of the service, we wanted to focus on visual involvement through the use of photographs that would have an impact on the visitor.

The page opens with an overview of all the components and outputs of the kit, so as to provide an impactful overview of what the visitor is potentially going to buy. We also immediately find a CTA linked to the purchase page for site visitors who are already aware of the contents of the Extra Kit and need no further information. This initial overview is followed by the descriptions of the individual components of the kit, which, as already mentioned, are ordered in the narrative following the process of fruition.

In order, therefore, we find images of the kit closed and in the opening phase, followed by the description of the X Guide, X Training, X Game, and concluding with the X App and its invitation via CTA to go to the purchase area to proceed with a possible order.



our need
adventure
Learn and Connect

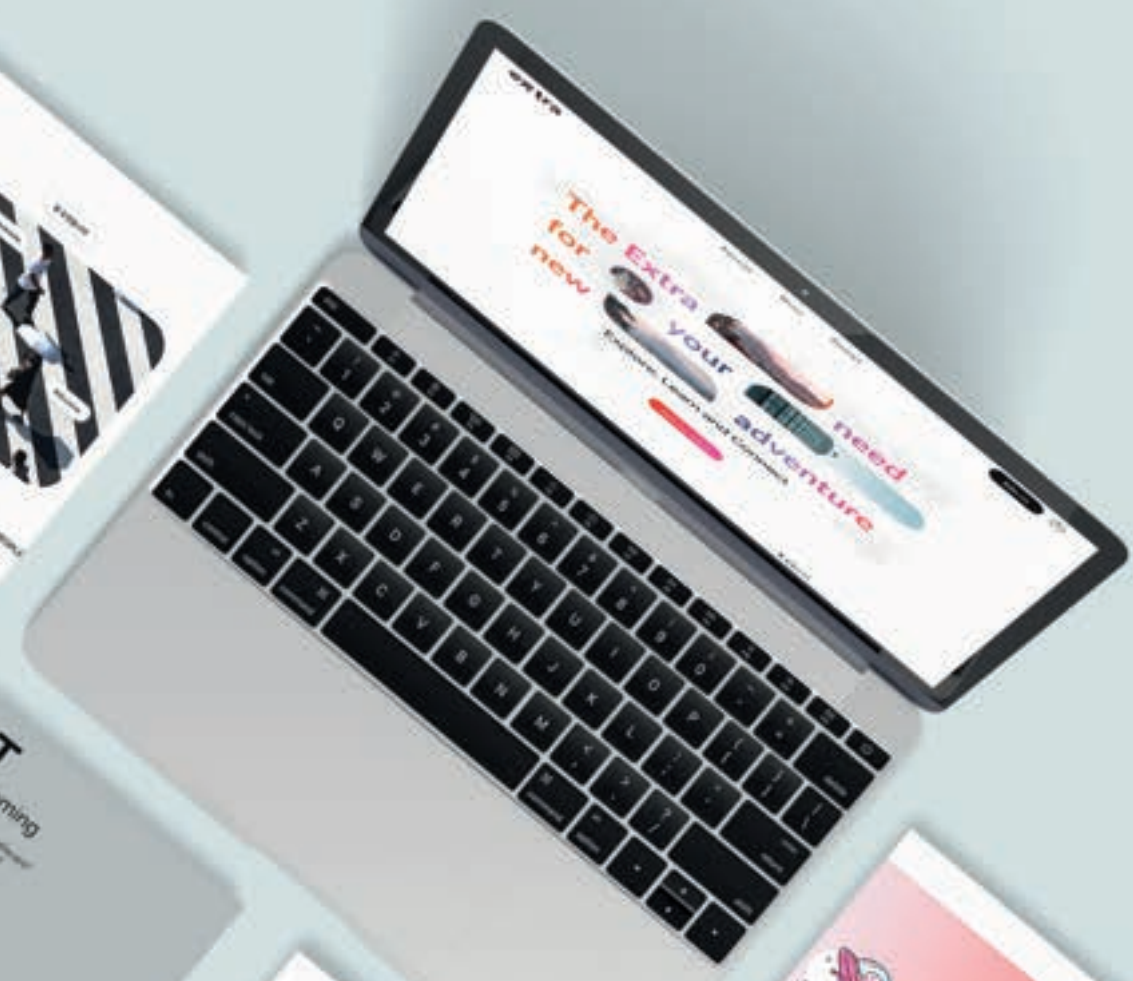
WORLDWIDE DIGITAL TRAVEL BUDDY



...with your digital travel buddy...

empathy

integration



X-KIT

More than just welcoming



Start here now

20 Country

250+ University partner

300+ Company partner

Explore Extra kit

Start your experience

Where you need to go?

We have the right kit for you



3 students

From our experience to you

A scalable service



Global community

Global Integration

Start together with X-KIT



X Guide

PERSONALIZED

Survival Kit

6.3 WHAT IS IT?

The **Survival kit** project created by the EXTRA agency for those moving to Japan is a brilliant idea and is an innovative and very useful service to **help integrate with the local culture**.

The kit consists of a **box** containing several tools designed to make the experience of those arriving in Japan more comfortable, essential elements to help the user integrate with Japanese culture and language. The kit consists of **three elements** between physical and digital: **the board game SUGOI!**, **the carnet and poster** and **finally the application**. Each of these three elements aims to foster the integration and interaction of foreigners with locals. The physical part of the kit consists of the game and the carnet and subscription, while the digital part consists of the application.

The **board game** is designed for students and/or workers to encourage interaction with locals and improve language skills, it allows them to get **to know each other and deal with people from different backgrounds**.

The kit also contains a **guide and a poster**: the first one contains **useful phrases and advice** on how best to deal with the first difficulties encountered upon arrival, while the poster the poster is set up as a kind of graphic bucket list, through the illustrations we suggest some experiences. Thanks to this service, those moving to Japan will have all the useful information at their fingertips, without having to waste time looking for it on their own.

In addition, the carnet is the physical means of downloading the app, in fact at the end there is a **QRcode** through which you can get the app and start discovering all the info and curiosities.



The **application** included in the kit is an important resource for those visiting Japan for the first time. It contains **advice and indications on how to behave, what to do and what to avoid**, together with a useful vocabulary for communicating with locals.

In addition, the application includes a **Google maps plug-in** to facilitate getting around the city. In summary, the survival kit created by the EXTRA agency is an excellent **solution for those moving to Japan**, as it offers a complete and customised service to facilitate integration into the local culture.

日本の経験

extra

Welcoming agency service
Explore, learn, connect

Welcome to Extra Japan
This kit includes:



survival kit

サバイバルキット

Japanese experience

SUGOI

extra

Let's play!

SUGOI

Unexpected

不慮

A short story

Challenge

話

挑戦

Situation

CHECK YOUR EXPERIENCES

extra Japan

The best guide for your first steps in Japan

Survival Kit

6.3.1 GUIDE AND POSTER

The first physical elements of the Survival Kit that the user will have in his hands are the **guide and the poster**. These two small elements have the task of **helping the user who has just arrived in Japan, giving advice and tips for initial needs**.

THE GUIDE

The **Guide** represents a small booklet, inside which the student or worker can read trivia about the country he or she has just arrived in, how to behave there, and will have concise support for communicating with locals. The purpose of the Guide is certainly to be of **help to the user, but it also has the function of a souvenir**; in fact, we wanted to create something that could represent a sort of souvenir of one's experience in Japan in which to write down thoughts, stick stickers etc., making it almost a sort of **small diary**.

The Guide has a size of 10 x 10 cm, we wanted it to be **compact and pocket-sized** so that our traveller could always carry it with him. The first thing that happens when arriving in a new country is certainly to feel a sense of **disorientation, not knowing what to do and how to do it are very common**, which is why we wanted to structure our carnet in such a way that the user would immediately have the first information.



Section detail

The booklet is made up of **six sections**: one on behaviour, one on communication, one on how to interact, one on greetings, rules in public spaces and information on means of transport.

In these short sections the user will discover the first basic information on how to behave and address a Japanese person, respect and formality are very important.

The **rules section** is very useful and important for knowing **what to do and what not to do**, especially in super-crowded areas, and finally, information on how to take public transport, which can be confusing at first as there are so many lines, vehicles, etc.

The carnet therefore represents the **physical entry point for the app**, where users will find all the necessary information, tips and language notions; in fact, at the end of the carnet there is a **QRcode** that allows users to download our app.

POSTER

In addition to the Guide, as already mentioned, the other element is the **poster**; this element is intended to be a **graphic bucket list** in which we suggest particular experiences, places to visit or food to taste in the form of illustrations. Next to each illustration is a heart that the user can colour in once they have had that experience, tick it off and go on to experience them all! In this way, at the end of the journey the poster will be completed and **become a souvenir** of the experience to keep and hang at home.



Section details

Poster detail

Survival Kit

6.3.2 BOARDGAME

The second physical element of the Survival Kit is our game **"SUGOI!"** designed with the aim of creating interaction between people at university, work or wherever they want.

One of the biggest difficulties in Japan is making friends if you don't know the language, because as seen above, Japanese people are very shy and although many speak English, they get embarrassed. The expression **SUGOI!** is very common among the Japanese and is used to indicate awe and wonder, and this is exactly what we would like to spread through our game.

The **amazement of meeting new people** who come from a different background is the focal point of the game, and we also want to facilitate the interaction and integration of those who come to Japan.

We decided to design this game for students and workers, so that it could be used in these two social environments, but not only that...the user can take it with them and play with new people and **create new friendships**.



Players with Sugoi!



Game details

The game incorporates elements found in other board games, but the main difference lies in the desire to create relationships between the players **by challenging them with questions about social situations and contexts that may be very far removed from their own reality.**

In this way, a confrontation is created between the various players, they get to know each other and learn new ways of doing and interacting. The aim of the game is to get to know the other players through the answers they will give, it is intended to create **confrontation as well as fun.**

There are questions and a board to move around on, each answer corresponds to an adjective and at the end the winner will have collected a series of adjectives that will correspond to those of the **society of the future.**



There are **four different decks**:

the **SITUATIONS** cards, which present questions about different social situations and four possible ABCD answers, on the back of which each letter corresponds to an adjective and a score, which determines the player's movement on the board; the **UNEXPECTED** deck, which represent cards with contingencies; the **A SHORT STORY** deck, in which the cards invite players to tell something and thus create a moment of sharing; and finally the **CHALLENGES** cards, which represent general culture challenges to be done alone or in groups.

These three decks have corresponding **tokens**, which players conquer along the way by completing the challenges. These tokens are essential as **players must have conquered at least one in each category to win!**

The boxes on the board tell players which cards to draw and how to move to reach the final box. The rules are part of the kit itself. The game proceeds through questions, challenges, winning tokens until the first player reaches the final square and wins. The stylistic choice of the game recalls that presented within the whole kit; we wanted each element to follow a common line, a reference to **pop and playful Japan**, through the use of bright colours and whimsical illustrations.



Cards detail



Game rules detail



Players with Sugoi!

Survival Kit

6.3.3 APP

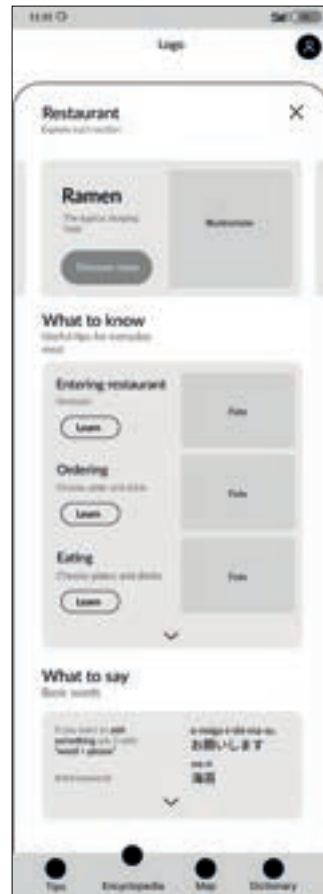
At the carnet's end the users will found a **QRcode** which can be scanned for download our application.
 X App can be freely downloaded from online store but can be used only if the users have already an account. It can be made online by institutions or by companies, and after have been completely registered to Extra service every user will be provided of **personal credentials**. These will be required in the process of login in the App.

Home



First section : encyclopedia

Category page



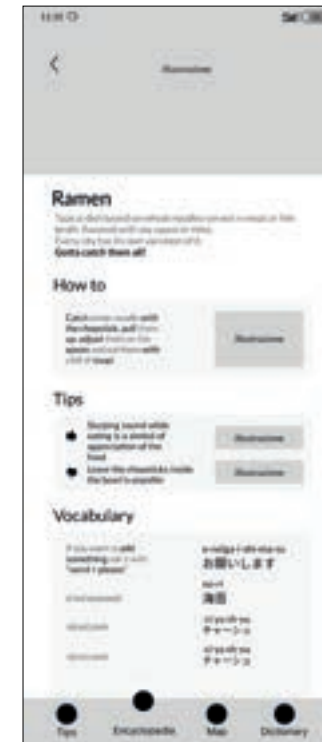
Scrolling different cards or typing keywords users find the category page

The DESIGN process

For designing an app we started setting our goals: **create an useful product for start a life in another country**. It has to be worldwide, a **scalable service**, but we concentrate our effort on one singular country, Japan.
 X App offers a lot of contents on everyday life problems and doubts. It contains inside a guide, like an **encyclopedia of knowledge** by people that have experienced the **same change of life** as our users.

The crucial feature is help foreigners giving tips and providing language and culture notions.
 We structure the app in an intuitive and easy way to use, starting from sketching the rough layout, defining the user experience, and after consolidated we develop the design system and the visual identity of the app.

Specific page



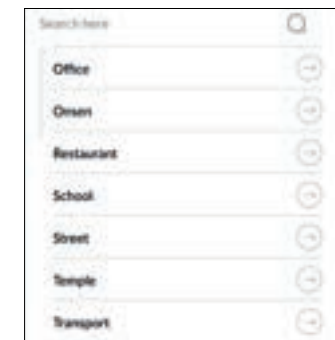
Clicking on the second level card users find a detailed page divided by info, practical tips and vocabulary section

Exercise



Modal page for trying language pronunciation and writing skills

Research bar



Search module where there are all the categories

Tips



Section with different categories of tips for every occasion that are useful for adapting in a new cultural contexts

Map use guide



Map section where users can download a plugin with the tutorial how to do it and what are the features

Google Maps



Google Maps page where users have Extra tab, clicking on it they will find the majorities of X App information

Extra Section



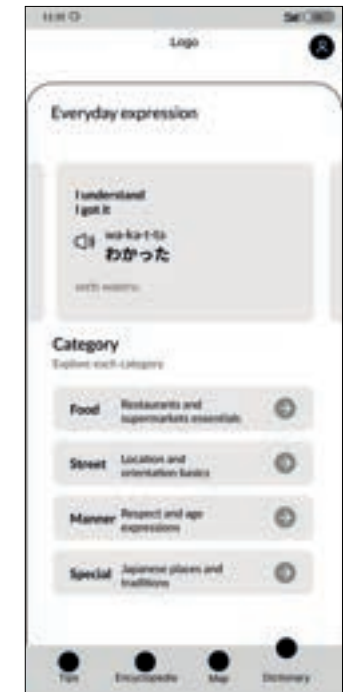
Section of Google Maps where there are all the X App information related to the research on Google Maps

Dictionary



Section for learning language and cultural curiosity related contents

Category page



Category page entered by cards of the Dictionary section with exercises

The purpose

X App wants to accompany the user throughout his experience and help him in his time of need, so that he can fully enjoy the experience and learn more about the traditions, food, culture and language of a country.



User experience

The user, after downloading and opening the app, will find the splash screen and the **login section**, where he will enter his credentials (given by his company or university) and specify his country of origin and arrival. The user will select the **country** where he will travel and in what **language** he wants to use the app (mother tongue/english/host's language).



Personalization

A further step, before accessing the app sections and start to discover all the features, are the notification **settings**, accessible always by the account icon. At the first opening of the app the user can choose at least three categories of content of which **receive notifications** and more news. These will arrive while walking or **using Google Maps**, so when the user is nearby a categories of places he has selected as interesting. This is for makin X App more **targeted and on the user preferences**.

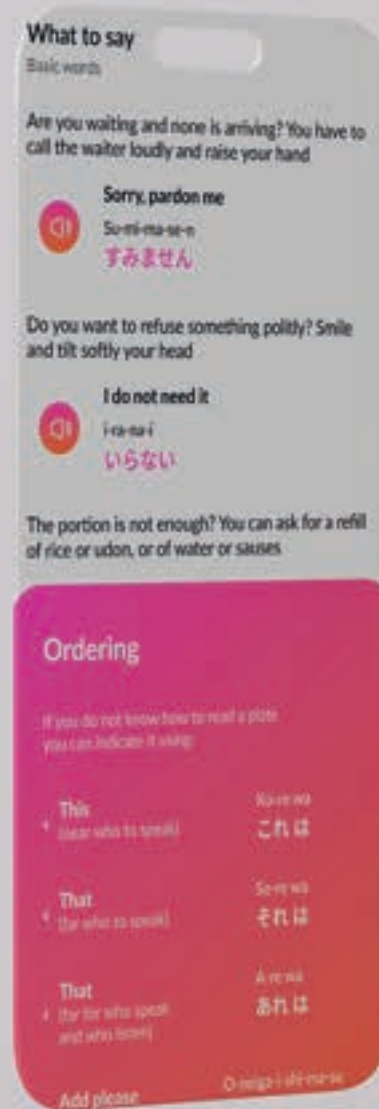
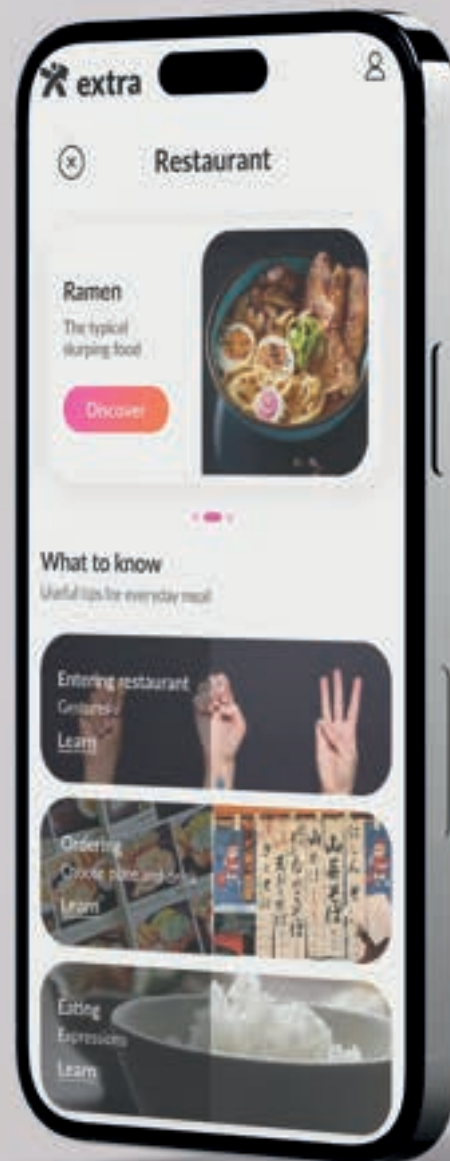
Navigation

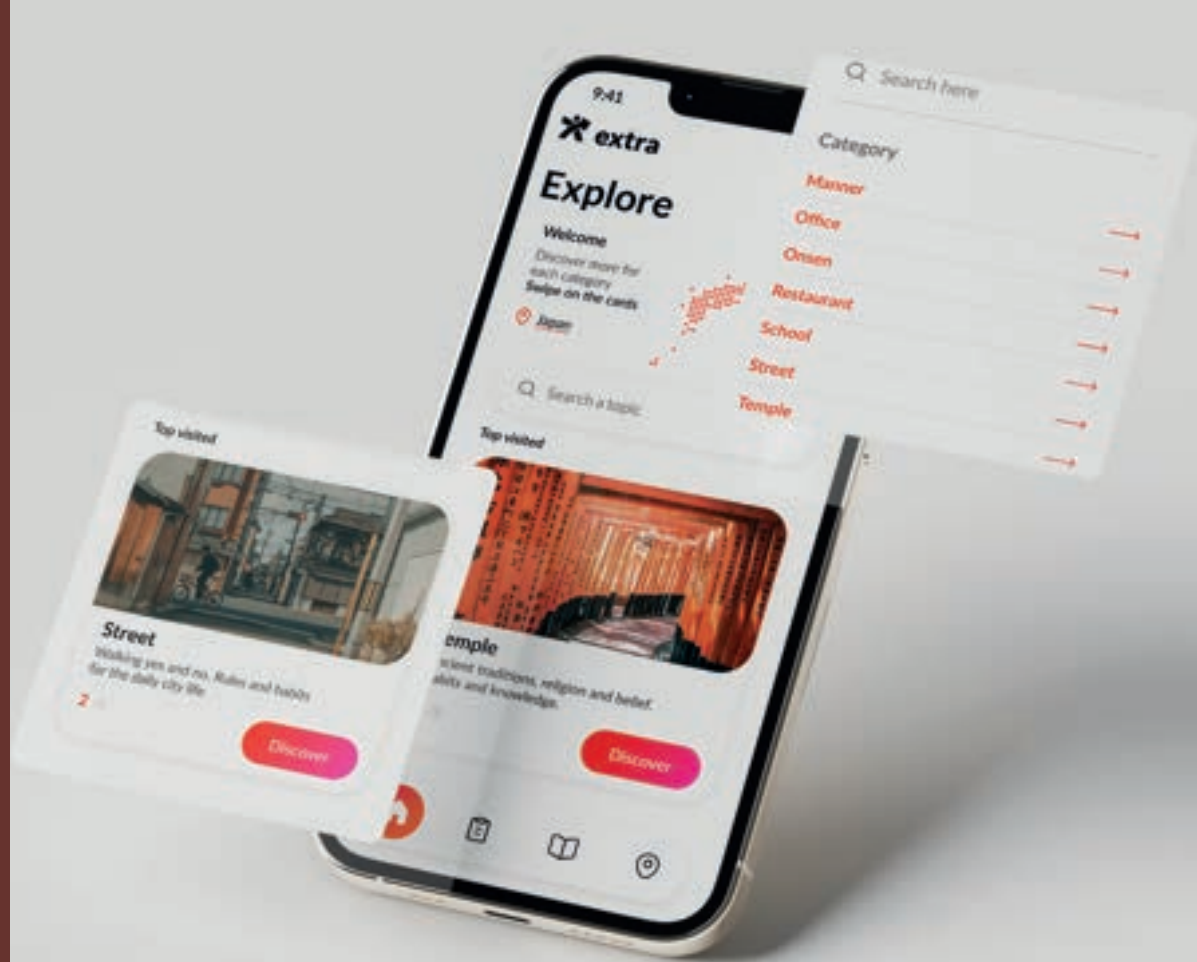
The app is divided into **four sections**, visible in the navigation bar, thanks to which the user can switch from one section to another at any time.

The page **Explore** is the Home: let the user scroll different categories and discover a wealth of information and curiosities. We develop the flow dedicated on restaurants: by clicking on the **card**

we go to a secondary page where there are various culinary specialities of the country, interesting facts about this category and tips about how to behave in different contexts, for example with suggestions how to order and what to say in restaurants. There is always a **call to action cross reference** to the dictionary section, where there are more detailed expressions and pronunciations.

There are different **levels of complexity and depth of information**, with cultural hints and tips on how to behave and how to familiarize with the local manners and language, explained with audios and illustrations.



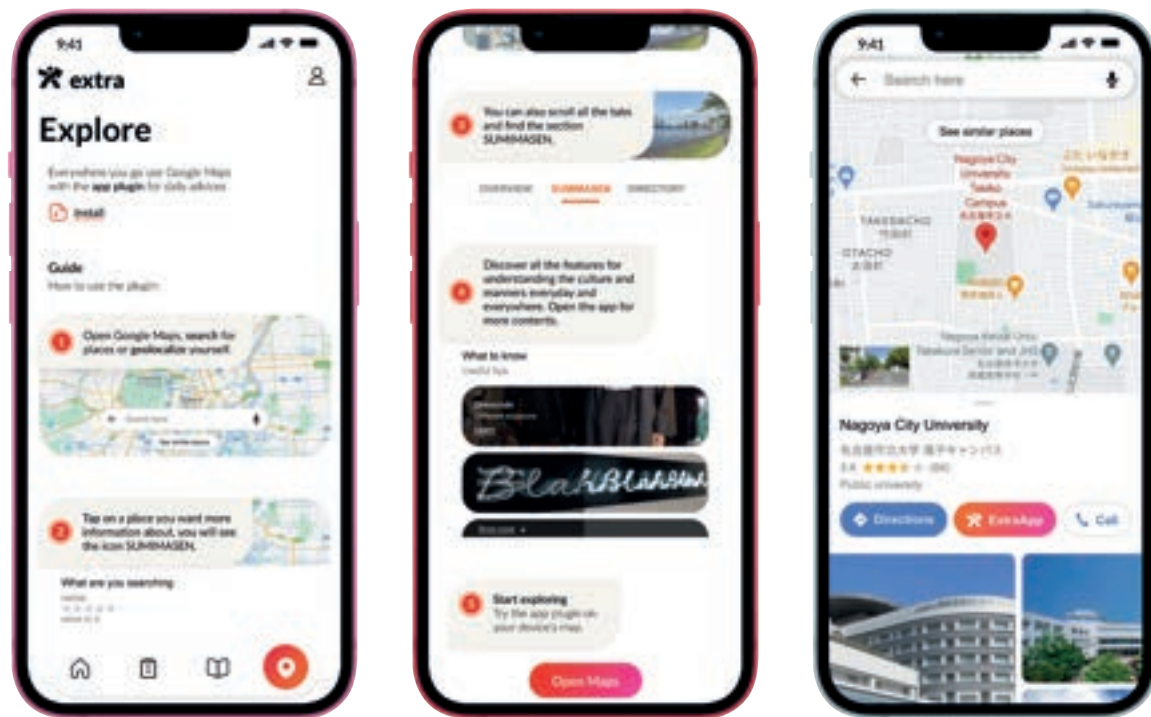


In Home the main element is the **search bar**, clicking on it, it will open a modale with all the categories the app contained, plus the opportunity to search from **keywords**. The top visited categories are below as cards that can be swiped right and left.

The second section is the **Tips**, a part dedicated to **trivia and advices** on different categories, such as public transport or the weather etc. By clicking on each of these cards, there are different pages of detailed informations like in the Home page. The main difference is that here are concentrated suggestions that are strictly **useful when the user first arrive in Japan**. They are relate to what it can be found in the Carnet but more detailed on what to do and what to say in **different occasions**.

Next is the **Dictionary** section where user can try with different **exersice expressions and words** of different categories. Plus more notions about holidays, festivals, and learning the two alphabets.





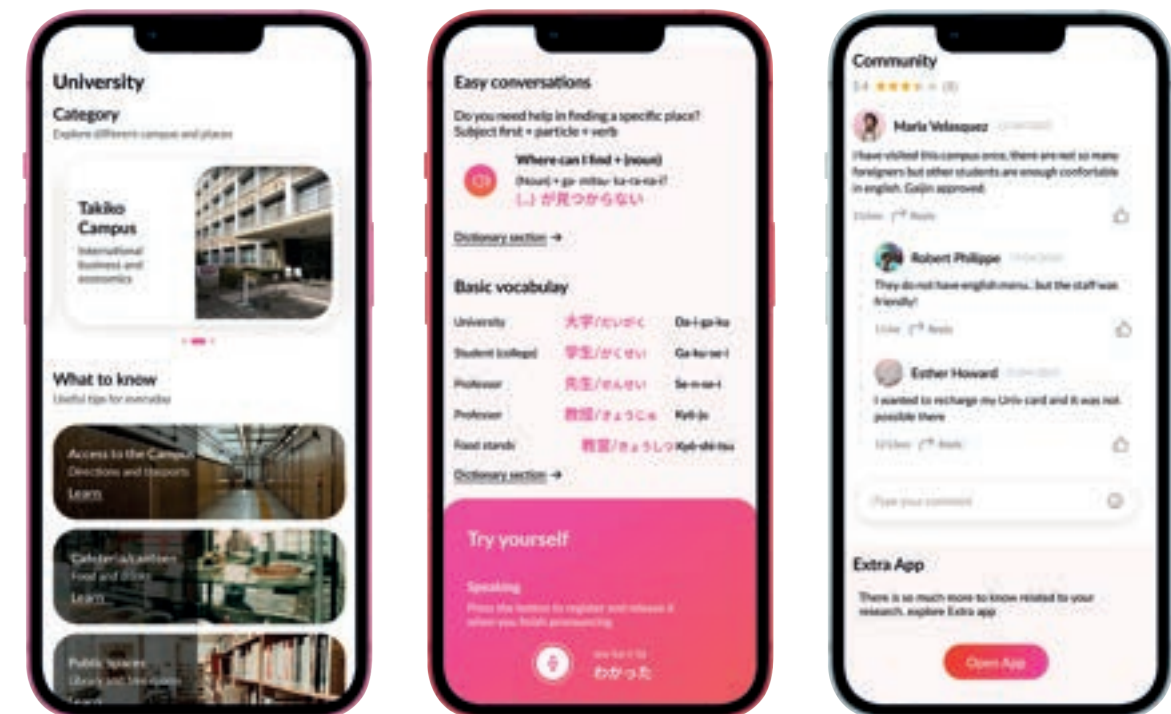
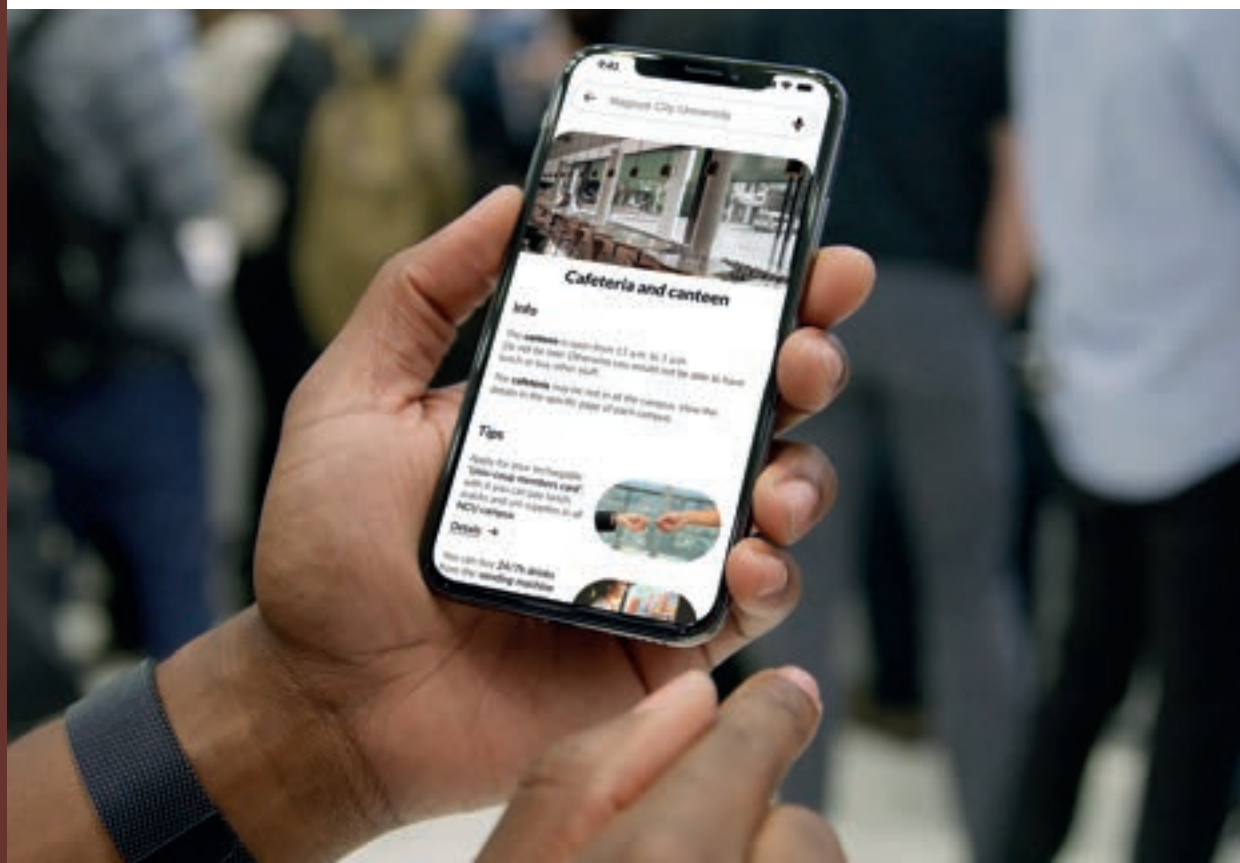
The last part is the **Map**, where first there is an introduction that explain about the main features of the app: the geolocalization use. For using everyday the app the user can download a **Google Maps plug-in** for having X App Japan app informations whenever he/she opens and searches for something on Google Maps.

The short guide illustrate in four steps how to use the X App plugin: after downloading the user will open automatically Google Maps and will start using it as usually. When he/she will select something on the map or made a research there is gonna be a **new botton Extra**. Clicking on it the Maps page will go on the tab corripoding of the plugin app.

This feature is very useful in **everyday life** because exploring a new city in a new country the most useful app for orientiring is a navigation one: **integrate useful information with navigation features** is vital.

Clicking on a research, as an example, a university, in the Extra App tab the user will find different info such as campus, public spaces as orientation offices, cafeteria and canteen, parking area etc. Then **social rules, behaviour, how to handle basic conversations with basic vocabulary** and exercises. All of this sections have a link to the Extra App for exploring more contents. Last there

is a comment section, dedicated to the community of **Extra users**, where they can write suggestions, tips and updates for helping each other. In a foreign context is always useful and practical see how people in same situations have handle different situations. For this reason this section is helpful and essentials for the foreigner's **community**.





Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis is the result of a research process combining personal experience, in-depth analysis, and an inclusive view of individuals living in Japan as foreigners. The research, questionnaires, as well as interviews we conducted, highlighted some recurring characteristics of culture shock and allowed us to better understand human nature and our connectedness despite cultural differences.

Our aim is to make a meaningful contribution to those who are preparing to live in Japan by providing them with concrete tools for a smoother and more rewarding adjustment experience. Furthermore, we hope that this research will foster greater mutual understanding and appreciation between different cultures and promote deeper and more meaningful intercultural dialogue.

Through our thesis project, we have developed a kit that aims to help those traveling to Japan integrate into the local culture without completely losing the experience of culture shock, which is an essential part of traveling or moving to a new place. We have received positive feedback from our friends in Japan, especially for the app we created, which has proven to be a valuable tool for those who have just arrived in the country.

We are excited to share our kit with girls who are going on an Erasmus exchange experience in Japan, in order to test it and make it useful for those who are about to embark on a similar journey. We want to test our kit on them to help them with cultural integration and gather further feedback to improve it. As stated in the project chapter, the idea is scalable and can be implemented in various countries, not just Japan, with the aim of improving human interactions and fostering greater understanding between cultures.

We hope that our work can be a starting point to improve interactions in universities, companies and create a global movement that promotes the appreciation of cultural differences and positive interaction between people. We believe that travel experiences and encounters with different cultures are essential tools for personal growth and to foster dialogue and collaboration between individuals from different backgrounds.

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Thanks

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