

International Master's Program in International Studies

National Chengchi University

國立政治大學國際研究英語碩士學位學程

Master's Thesis

碩士論文

**Evaluating the Effectiveness of  
The New Southbound Policy:  
A Case Study of Thai Higher  
Education Students in Taiwan**

評估新南向政策效益—以泰籍學生  
在台灣之高等教育為例

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July 2022

## Acknowledgment

First of all, I am deeply thankful to the Taiwan International Higher Education Scholarship ICDF and International Master's Program in International Studies (IMPIS) at National Chengchi University for giving me a great opportunity to complete a Master's degree and have wonderful experiences in Taiwan. Such experiences are one of the most significant steps in my life. I also would like to pay my special regard to all professors who provided me with valuable knowledge and the IMPIS staff who always gave me useful advice during these past two years.

Second, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Chien-Wu Hsueh, who provided me with precious guidance and knowledge. I truly appreciate his patience, motivation, and engagement in encouraging me to overcome the challenges throughout my thesis writing. I also would like to extend my genuine thankfulness to my committee, Professor Tsai-Wei Sun and Professor Wen-Chin Wu, for their insightful recommendations to improve my research.

Third, I am extremely grateful to my family, who wholeheartedly supported and encouraged me to overcome the difficulty I faced during my life journey. I also would like to express my appreciation to my friends in Thailand, my Thai community in Taiwan, and my IMPIS family, who always cordially gave me assistance and accompanied me while pursuing a Master's degree in Taiwan.

Last but not least, I also would like to express my thanks to all the research participants who helped me successfully conduct the thesis, all the fictional characters that have always been my mental support, and all the passersby who more or less constituted the success of my journey in Taiwan.

## Abstract

This research aims to answer a set of the following questions: Is the New Southbound Policy effective in improving Taiwan's positive image and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher educational students in Taiwan? If yes, which factors improve Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan? And if not, which factors deteriorate Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan? By interviewing the 30 Thai higher education students and alumni in Taiwan, the results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis show that the New Southbound Policy is effective to a certain degree in improving Taiwan's positive image and its status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan. The policy significantly influences Thai students' decisions and positive perceptions of studying in Taiwan before arrival by reinforcing specific pulling factors. However, the New Southbound Policy may not be influential as expected in improving Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status after their arrival. Despite reinforcing specific fostering factors, most of the fostering factors and deteriorating factors that affect the perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan are in nature not easily influenced by the implementation of the policy.

*Keywords:* higher education, New Southbound Policy, soft power, Taiwan, Thailand

## 摘要

本研究旨在回答以下一組問題：新南向政策是否有效提升在台灣的泰國高等教育學生對台灣正面形象和國際地位的認知？若答案是肯定的，哪些因素提高在台灣的泰國高等教育學生對台灣的吸引力和國際地位？若答案是否定的，哪些因素會降低在台灣的泰國高等教育學生對台灣的吸引力和國際地位？通過對三十名在台灣的泰國高等教育學生和校友的訪談，定量和定性分析的結果表明，新南向政策在一定程度上改善在台灣的泰國高等教育學生對台灣正面形象及國際地位的認知。該政策透過強化特定的拉動因素，顯著影響泰國學生抵達前在台灣留學的決定和積極認知。然而，新南向政策在提高泰國學生抵達後對台灣吸引力和國際地位的認知可能沒有預期之影響。儘管強化了具體的培養因素，但影響在台灣的泰國學生認知的培養因素和惡化因素，本質上都不容易受到政策實施的影響。

關鍵詞：高等教育，新南向政策，軟實力，台灣，泰國

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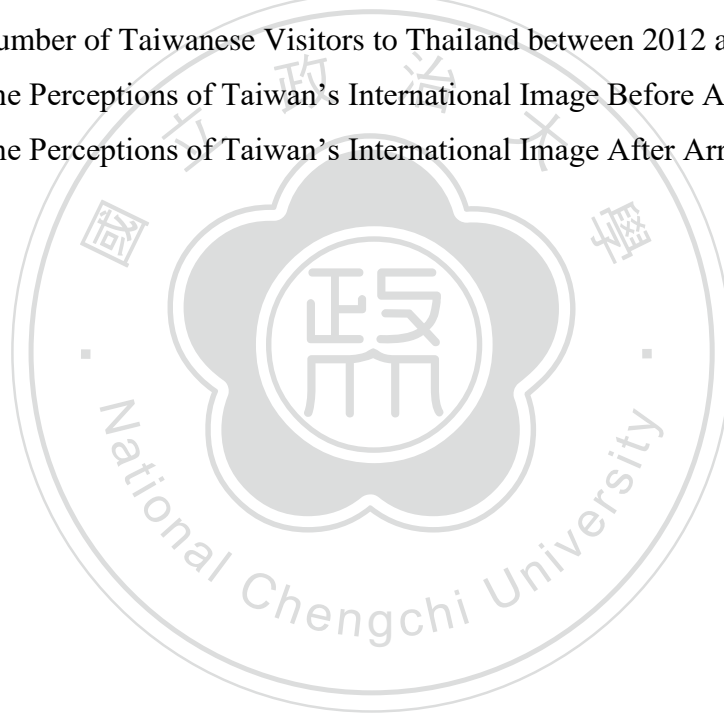
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## Lists of Acronyms

3C: Computer, Communication, Consumer electronics .....	
AIC: Academic-Industry Cooperation .....	
AIIESEC: Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales.....	
AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank .....	
AIT: Asian Institute of Technology .....	
APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation .....	
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations.....	
AWS: Amazon Web Services.....	
BACC: Bangkok Art and Culture Centre .....	
BIA: Bilateral Investment Agreement .....	
BRI: Belt and Road Initiative .....	
CCH: Changhua Christian Hospital.....	
CoE: Center of Excellence.....	
COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease .....	
DPP: Democratic Progressive Party .....	
FDA: Food and Drug Administration.....	
FDI: Foreign Direct Investment.....	
FOIP: Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy .....	
FTA: Free Trade Agreement.....	
FTI: Federation of Thai Industries .....	
GCTF: Global Cooperation and Training Framework.....	
GIO: Government Information Office .....	
ICDF: International Cooperation and Development Fund.....	
IDC: International Data Corporation .....	
ISA: Master of Information Systems and Applications.....	
ITRI: Industrial Technology Research Institute .....	
JETRO: Japan External Trade Organization.....	
KMT: Kuomintang.....	

KMUTT: King Mongkuts’ University of Technology Thonburi .....	
MCH: Mekong Cultural Hub .....	
MOC: Memorandum of Cooperation.....	
MOE: Ministry of Education .....	
MOFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs .....	
MOU: Memorandums of Understanding .....	
MPP: Market, Pipeline, and Platform .....	
MRT: Taipei Mass Rapid Transit .....	
NCREE: National Center for Earthquake Engineering .....	
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations.....	
NHI: National Health Insurance .....	
NPUST: National Pingtung University of Science and Technology .....	
NSP: New Southbound Policy .....	
NSTDA: National Science and Technology Development Agency .....	
NT: New Taiwan dollar .....	
ONSP: Office of New Southbound Policy.....	
OTN: Office of Trade Negotiation .....	
PRC: People’s Republic of China.....	
ROC: Republic of China.....	
RSU: Rangsit University.....	
SI: System Integration.....	
STIC: Oversea Science and Technology Innovation Center .....	
TA: Teaching Assistant.....	
TAEF: Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation.....	
TAITRA: Taiwan External Trade Development Council.....	
TIGP: Taiwan International Graduate Program.....	
TOCFL: Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language .....	
TRA: Taiwan Railways Administration .....	
US: The United States.....	
WHO: World Health Organization .....	

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy: A Case Study of Thai Higher Education Students in Taiwan

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

#### 1.1.1 Introduction of the New Southbound Policy

On May 20, 2016, the elected President of the Republic of China (ROC) Tsai Ing-Wen from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) delivered her inauguration speech manifesting distinguished foreign policy strategy under her presidential term, **the New Southbound Policy (NSP)** (Office of the President Republic of China, 2016).<sup>1</sup> The NSP aims for Taiwan to “play a proactive role in the region by expanding and enhancing trade cooperation with neighboring countries through resource sharing and people-to-people exchange” (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, p. 4) in order to achieve mutual prosperity and ‘a sense of community.’ The policy targets Asia-Pacific regional countries focusing on 10 ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar), 6 South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan), as well as New Zealand and Australia (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017).

This is not the first Taiwan’s intention to engage with these subregional countries. The presidency of Lee Teng-Hui in 1994 had first initiated the ‘Go South Policy,’ which aimed to encourage Taiwanese enterprises to invest in Southeast Asian countries. His two successors, President Chen Shui-Bian, and Ma Ying-Jeou, also sought cooperation with Southeast Asia with different levels of engagement. However, due to China’s rapid economic growth and Southeast Asia’s slow-down economy since the 1997 financial crisis, the attempts did not appear significant results but instead pushed the Taiwanese economy more rely on China’s market. Winning election in 2016, the DPP government led by

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the New Southbound Policy and the NSP will be used interchangeably.

Tsai Ing-Wen has not only faced challenges from Taiwan's economic reliance on China and political constraint in international space, but also the escalated tension on Cross-Strait relations due to the DPP's pro-independence stance (Huang, 2018). Dealing with such problems, the Tsai presidency has thus turned its pivot toward South Asia and Southeast Asia, which have currently presented rapid economic growth, and has initiated the NSP to uphold Taiwan's international presence and strengthen cooperation in the region (Huang, 2018).

Different from the 'Go South Policy' from the previous governments, which mainly focused on economic cooperation with Southeast Asia under state-led management and profit-based approach by utilizing financial and political policies to strengthen Taiwanese investments and presence in the region, Tsai's New Southbound Policy has presented its central points on multifaceted and comprehensive cooperation with Southeast Asia, South Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia on **trade and economic, tourism, education, medical, technology, small and medium enterprises, as well as agriculture**. To avoid China's pressure and Taiwan's limited international space on official engagement with these countries, the NSP denies geopolitical incentives and emphasizes the cultivation of **people-to-people ties** based on economic and social linkages between Taiwan and the target countries. Rather than unilaterally reinforcing Taiwanese presence in the region, Tsai's NSP encourages '**two-way interaction,**' which actively welcomes the NSP countries' people to invest and present in Taiwan as well (Bing, 2017; Huang, 2018). Such initiative thus underlines Taiwan's **soft power** mobilization and can be considered as Taiwan's **public diplomacy** (Yang, 2017) in order to **1) improve the attractiveness of Taiwan and the attitude of the NSP's people toward Taiwan** as well as to **2) enhance Taiwan's soft power and uphold its international status in the Asia-Pacific region** (Institute for National Policy Research, n.d.; Rawnsley, 2012; Wang & Lu, 2008).

### 1.1.2 Brief Debates on the Effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy

Amidst the endeavors of the DPP government to promote the New Southbound Policy, there are ongoing debates on the effectiveness of the initiative. On the one hand, some scholars and activists see the NSP as ineffective for various reasons. First, the NSP scope is too broad to be successful (Huang, 2018) as it encompasses 18 countries in different subregions and aims to reinforce comprehensive cooperation in economic, social, and cultural aspects (Chotiphathaisal & Peansuwan, 2020; Huang, 2018). Second, the board scope of the NSP results in the budget issues such as the budget shortage that cannot cover all the NSP's flagship projects and the criticisms on budget misallocation from necessary activities, especially the reduction of the budget in the activities and cooperation with China (Huang, 2018; Parameswaran, 2019; Shapiro, 2018). Third, there is a lack of understanding of the target regions and few efforts to acknowledge them, which potentially endangers misperceptions and conflicts arising from Taiwan's attempts to cooperate with its counterparts (Chao, 2016; Chong, 2019; Chotiphathaisal & Peansuwan, 2020). Fourth, the difficulty of interagency coordination, the lack of transparency in policy operation, the fragmentation of the DPP party as well as the opposition of the Kuomintang (KMT) also raises criticisms toward the efficiency and consistency of the policy implementation (Chotiphathaisal & Peansuwan, 2020; Huang, 2018; Meesuwan, 2018; Shapiro, 2019). Fifth, incompetent management of the policy has brought about less significant results in economic fields such as the criticism on the lack of transparency and fraudulent activities in Taiwan's infrastructure projects, the inefficiency to divert Taiwan's economic reliance on China, and the few achievements in concluding bilateral investment agreements (BIAs) with target countries (Huang, 2018; Huang, 2019; Meesuwan, 2018). Last but not least, the bitter relationship in Cross-Strait relations and China's ambition to promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also potentially impede the attainment of Taiwan to cooperate with the NSP countries (Black, 2019; Chao, 2016; Chotiphathaisal & Peansuwan, 2020; Huang, 2018; Jing, 2018; Meesuwan, 2018; Yang, 2018).

On the other hand, pundits and advocates of the New Southbound Policy argue against these critiques that such comments overconcern on Chinese influence and Taiwan's economic reliance on China, while ignore the comprehensive scope of the NSP, which goes beyond trade and investments but also aims to develop people-to-people interaction in the field of technology, medical, education, agriculture, and cultural exchanges (Black, 2019; Sang, 2021; Yang, 2018; Yang, 2020). The NSP's supporters thus indicate the effectiveness of the NSP in several aspects. First, the NSP helps increase mutual benefits between Taiwan and the NSP partners. Apart from reciprocal advantages from the deeper economic interdependence (Liew & Tang, 2019; Yang & Chiang, 2019), both sides also benefit from stronger socio-cultural interaction as well. For example, while Taiwan's shared experiences and resources are able to further development in the NSP countries, the presence of the counterparts in Taiwan also helps to build Taiwan to become a multicultural society (Parameswaran, 2019; Yang, 2017; Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019). Second, the NSP is also effective as a soft power strategy to assert Taiwan's visibility and favorability in the region (Yang & Hsiao, 2020). Prioritizing soft power strategy by offering cooperative benefits to the NSP partners across a wide range of aspects, the policy contributes to Taiwan's existing narrative and better reinforces Taiwan's positive image in the region (Bing, 2017; Chiang, 2020). Last but not least, the NSP is also helpful to diversify and strengthen Taiwan's foreign relations. The policy not only reinforces Taiwan's closer relations with the NSP counterparts but also bolsters Taiwan's relations with other countries outside a circle of the initiative (Bing, 2017; Black, 2019; Chen, 2020; Chong, 2019; Parameswaran, 2019; Yang, 2017; Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019). For example, the NSP helps strengthen the relationship between Taiwan and the United States since the people-centered and non-provocative nature of the NSP resonates with the United States' interests and can contribute to its Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP) (Chen, 2020).

### 1.1.3 The Importance of Thailand for Taiwan

Considering the debates on the New Southbound Policy above, they only focus on the overall effectiveness of the NSP in general rather than its effectiveness toward the specific NSP countries, in particular, Thailand. Thailand and Taiwan have had a long history since the 1950s. Both countries established traditional diplomatic relations since the post-second World War. However, in July 1975, when Thailand began diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), the assertion of the One China Policy forced Thailand to cease its diplomatic relations with the ROC. Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, Thailand and Taiwan have still maintained a good relationship. This is evident from the establishment of *de facto* representatives, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representatives in Thailand and Thailand Trade and Economic Office in Taipei, to strengthen and reinforce cooperation in the fields of economic, education, agriculture, tourism, and culture exchanges between the two countries. (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Thailand, 2018; Thailand Trade and Economic Office [Taipei], n.d.).

However, since the 2014 *coup d'état*, Thailand, governed by the military-dominated government, has opened the opportunity for China to assert its influence in the country (Meesuwan, 2018). Evidence can see from the numerous trade and investment values between the two countries,<sup>2</sup> the increasing inflow of Chinese students in Thailand<sup>3</sup> as well as the promotion of Chinese culture on various platforms such as Chinese Xinhua News in the Thai version or the Confucius Institutes (Chotiphatpaisan & Peansuwan, 2020; Meesuwan, 2018). Such China's influential insertion has thus significantly diminished Taiwan's

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<sup>2</sup> Total trade value between Thailand and China increased from US\$25,083.80 million in 2014 to US\$29,506.01 in 2017 (Information Technology and Communication Center, n.d.-a-b), while Chinese FDI in Thailand has also remarkably jumped from US\$221.35 million in 2014 to US\$1,071.91 million in 2016 (Bank of Thailand, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The number of Chinese students in Thailand has already reached more than 12,000 in 2020, which significantly increased from 8,455 in 2017 (Thansettakij, 2019; Wongca-um, 2019).



visibility and engagement in Thailand (Meesuwan, 2018).<sup>4</sup> Considering Thailand's location in a strategic point and its fast-growing market in Southeast Asia (Chotiphapaisan & Peansuwan, 2020; Thailand Trade and Economic Office [Taipei], 2019), it is thus essential for Taiwan to re-strengthen its relationship and cooperation with Thailand in order to achieve mutual benefits and integrate Taiwan's presence in Southeast Asia. Due to the absence of formal diplomatic relations and the concern on Chinese pressure, implementing public diplomacy is thus necessary for Taiwan to promote its attractiveness and reinforce its presence in order to deepen a relationship with Thailand.

Possibly concerned on these issues, with the launch of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy in 2016, Taiwan has pivoted Thailand as one of the initial priority countries of the initiative (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018a). More importantly, it also put Thailand as one of the focal countries on the **talent development program**, aiming to attract Thai students to pursue higher education in Taiwan (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017). This is because promoting higher education has long been an important soft power operation in cultivating students' positive perceptions to build favorable conditions for a country to achieve desired outcomes (Amirgek & Ydyrys, 2014; Wojciuk, 2018). As a result of the efforts, the number of Thai higher education students in Taiwan has significantly increased from 725 in 2012 to 1,450 in 2021 (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2015-2022). However, such an increasing number of Thai students does not reflect the success of the NSP as Taiwan's soft power strategy in improving the positive image and upholding Taiwan's international status in Thai students' perceptions. To comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the NSP in the aspect of a talent development program, it is, therefore, important to

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<sup>4</sup> This is evident in the significant diminishing in trade value between Thailand and Taiwan after the 2014 coup d'état. Total trade value between Thailand and Taiwan had diminished from US\$10,398.26 million in 2014 to 9,308.86 million in 2016. However, after the implementation of the NSP, Thailand-Taiwan trade values were recovered back to US\$10,740.21 million in 2017 (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, n.d.-b).

explore whether the NSP is effective in cultivating favorable perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan.

## 1.2 The Purpose of the Research

As Taiwan has implemented the New Southbound Policy in 2016 to reinforce Taiwan's visibility and engagement with South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia regions, Thailand with its strategic location and fast-economic growth, is categorized as one of the priorities countries of the initiative. Apart from encouraging concrete cooperation between two countries, the NSP also works as a soft power strategy to **1) improve the attractiveness of Taiwan and the favorable attitudes of Thai people toward Taiwan** as well as **2) enhance Taiwan's soft power and uphold its international status in Thai public's perception**. An important strategy of the NSP to achieve these public diplomacy goals is the promotion of Taiwanese higher education to encourage Thai students to pursue higher education in Taiwan. As a result, in 2021, Taiwan has attracted more than 1,400 Thai students pursuing higher education degrees in the country, a remarkable increase from 725 in 2012 (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2013-2022). The share of Thai students studying in Taiwan over the total Thai students who study abroad has been also in a rising trend after the implementation of the NSP, which has increased from 2.58% in 2016 to 3.32% in 2019 (The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.). The following table (Table 1.1) and figure (Figure 1.1) show the numbers of Thai higher education students in Taiwan from 2012 to 2020 and the percentage of the number of Thai students studying in Taiwan over the total number of Thai students who study abroad.

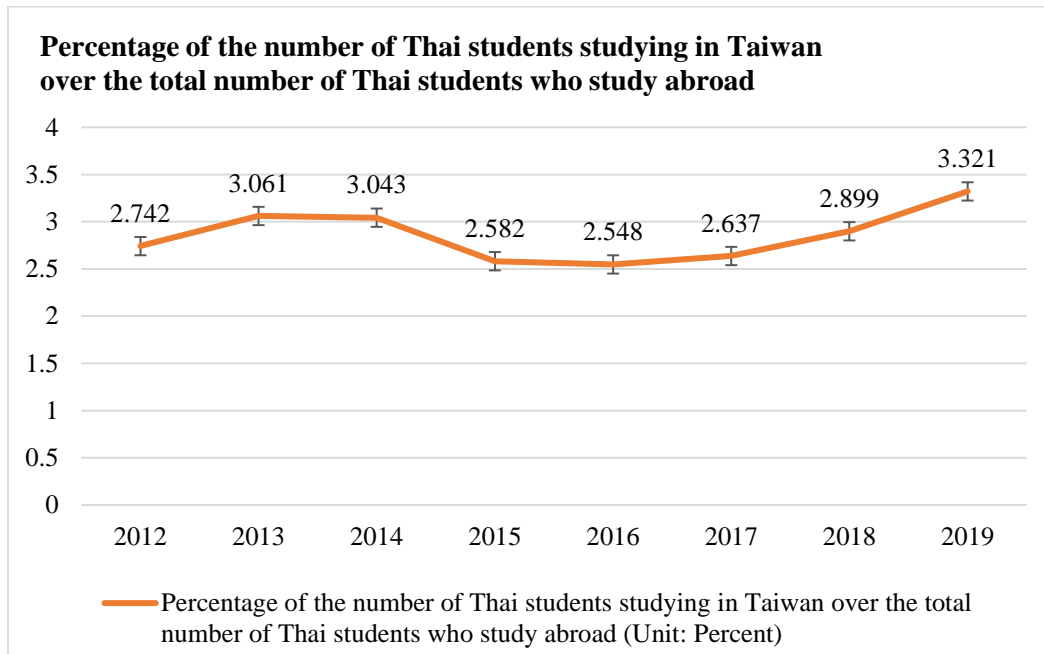
**Table 1.1 Numbers of Thai Students Studying in Taiwan and Abroad between 2012 and 2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of Thai students studying in Taiwan (Unit: Person)	725	799	816	766	784	847	955	1,083	1,197	1,450
Number of Thai students studying abroad (Unit: Person)	26,612	26,100	26,815	29,659	30,771	32,117	32,944	32,607	N/A	N/A
<b>Ratio (Unit: Percent)</b>	<b>2.724</b>	<b>3.061</b>	<b>3.043</b>	<b>2.582</b>	<b>2.548</b>	<b>2.637</b>	<b>2.899</b>	<b>3.321</b>	N/A	N/A

*Note.*

1. The data for Number of Thai students studying in Taiwan are from *Dazhuan xiao yuan jingwai xuesheng renshu tongji* (Statistics on the Number of Foreign Students in Colleges and Universities), by Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2013-2022, Department of Statistics, Retrieved March 14, 2022, (<https://depart.moe.edu.tw/ed4500/News.aspx?>).
2. The data for Number of Thai students studying abroad are from *Outbound Internationally Mobile Students by Host Region (COUNTRY: THAILAND)* [Data set], by The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d., Retrieved February 16, 2022 (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>).
3. The percentage of the number of Thai students studying in Taiwan over the total number of Thai students who study abroad are calculated by the author.

**Figure 1.1 Percentage of the number of Thai students studying in Taiwan over the total number of Thai students who study abroad between 2012 and 2019**



*Note.* Figure is created by the author.

Although the New Southbound Policy has resulted in the rising number of Thai higher education students in Taiwan, it does not reflect that the policy is effective in achieving the two goals of the NSP's soft power mobilization mentioned above (1. improving Taiwan's attractiveness and 2. enhancing Taiwan's international status in Thai students' perceptions). The critical questions thus arise from this puzzle are:

1. Is the New Southbound Policy effective in improving Taiwan's positive image and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan?
2. If yes, which factors improve Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan?

3. If not, which factors deteriorate Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan?

This thesis, therefore, attempts to answer these particular questions and make a contribution toward the scholarship of soft power and international higher education as well as the debates on the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy.

### **1.3 Methodology**

To evaluate the New Southbound Policy's effectiveness in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and upholding its international status in Thai students' perceptions, this thesis is conducted by using **interview survey methods**. According to Bhattacharjee (2011), survey research that uses questionnaires or interviews to collect data is an 'excellent method' to measure people's "preferences, traits, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, or factual information (p. 73)." In this research, interview questions are designed as open-end and close-ended questions that allow respondents to provide their own answers and select answers from a list prepared by a researcher (Babbie, 2011). They are thus helpful for a researcher to conduct both **quantitative** and **qualitative analysis** to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

Interview questionnaires are designed based on the analysis of influential factors that affect the perceptions of international students toward their host country (discussed in Chapter 2 Section 3). Basic questions to assess general international students' perceptions are adapted from René Mauricio Reyes Torres's thesis. As his interview questions were built on Mazzarol and Soutar's pull factors of international students' destination decision to evaluate the influence of a higher education scholarship on Taiwan's central American allies' students, it is valuable to be a foundation of interview questionnaires to evaluate the influence of the New Southbound Policy on Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan. Apart from these general questions, additional questions are included in order to specifically assess the effectiveness of the NSP as a soft power strategy in

Thai higher education students such as the questions asking about the perceptions of Thai students toward the NSP as well as Taiwan's politics and its international status.

The research participants are limited to Thai students who came to study in Taiwan after the implementation of the NSP (from 2017 until the present). Regarding sample selection, the **snowball sampling methodology** is used to find the interview participants. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling method that participants of the research will be asked to suggest additional people for the discussion (Babbie, 2011). However, to avoid sampling bias, selected participants are specific to Thai students/alumni who possess Thai nationality. Participants are also widely diversified in their backgrounds such as gender, levels of education, academic majors, academic institutes, and living places in Taiwan.

About the interview process, before an interview, participants are given information about an interviewer, the purpose of the interview, as well as be asked for allowance in recording the interview and using interview data for research purposes. The interviews are conducted in Thai in person or via video call, depending on the interviewee's preferences. The appointed time (for both offline and online interviews) and place (for offline interviews) is decided by the convenience and availability of the participants. Information of each interview is registered in the Microsoft Excel database file in order to keep a record of interview data and the necessary information for the further analysis.

In terms of scope and limitation of the research, due to the language ability of the author, primary and secondary resources, data regarding the New Southbound Policy and related literature are mainly derived from English and Thai language resources. Nevertheless, Mandarin resources are supplemented when significant data is unavailable in English and Thai.

#### 1.4 Main Findings in Brief

By interviewing the 30 higher education students and alumni, main findings of this research show that **the New Southbound Policy is effective to a certain degree** in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai students and alumni in Taiwan. The NSP **significantly influenced Thai students' decisions and positive pre-departure perceptions** of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status by **reinforcing specific pulling factors**, including the implicit and explicit recognition of the New Southbound Policy and the contents of the policy, positive past experience of visiting Taiwan (between 2016 and 2019), positive perceptions of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships, positive perceptions of easiness of obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education, positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities, and scholarship financial benefit.

However, the NSP **may not influential as expected** in improving Thai students' **positive post-departure perceptions** of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status. Despite reinforcing some specific fostering factors (kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people, allowance to do internship/part-time work while studying, the living convenience in Taiwan for Southeast Asian people, the positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Thai students and Southeast Asian students, positive perceptions of Taiwan as a place for their career development, intention to find a job in Taiwan/ currently working in Taiwan, and positive perceptions of the NSP in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan and improving positive attitudes toward Taiwan), **most post-departure positive and negative perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan** are driven by significant fostering factors (e.g., transportation, technology, politics) and deteriorating factors (e.g., climate, food, entertainment), which in nature **are not easily altered by the policy**.

## 1.5 Organization of Thesis Chapters

As this thesis aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perception of Thai students in Taiwan, to achieve such a goal, the structure of the thesis is organized into **five chapters** as follows.

**Chapter 1** is an **introduction** to the thesis. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides the background of the research, including a brief introduction of the New Southbound Policy, a brief debate on the effectiveness of the NSP, and the importance of Thailand for Taiwan. After explaining the background of the thesis, the second section presents the purpose of the research and the research questions. The third section shows the methodology for conducting the research as well as the scope and limitation of the thesis. The fourth section briefly introduces the main findings of this thesis. And, the final section outlines the organization of the thesis.

**Chapter 2** comprises an **overview of the New Southbound Policy and literature review**. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section is an overview of the NSP, which provides information on the initiative in general and in the aspect of the talent development program in particular, as well as the NSP implementation toward Thailand. The second section is a literature review, divided into three parts. The first part deeply reviews the literature on the debate on the effectiveness of the NSP in detail, including pessimistic and optimistic viewpoints towards the NSP. The second part introduces the concept of soft power and Taiwan's public diplomacy. The final part discusses the literature on soft power in higher education, influential factors on international students' perception toward the host country, and relevant literature on the NSP students in Taiwan. The last section is a conclusion, which summarizes the overall discussion of this chapter.

**Chapter 3** is a **quantitative analysis** of the interview data of 30 Thai higher education students in Taiwan. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the interview process and describe the sampling



distribution among the 30 participants. The second section presents the distribution analysis of driving factors of Thai students' perception of Taiwan, the influence of the New Southbound Policy, and the results of before and after arrival perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. The third section examines the cross-tabulation analysis of the key variables on before and after arrival perception trajectory of Thai students' impression of Taiwan. The last section concludes the findings and the discussion of this chapter.

**Chapters 4** presents a **qualitative analysis** of the interview data of 30 Thai higher education students in Taiwan. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the main pulling factors and the influence of the New Southbound Policy on pre-departure perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan. The second section describes the main fostering factors and the influence of the NSP on the post-departure perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan. The third section explains the deteriorating factors on the post-departure perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan. The fourth section discusses a before and after arrival perceptions analysis and five case studies of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan before and after arrival. The last section summarizes the key points and the discussion of this analysis.

**Chapter 5** is **the conclusion**. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section summarizes the main findings of the thesis. The second section indicates the policy suggestions for the improvement of Taiwan's soft power operation under the New Southbound Policy to uphold Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan in the future.

## Chapter 2 Overview of the New Southbound Policy and Literature Reviews

Since the New Southbound Policy, as Taiwan's foreign policy strategy to engage with the Asia-Pacific region, has significantly attracted the increasing number of Thai higher education students to study in Taiwan, this thesis thus aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the NSP as a Taiwanese soft power strategy in improving favorable perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan.

This second chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section is the *Overview of the New Southbound Policy*, which provides information on the NSP in general and on higher education programs in particular, as well as the implementation of the NSP in Thailand. The second section is a *Literature Review*, which is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the recent scholarly debates on the effectiveness of the NSP in detail, including the pessimistic viewpoints and the optimistic viewpoints towards the initiative. The second part introduces the concept of soft power and how to wield it efficiently in general, as well as examines Taiwan's soft power and its public diplomacy in particular. The last part discusses the literature on soft power in higher education, the influential factors that affect international students' decisions and perceptions toward a host country, as well as relevant literature on the NSP students in Taiwan. The last section is a *Conclusion*, which summarizes the overall discussion of this chapter.

### 2.1 Overview of the New Southbound Policy

#### 2.1.1 Overall Implementation of the New Southbound Policy

**The New Southbound Policy (NSP)** (Chinese: 新南向政策) is Taiwan's foreign policy initiative of the Tsai Ing-Wen presidency from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) manifested in 2016. Recognizing the rapid economic growth of South Asia and Southeast Asia region as well as the need for Taiwan's economic diversification, the initiative has pivoted 10 Southeast Asian countries, 6 South Asian countries, as well as Australia and New Zealand as target countries

for Taiwan to actively develop a long-term relationship in order to achieve mutual prosperity in the region (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017). Denying hidden agenda and geopolitical incentives, Taiwan's NSP emphasizes comprehensive partnership based on the cultivation of 'people-to-people ties' and 'two-way interaction' with the target countries encompassing a wide range of cooperation including trade and economic, education, tourism, medical, technology, and sciences, infrastructure, small and medium enterprises, as well as agriculture. Such cooperation combined with the aim to share Taiwan's strengths and experiences not only bolsters Taiwan's deeper integration but also "fulfill[s] the needs of New Southbound Policy partner countries and contribute[s] to the development and well-being of people across the region, as well as foster[s] a sense of community (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, p. 31)."

To accomplish these objectives, after announcing the New Southbound Policy in 2016, the Tsai government later approved the **'Guidelines for the New Southbound Policy (新南向政策綱領)'** in August of the same year to set up short-middle goals and overall and long-term goals of the policy. Apart from these goals, the document also layouts implementation principles and frameworks for the initiative. A month later, the Executive Yuan published the **'New Southbound Policy Promotion Plan (新南向推動計畫)'**. The plan restates government aims to reinforce beneficial cooperation and sense of community with target countries by integrating Taiwanese private and public sectors' resources and strengths based on four main focal points: **1) economic and trade cooperation, 2) talent exchanges, 3) resource sharing, and 4) institutional links and connectivity**. Following the promotional plan, the **'New Southbound Policy Implementation Plan (新南向政策概略)'** was approved in December 2016, with the beginning of the implementation in January 2017. The implementation plan elucidates focal points of the promotional plan into detailed policy action plans. In addition to the NSP implementation plans, in August 2017, the Office of Trade Negotiation also outlined **Five Flagship Projects and Three Potential Business Fields (五大旗艦計畫及三大潛力領域)** under the initiative,

which highlights **Taiwan's soft power maneuver** to share Taiwan's experiences in the contribution of the NSP target countries' development. Five flagship projects consist of **1) agricultural development, 2) medical and public health cooperation, 3) talent cultivation, 4) innovative industries, as well as 5) youth exchanges and policy forums**. The three potential business fields include **1) e-commerce, 2) infrastructure and 3) tourism** (Bing, 2017; Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017). The following table (Table 2.1) shows the operational plans of the NSP.



**Table 2.1 The New Southbound Policy’s Operational Guidelines and Specifications**

<b>Economic and Trade Cooperation</b>	<b>Talent Exchanges</b>	<b>Resource Sharing</b>	<b>Regional Integration</b>
<b>1. Industry Cooperation and Trade/Economic Expansion</b>	<b>1. Talent Cultivation</b>	<b>1. Medical and Public Health Cooperation</b>	<b>1. Regional Integration</b>
1.1 Promoting two-way industry cooperation	1.1 Integrating and increasing scholarships to attract international students	1.1 Promoting international cooperation	1.1 Promote the signing and updating of bilateral investment agreements
1.2 Engaging in comprehensive trade expansion	1.2 Encouraging students to study in ASEAN and South Asian countries	1.2 Promoting laboratory accreditation and drug/instrument testing and technical cooperation	1.2 Promote the signing of double taxation avoidance and bilateral economic cooperation agreements
1.3 Expanding e-commerce in southbound markets	1.3 Establishing the Contact Taiwan recruitment platform and promoting the Taiwan Connection Project	1.3 Promoting the reconciliation of medical regulations	<b>2. Regular Consultation Mechanisms</b>
1.4 Reinforcing the export of agricultural products	<b>2. Industry/Labour Cooperation</b>	1.4 Training medical and health professionals	2.1 Establish or reinforce bilateral consultation mechanisms
1.5 Reinforcing Taiwan’s overall image	2.1 Organizing academic-industry cooperation (AIC) and technical training courses	1.5 Providing medical and humanitarian support	2.2 Organize the Taiwan-ASEAN Dialogue Forum
1.6 Assisting the expansion of Taiwanese businesses	2.2 Subsidizing internship programs	1.6 Promoting epidemic prevention cooperation	2.3 Promote benign cross-strait interaction and cooperation
<b>2. Infrastructure Construction Cooperation and Systems Integration Exports</b>	2.3 Attracting experienced foreign technical professionals	<b>2. Tourism Promotion</b>	<b>3. Strategic Alliances</b>
2.1 Promoting infrastructure construction cooperation	2.4 Establishing a business and recruitment information platform for Taiwanese vendors	2.1 Implementing convenient Taiwan visas	3.1 Utilize Taiwan’s foreign aid resources

2.2 Enhancing systems integration exports	<b>3. Immigrant Training</b>	2.2 Encouraging tourism in Taiwan	3.2 Leverage third-country resources
<b>3. Financial Support</b>		3.1 Fostering second-generation immigrants	<b>3. Cultural Exchange</b>
3.1 Augmenting the finance functions of the Import-Export Bank of the ROC 3.2 Enhancing the assurance function of overseas trusts and funds 3.3 Increase the number of offshore branches of Taiwanese banks	3.2 Fostering immigrant service docents	3.1 Facilitating cultural exchanges	<b>4. Overseas Taiwanese Networks</b>
		3.2 Improving indigenous cultural exchanges	
		3.3 Encouraging Hakka cultural exchanges	
		<b>4. Agricultural Cooperation</b>	
		4.1 Improving agricultural technical cooperation 4.2 Improving agricultural production and marketing and storage/logistics cooperation 4.3 Assisting private vendor cooperation	
		<b>5. Technological Cooperation</b>	
		5.1 Analyzing technical cooperation strategies 5.2 Subsidizing AIC projects 5.3 Promoting academic cooperation and resource sharing	3.3 Reinforce cooperation with private organizations
			4.1 Enhance organizational functions of Taiwanese vendors 4.2 Assist Taiwanese businesses in organizing diverse economic and trade activities 4.3 Establish interpersonal exchange networks

Note. Adapted from *An Introductory Guide to Taiwan's New Southbound Policy*, by Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, Executive Yuan, ROC.

Along with the implementation of the policy, the Taiwanese government has also allocated specific budgets for the New Southbound Policy initiative. Table 2.2 shows the budget allocation of the NSP between 2017 and 2022. It is noteworthy that the budget allocation has significantly increased from NT\$2.11 billion in 2017 to NT\$7.19 billion in 2018. Since 2018, the largest significant amounts of the budget have been allocated to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education, respectively.



**Table 2.2 Budget Allocation of the New Southbound Policy among Related Ministries**

	2017 NSP Budget	2018 NSP Budget	2019 NSP Budget	2020 NSP Budget	2021 NSP Budget	2022 NSP Budget
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>7.19</b> (Including basis budget of the NSP 3.78 billion and another 3.41 billion from operating and non-operating special funds)	<b>7.03</b> (Including basis budget of the NSP 3.3 billion and another 3.9 billion from operating and non-operating special funds)	<b>6.9</b> (Including basis budget of the NSP 3.16 billion and another 3.74 billion from operating and non-operating special funds)	<b>6.781</b> (Including basis budget of the NSP 3.04 billion with 3.74 billion from operating and non-operating special funds)	<b>6.42<sup>5</sup></b> (Including basis budget of the NSP 2.98 billion with 3.44 billion from operating and non-operating special funds)
Ministry of Economic Affairs	0.13	2.88	2.57	2.59	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Education	1.0	1.7	1.64	1.64	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Science and Technology	0.28	0.56	0.45	0.41	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Transport	N/A	0.32	0.77	0.61	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	0.26	0.32	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission	0.2	0.45	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Health and Welfare	N/A	0.29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Unit: NT\$ Billion)

*Note.* Adapted from *Si. zong yusuan an zhi zhongdian fenxi* (Four. Key Analysis of General Budget), by Taiwan Directorate-General of Budget, 2017-2021, *Zhongyang zhengfu zong yusuan* (General Budget of the Central Government). Executive Yuan, ROC, Retrieved March 14, 2022 (<https://www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=26269&CtNode=5389&mp=1> [in Chinese]).

<sup>5</sup> The New Southbound Policy budget in 2022 decreased NT\$240 million or around 3.5% from the same basis in the previous year because the Ministry of Communications has reduced tourism promotion expenditure by NT\$250 million in response to the epidemic situation (Taiwan Directorate-General of Budget, 2021).



### 2.1.2 The New Southbound Policy on Education

According to the scheme and budget allocation of the New Southbound Policy mentioned above, the large amount of the NSP budget allocation to the Ministry of Education apparently presents that the promotion of talent exchanges and cultivation is one of the core components of the NSP. This is because the Taiwanese government sees that talented human resource is an important component of Taiwan's industrial development. It thus aims to attract the NSP talented students, especially from South Asia and Southeast Asia, to study, live, and work in Taiwan (Nguyen et al., 2020). The implementation of the NSP, therefore, determines to “deepen bilateral ties and cultivate talented people in ASEAN and South Asian countries through academic and job training programs at Taiwanese colleges and universities (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, p. 13).” To achieve these goals, in 2017, the Ministry of Education has launched **‘Elite Study in Taiwan’** and established **‘the New Southbound Talent Development Program,’** which includes 75 Taiwanese universities in resource-sharing and collaborative consortium. The program operates based on the **‘MPP’ concept**, standing for **‘Market,’** to promote and provide academic and training programs to support the NSP students and markets, **‘Pipeline,’** to reinforce the interflow of talented people between Taiwan and the NSP countries, and **‘Platform,’** to establish **‘Taiwan Connection’** platform for educational collaboration through social and cultural links (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, p.14).

Under these schemes, the New Southbound Talent Development Program can generally be divided into two main projections. The first projection is to bolster domestic human resources to create bilateral educational exchanges and connections between Taiwan and the NSP partners. The program provides Southeast Asian language courses and the NSP countries-related programs for Taiwanese university lecturers, students, and second-generation immigrants to acknowledge the region. It also funds scholarships and subsidies for them to conduct research, study, and internships in the NSP countries (The New

Southbound Talent Development Program, n.d.-a). The second projection predominantly aims to attract South Asian and Southeast Asian students to study in Taiwan to cultivate talented people for key industries and businesses, as well as deepen people's connection between Taiwan and the NSP counterparts. To achieve these goals, the Taiwanese government arranges a wide range of programs and training to meet the demands of the target countries as well as provides different types of scholarships and grants for South Asian and Southeast Asian lecturers and students to study and conduct research in Taiwan (The New Southbound Talent Development Programs, n.d.-a). Moreover, the government also relaxed the visa process and internship requirement for the NSP students (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017) to offer the opportunity for them to work in Taiwan after graduation (Nguyen et al., 2020). Apart from these projections, the Taiwanese government also creates new working groups, coordinates with the existing Taiwanese agencies, promotes Taiwan connection platform, as well as forges the bilateral alliance between Taiwanese and the NSP countries' higher education institutes to support this bilateral educational exchange (The New Southbound Talent Development Programs, n.d.-a). Table 2.3 presents working plans under the New Southbound Talent Development Programs categorized based on the MPP scheme.

**Table 2.3 The New Southbound Talent Development Programs Schemes**

Programs	Responsible Department
<b>Market</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry-Academia Collaboration Program for International Students (Degree Program)</li> <li>• Short-term Program of Technical Training for Foreign Youths (Non-Degree Program)</li> <li>• Short-term Program of Enhancing Professional Skills for Foreign Youths (Non-Degree Program)</li> <li>• Industry-Academia Collaboration Program for Indonesian 2-year college</li> <li>• Programs to Train Professionals with Southeast Asian Language &amp; Culture and Industry Skills</li> <li>• Southeast Asian languages courses</li> <li>• Professional Skills Improvement Training for Children of New Immigrants</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Technological and Vocational Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer subsidies to schools for overseas expansion and creating preparatory pathway education programs</li> <li>• Offer subsidies to professors and students for overseas research; promote academic cooperation with New Southbound countries</li> <li>• Offer subsidies for an internship or on-the-job programs in e-commerce, biomedical sciences, information engineering, traditional industries, and other selected fields</li> <li>• Southeast Asian languages plans, regional cultural and trade talent cultivation plans for the New Southbound countries</li> <li>• Provide summer schools in cooperation with ASEAN and South Asian countries to attract young students to train and study in Taiwan, increase recognition of Taiwan's higher education, and promote T</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Higher Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the educational needs of New Southbound countries (including students in Taiwan and the New Southbound countries); develop digital education services</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Information and Technology Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2017: Expand scholarships for internships in ASEAN and South Asian countries (the Pilot Overseas Internships program) 2018: Expand scholarships for internships in New Southbound countries (the Pilot Overseas Internships program)</li> <li>• Scholarships</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of International and Cross-strait Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer Southeast Asian language courses for new immigrants' children at the elementary and junior high schools, prepare appropriate teaching materials, train qualified teachers, arrange language courses</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">K-12 Education Administration</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide subsidies to selected university trainee teachers for student teaching or internship at elementary or junior high schools in Southeast Asia</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Teacher and Art Education</p>
<b>Pipeline</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer scholarships for foreign students under the New Southbound Policy in Taiwan, and provide job matching assistance after graduation</li> <li>• Promote "Elite Scholarship Program - providing subsidies to universities for retaining Southeast Asian and South Asian lecturers by Ministry of Education."</li> <li>• Offer scholarships for overseas compatriot students</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of International and Cross-strait Education</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand invitations to the New Southbound countries for participating in creativity design competitions and Intelligent Ironman Creativity Contest in Taiwan</li> <li>• Use the establishment of the Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Platform Plan to organize innovation and entrepreneurship exchanges and related theme events under the New Southbound Policy, and pro</li> <li>• Organize international youth experience events; cultivate New Southbound international affairs talent and send them to New Southbound countries for learning experience</li> </ul>	Youth Development Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase sport exchanges in sports such as soccer with New Southbound countries; encourage the participation of new immigrants in "Sports for All"; expand communication channels with sport leader</li> </ul>	Sports Administration
<b>Platform</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding to Taiwan schools for operating in Southeast Asian countries</li> <li>• Promote "Taiwan Studies Projects" in India or the targeted countries in the Southeast Asian region</li> <li>• Expand invitations to major international educators of ASEAN and South Asian countries</li> <li>• Promote the Taiwan Connection project in accordance with the New Southbound Policy</li> <li>• Promote Mandarin Education in New Southbound Countries</li> </ul>	Department of International and Cross-strait Education

*Note.* From *Schemes*, by The New Southbound Talent Development Program, n.d.-b, Retrieved November 19, 2021 ([https://www.edunsbp.moe.gov.tw/content\\_en.html](https://www.edunsbp.moe.gov.tw/content_en.html)).

After implementing the New Southbound Talent Development Program in 2017, the number of students from the NSP countries in Taiwan has increased from 51,970 in 2018 to 55,482 in 2020. The number of Taiwanese students in the NSP students increased from 21,100 in 2018 to 21,718 in 2019. However, this number decreased to 20,551 in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the encouragement and subsidies of the Ministry of Education toward universities to implement ‘the New Southbound Industry-University Cooperation’ and international special classes (including degree and non-degree classes) for foreign students, between 2018 and 2020, there are 292 degree classes, and 9,858 students enrolled in the classes. In 2021, there are 84 classes have been approved, and a total of 3,335 students to enroll. For the Industry-University Cooperation Special Classes for overseas Chinese students, in 2021, universities opened 18 classes, and there were 2,362 students enrolled, which is the highest number since its implementation. The Ministry of Labor has also increased the acceptance quota

for foreign and overseas Chinese students' employment from 2,500 in 2018 to 3,500 in 2021. Apart from these accomplishments, other projects under the New Southbound Talent Development Program, such as subsidizing overseas Chinese teachers in the NSP countries, cultivating second-generation immigrants, opening special training classes, and holding educational forums, have also been continuously implemented and been increasingly received attention from the NSP countries. However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 since 2020, many events and projects between 2020 and 2021 have been suspended while some projects have been arranged on the online platforms instead (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018c-2021).

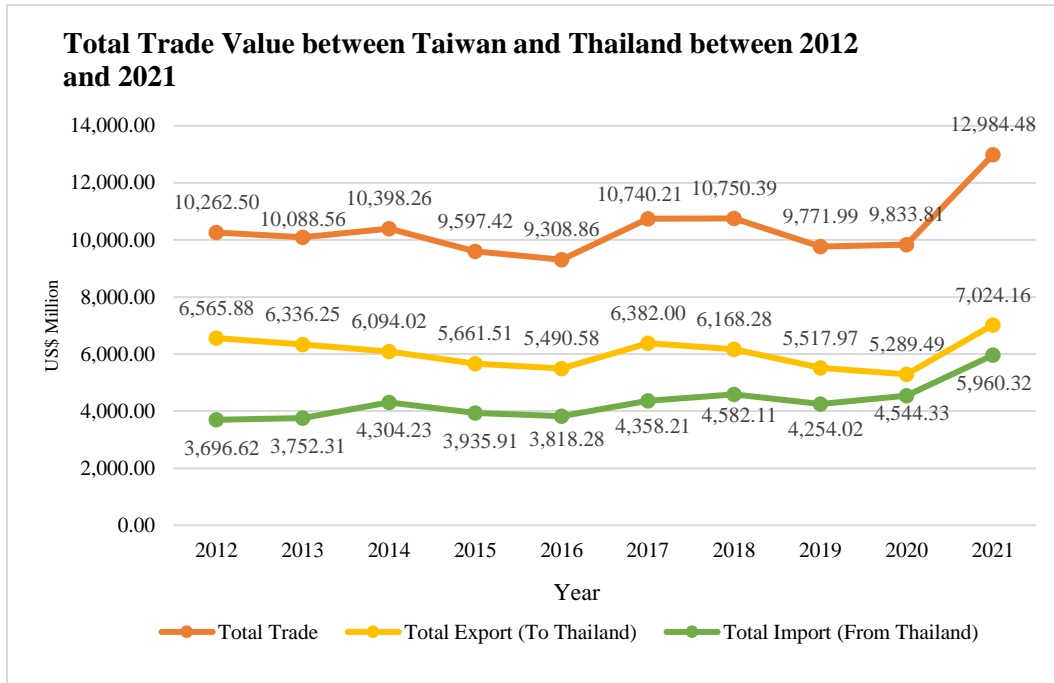
### 2.1.3 The Implementation of the New Southbound Policy toward Thailand

Despite the scope of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy covering 18 countries, the real focus of the initiative is on 10 ASEAN nations, which account for a majority proportion of Taiwan's economic engagement among the NSP countries (Marton & Bush, 2018). Among 10 ASEAN countries, the NSP pivots the initial priority countries focusing on Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, The Philippines, and Thailand, as well as India from South Asia (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018a). Unlike the other five initial priority countries, Thailand is located in an important geopolitical position and has long developed socioeconomic relationships with Taiwan. Since the 1950s, Taiwan has started to invest in Thailand and also ranked the top investor of Thailand in the 1990s (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018a). Apart from economic engagement, the two countries have also been developing deep relationships from labor exchanges, agricultural collaboration, and the presence of overseas Taiwanese associations in Thailand (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Thailand, 2018). However, the increasing Chinese influence after the Thai 2014 *coup d'état* has overshadowed Taiwan's visibility and engagement in Thailand (Meesuwan, 2018). Therefore, the implementation of the NSP is potentially capable of reinforcing and re-strengthening Taiwan's relationship and cooperation with Thailand. Such an initiative can also contribute to the Thai 4.0 initiative, an

economic model of Thailand to develop value-based, high-tech, and innovative industries, and to establish the Eastern Economic Corridor as a special economic zone to promote industrial development (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018a).

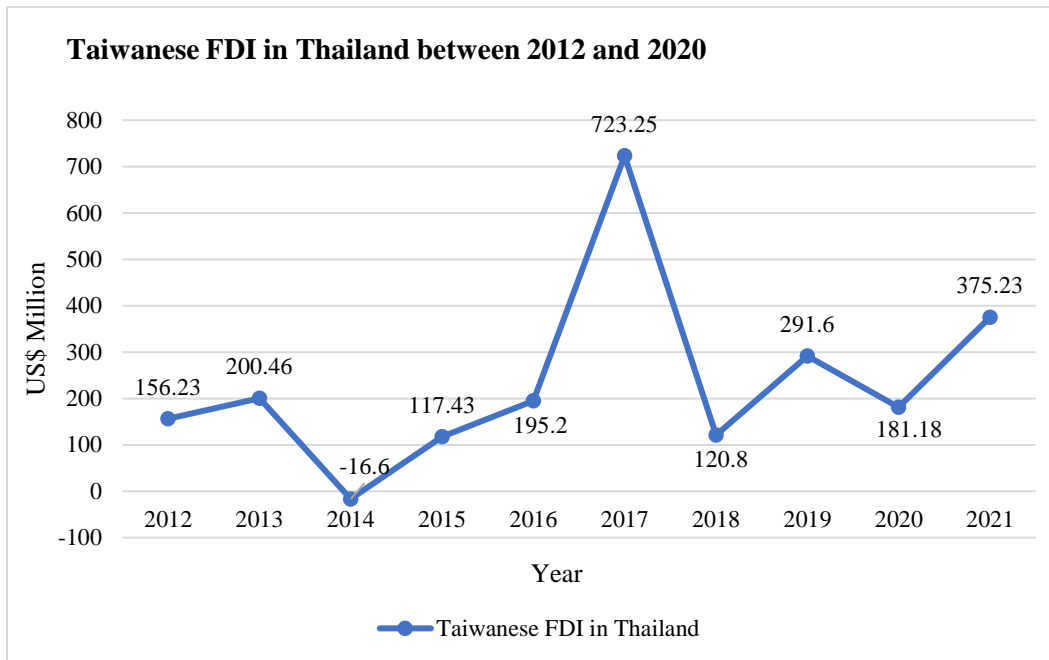
After implementing the New Southbound Policy, Thailand and Taiwan have re-strengthened their engagement in various areas based on the NSP focal points. Regarding economic and trade cooperation, the total trade value between the two countries has risen from US\$9,308.86 million in 2016 to US\$12,984.84 million by 2021. Taiwan's export to Thailand has increased from US\$5,490.58 million in 2016 to US\$7,024.16 million in 2021, while Taiwan's import from Thailand has also grown from US\$3,818.27 million in 2016 to US\$5,960.32 million in 2021 (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, n.d.-b). Figure 2.1 shows the trade value, export, and import between Taiwan and Thailand between 2012 and 2021. In addition, under the implementation of the NSP, Taiwan's foreign direct investment in Thailand has also significantly increased. Especially in 2017, Taiwanese FDI in Thailand rose to US\$723.25 million (Bank of Thailand, 2021). Figure 2.2 shows Taiwanese FDI in Thailand between 2012-2021.

**Figure 2.1 Total Trade Value between Taiwan and Thailand between 2012 and 2021**



*Note.* Adapted from *Export and Import Value List (FSCE030R) (COUNTRY(REGION): THAILAND) [Data set]*, by Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, n.d.-b, Ministry of Economic Affairs ROC, Retrieved November 19, 2021 (<https://cuswebo.trade.gov.tw/FSCE030F/FSCE030F>).

**Figure 2.2 Taiwanese FDI in Thailand between 2012 and 2020**



Note. Adapted from *Foreign Direct Investment Classified by Country/Economic territories*, by Bank of Thailand, 2021, September 30, All Statistics Report & Contact Persons, Retrieved November 19, 2021 ([https://www.bot.or.th/App/BTWS\\_STAT/statistics/ReportPage.aspx?reportID=654&language=eng](https://www.bot.or.th/App/BTWS_STAT/statistics/ReportPage.aspx?reportID=654&language=eng)).

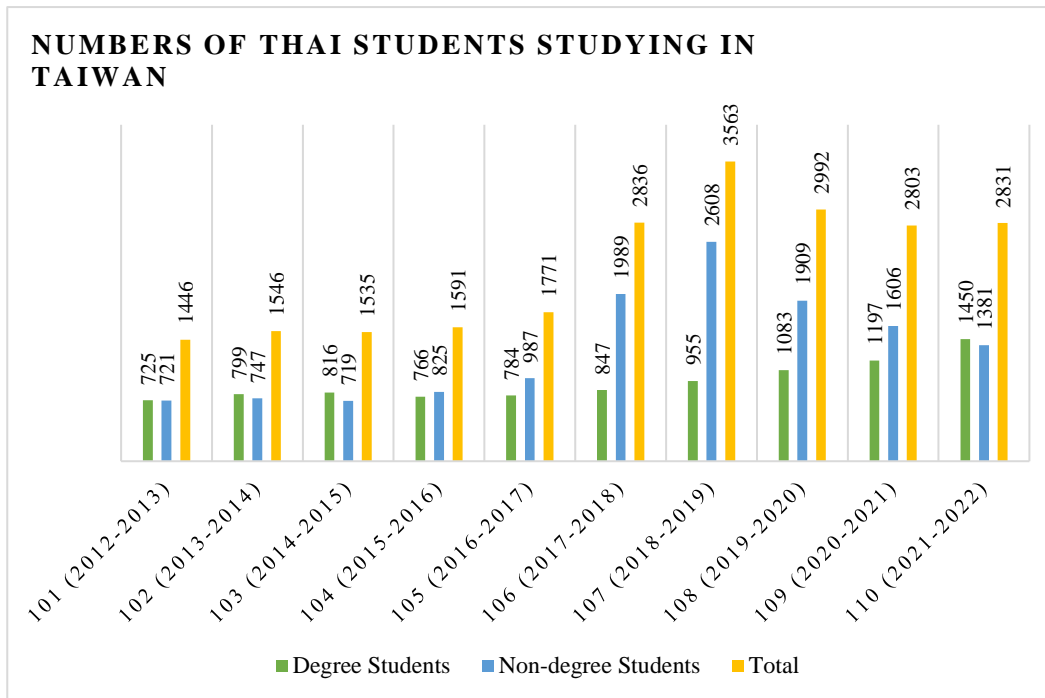
The Taiwanese government has also implemented significant trade and economic-related projects and events toward Thailand to encourage Taiwan and Thailand's deeper economic integration. For example, since 2018, Taiwan has been annually organizing the Taiwan-Thailand Industrial Collaboration Summits to promote industrial cooperation and exchanges between two countries. In 2019, at the summit, Taiwan's Chinese National Federation of Industries and the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) achieved memorandums of understanding (MOU) to collaborate in the field of food, textile, machinery, uncrewed aerial vehicle, and smart city (Central News Agency, 2019). Taiwan has also annually organized the Taiwan Expo in Thailand to promote Taiwan's culture, tourism, education, and sciences in medicine, industries, and technology. Moreover, in 2018, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) has



established a partnership with Thailand's PChome Online Inc. to promote e-commerce cooperation and has continued to expand Taiwan's product marketing through online platforms in Thailand (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2018c-2021).

Regarding talent exchanges, under the New Southbound Talent Development Program, the Taiwanese government categorizes Thailand as one of the initial priority countries in the talent development programs. To attract Thai students to study in Taiwan in order to strengthen people's connection between two countries, the Taiwanese government annually funds scholarships to encourage Thai students and scholars to study and conduct research in Taiwan, including Huayu Enrichment Scholarship, MOE Taiwan Scholarship, International Higher Education Scholarship Programs of Taiwan ICDF, Academia Sinica Taiwan International Graduate Program (TIGP), MOFA Taiwan Fellowship, MOE Short Term Research Award, Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies, as well as scholarships funded by universities (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017; Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-b). Taiwan has also established a Taiwan Connection base and collaborated with the Taiwan Education Center in Thailand, which was established in 2013 hosted by the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (NPUST), to promote Taiwanese higher education and exchange programs in Taiwan, such as annually organizing Taiwan Higher Education Fair, and facilitating academic cooperation with Thai academic institutes (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017; Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-a). With these efforts, the number of Thai students studying in Taiwan has increased annually from 1,446 in 2012 to 3,563 in 2019. However, the number of Thai students promptly decreased after 2020 due to Taiwan's entry restriction from the COVID-19 preventive measures. Figure 2.3 shows the number of Thai students studying in Taiwan between 2012 and 2021.

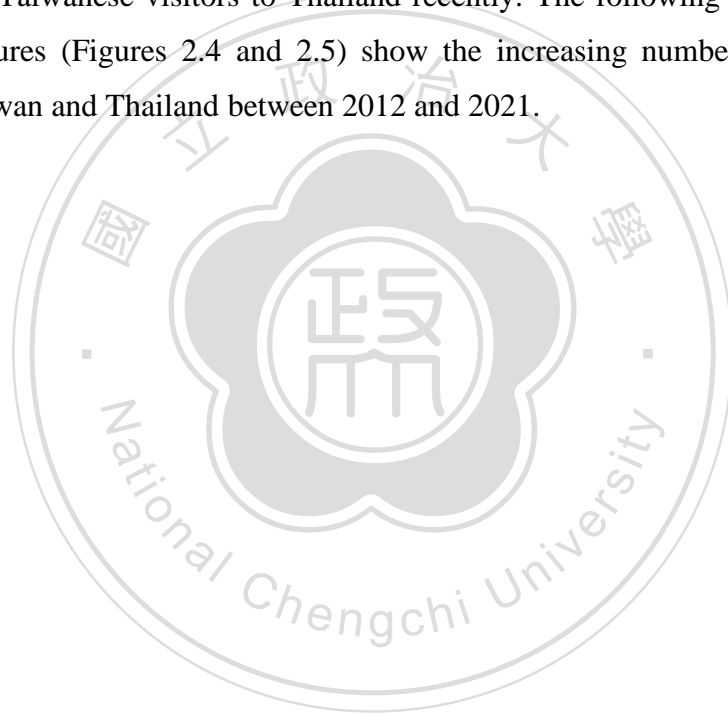
**Figure 2.3 Numbers of Thai Students Studying in Taiwan between 101 and 110 Academic Year (2012-2022)**



*Note.* Adapted from *Dazhuan xiao yuan jingwai xuesheng renshu tongji* (Statistics on the Number of Foreign Students in Colleges and Universities), by Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2013-2022, Department of Statistics, Retrieved March 14, 2022 (<https://depart.moe.edu.tw/ed4500/News.aspx?n=5A930C32CC6C3818&sms=91B3AAE8C6388B96> [in Chinese]).

As regards resource sharing programs, Thailand is also one of the priority nations of Taiwan’s sharing resource cooperation in the field of healthcare. In 2018, under the ‘One Country, One Center’ strategy, Taiwan opened Changhua Christian Hospital (CCH) in Thailand. The CCH hospital later achieved MOU with RSU International Hospital and the Bangkok Christian Hospital to set up a smart healthcare system as well as to continuously collaborate in sharing medical resources and technology, process management, and personnel training (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2018a). Taiwan and Thailand have also cooperated in sharing agricultural techniques. In 2019, Thailand Royal Project Foundation invited Taiwan agricultural representatives to Ang Kang, Huai Nam Khun, Khun Wang,

and other developmental project centers to exchange agricultural technology (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2019). To promote Taiwan and Thailand tourism, since 2016, the Taiwanese government has allowed a visa exemption program for Thai citizens (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2021) and set up a Taiwan promotional center in Thailand in 2017 (Office of Trade Negotiation 2018b). Apart from these examples, Taiwan and Thailand have been continuously collaborating in many projects in the field of healthcare, tourism, culture, agriculture, as well as science and technology. (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2018c-2021). The significant results of these efforts evidently present in the rising numbers of Thai visitors to Taiwan and Taiwanese visitors to Thailand recently. The following table (Table 2.4) and figures (Figures 2.4 and 2.5) show the increasing number of visitors between Taiwan and Thailand between 2012 and 2021.



**Table 2.4 Numbers of Thai Visitors to Taiwan between 2012 and 2021**

<b>Purposes of visit Years</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>2021</b>
Business	24,881	24,151	10,464	10,285	10,179	10,743	11,536	11,784	1,349	62
Leisure	27,525	37,062	34,344	52,640	110,116	201,729	214,725	300,352	29,890	4
Visit Relatives	9,861	9,853	4,894	4,892	6,652	9,253	9,187	9,742	1,664	176
Conference	2,191	2,318	2,115	2,156	2,490	3,006	3,358	3,225	201	0
Study	2,021	2,236	1,276	952	1,367	2,052	2,514	3,093	492	66
Exhibition	828	841	772	873	866	1,254	1,285	1,350	20	1
Medical Treatment	80	110	96	89	94	121	102	121	15	1
Others	30,325	27,567	50,851	52,432	63,876	64,376	77,301	84,259	29,922	7,260
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,712</b>	<b>104,138</b>	<b>104,409</b>	<b>124,409</b>	<b>195,640</b>	<b>292,534</b>	<b>320,008</b>	<b>413,926</b>	<b>63,533</b>	<b>7,570</b>

(Unit: Person)

*Note.* From *Tourism Statistics, Yearly Statistics, Monthly Statistics* (E003130) [Data set], by Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2022, February 18, Ministry of Transportation and Communications ROC, Retrieved March 14, 2022 (<https://admin.taiwan.net.tw/English/FileUploadCategoryListE003130.aspx?apname=FileUploadCategoryListE003130>).

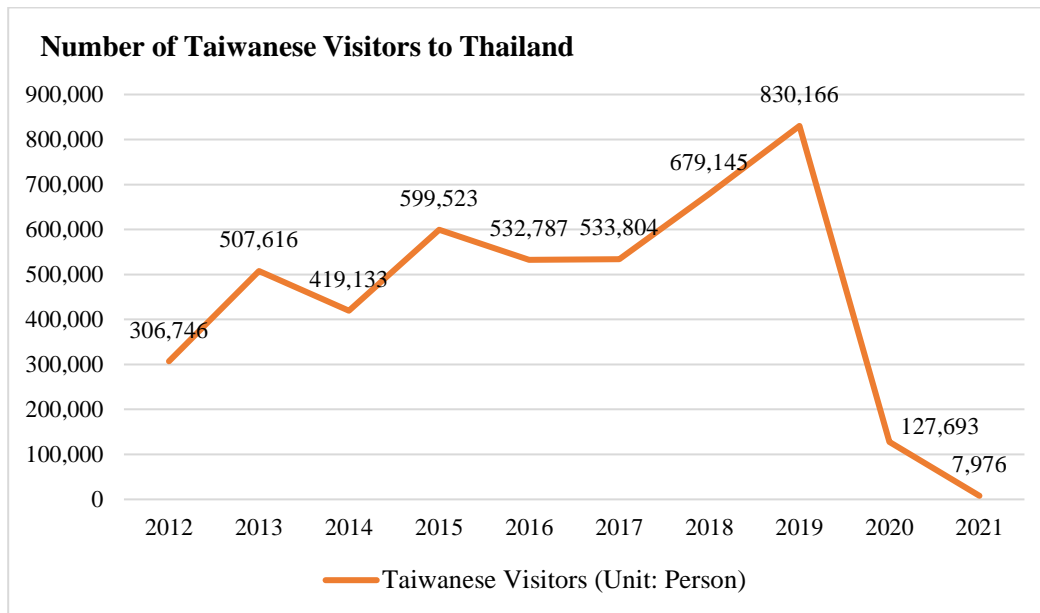
<sup>6</sup> The decreasing numbers of Thai visitors to Taiwan and Taiwanese visitors to Thailand are due to the entry restriction between the two countries from preventive measures of COVID-19 since 2020.

**Figure 2.4 Number of Thai Visitors to Taiwan between 2012 and 2021**



*Note.* Adapted from *Tourism Statistics, Yearly Statistics, Monthly Statistics* (E003130) [Data set], by Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2022, February 18, Ministry of Transportation and Communications ROC, Retrieved March 14, 2022 (<https://admin.taiwan.net.tw/English/FileUploadCategoryListE003130.aspx?appname=FileUploadCategoryListE003130>).

**Figure 2.5 Number of Taiwanese Visitors to Thailand between 2012 and 2021**



*Note.* Adapted from *Tourism Statistics, Yearly Statistics, Monthly Statistics* (E003130) [Data set], by Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2022, February 18, Ministry of Transportation and Communications ROC, Retrieved March 14, 2022 (<https://admin.taiwan.net.tw/English/FileUploadCategoryListE003130.aspx?appname=FileUploadCategoryListE003130>).

By reinforcing institutional links and connectivity, Taiwan established the Yushan Forum in 2017 as a regional dialogue platform to facilitate governmental and non-governmental between Taiwan and its neighboring partnership countries. Thailand has annually participated in the forum, and Thai key figures, former Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya and former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Kittiratt Na-Ranong, were invited to deliver speeches in the forum between 2017 and 2018, and 2020, respectively (Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, n.d.). In addition, Taiwan and Thailand have also deepened cultural collaboration through the Southeast Asia Advisory Committee. The Committee was established in 2015 by the Ministry of Culture as a platform for Taiwan and the NSP countries to exchange dialogue on the regional development of culture. Participating in the committee, Thanom Chapakdee, Thai visual artist and art critic, Pawit Mahasarinand, a chairman of the Chulalongkorn University's Department of

Theatrical Arts, and Anocha Suwichakornpong, a Thai independent film director, had served as the member of the first (2015-2016), second (2017), and third (2018-2019) Southeast Asia Advisory Committee, respectively (Ministry of Culture, n.d.). In summary, Table 2.5 shows overall Taiwan's NSP implementation toward Thailand.



**Table 2.5 The New Southbound Implementation Results till 2021**

Year	Programs
<b>Trade and Economic Collaboration</b>	
2018-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually organize the Taiwan-Thailand Industrial Collaboration Forum               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In 2019, Taiwan's Chinese National Federation of Industries and the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) achieved MOU to collaborate in the field of food, textile, machinery, uncrewed aerial vehicle, and smart city.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Annually organize Taiwan Expo in Thailand to promote Taiwan’s culture, tourism, education, and sciences in the field of medicine, industries, technology.</li> <li>• Annually cooperate on the construction of infrastructure in Thailand, mainly in the field of power plants, petrochemical plants, and environmental engineering projects.</li> <li>• Annually organize the New Southbound Theme Business Alliance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In 2019, Thailand was in the theme of ‘Smart Care’ and ‘3C Style.’</li> <li>○ In 2020, Thailand was in the theme of ‘Smart Tourism.’</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) has established a partnership with Thailand’s PChome Online Inc. to promote e-commerce cooperation.</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Linkou New Ventures Park and Amazon AWS joint Innovation Venture has signed an MOU with Thailand’s True Digital Park for the international partnership.</li> <li>• Organized the ‘2019 Taiwan Innovation and Technology Exhibition and Thailand Innovation and Entrepreneurship Exhibition’ to promote new Taiwan-Thailand Innovation and Technology exchange platform.</li> <li>• Cooperated with Thai logistic service industries to promote Taiwan’s System Integration (SI) innovative solution.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized the New Southbound International Smart City Forum in the theme of ‘Link Thailand and Indonesia: Explore the Unlimited Collaboration Opportunities of Smart Cities’ and invited renowned Thai IDC analysts to analyze the investment environment and share experiences on the issues.</li> <li>• Organized ‘Thailand Smart City Online Matchmaking Event’ to assist Taiwanese manufacturers exchange and establish cooperation with Thai system companies.</li> </ul>
<b>Talent Exchanges</b>	
2018-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually provides scholarships for Thai students and researchers to study and conduct research in Taiwan, including Huayu Enrichment Scholarship, MOE Taiwan Scholarship, International Higher Education Scholarship Programs of Taiwan ICDF, Academia Sinica Taiwan International Graduate Program (TIGP), MOFA Taiwan Fellowship, MOE Short Term Research Award, Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies, as well as scholarships funded by universities (MOE scholarship quota for Thai students has increased from 15 in 2018 to 17 in 2019 and 18 in 2020).</li> <li>• Annually cooperate with Taiwan Education Center in Thailand, organizing Taiwan Higher Education Fairs and participating in education fairs held by Thai schools and universities.</li> <li>• Annually subsidy and dispatch Taiwanese graduates and teachers to teach in overseas Chinese schools in Thailand.</li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established Taiwan Connection bases in 8 countries, including Thailand, to collaborate in talent exchanges and bilateral cooperation with local higher educational institutes.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The New Southbound Talent Development recruited 411 doctoral-level scientific and technological talents from the New Southbound countries, including Thailand to participate in particular research projects.</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized ‘Taiwan - ASEAN Digital Linking, E-Commerce Great Leap Forward’ to</li> </ul>



	attract manufacturers and educational services from 7 countries, including Thailand.
	<b>Resource Sharing</b>
	<b>Medical and Public Health Cooperation</b>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the ‘One Country, One Center’ strategy, established Changhua Christian Hospital (CCH) in Thailand. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CCH Hospital has signed MOU with RSU International Hospital and the Bangkok Christian Hospital to collaborate in sharing medical resources and technology, process management, and personnel training.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Thailand and the Ministry of Health and Welfare launched the online Taiwan-Thailand Medical and Healthcare Exchange Service to promote Taiwanese healthcare facilities to Thai people.</li> <li>Organize a medical team to set up regional disease prevention in the six priority nations, including Thailand.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (FDA) hosted ‘the 2020 APEC Medical Devices Regulatory Science Center of Excellence (CoE) Workshop,’ also invited seeded teachers from Thailand to share the experience of using international standards as the safety and efficacy assessment of medical devices.</li> <li>Organized the New Southbound Traditional Medical Personnel and Management Regulation Exchange Meeting, also invited representatives from Thailand to share the country’s latest traditional medicines, management regulations, and registration requirements.</li> <li>Taiwan with the United States, Japan, and Australia held the ‘Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)’ under the theme of ‘New Coronavirus: Preventing the Second Wave of Epidemics,’ inviting experts from 6 countries, including Thailand, to participate in the discussion on the COVID-9 preventive measure.</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donated have a total of 4.09 million medical masks and 300,000 N95 masks, 21,000 pieces of protective clothing, 80,000 pieces of isolation clothing, five sets of thermal imaging temperature display devices, five sets of automated nucleic acid analyzers, and 1,010 oxygen generators to Southeast Asia countries including Thailand.</li> <li>Organized ‘WHO Dental Policy Guidelines and International Special Remote Conference on the Outcome of Oral Care Talen Training’ with 94 participants, including participants from Thailand.</li> </ul>
	<b>Agricultural Cooperation</b>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent agricultural representatives consists of the delegates from Wuling, Fushoushan, and Cingjing Farm to visit Ang Kang, Huai Nam Khun, Khun Wang, and other development project centers under the Thai Royal Project Foundation to exchange agricultural technology.</li> </ul>
	<b>Technology Cooperation</b>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taiwanese state-backed Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) signed MOU with Thailand’s National Science and Technological Development Agency to promote cooperation on innovation applications.</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established Taiwan’s Oversea Science and Technology Innovation Center (STIC) in 9 NSP countries, including Thailand.</li> <li>International Industry-Academy Union has established new six alliances the NSP target countries for industry-academic cooperation and has launched 31 projects valued at more than NT\$50 million with six companies from Southeast Asia countries, including Thailand.</li> <li>The Southbound Medical Material Product Marketing Plan obtained marketing authorization to sell medical products to 5 companies in Thailand.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The New Southward Research Project on Humanities and Cross-Disciplines organized four lectures with 1,352 participants. Among them, there were 409</li> </ul>

	participants from the New Southbound countries, including Thailand.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the establishment of the Oversea Science and Technology Innovation Center (STIC) from January to September, 12 MOC were signed, 4,227 talents were trained, and 336 conferences were held, and 50 international cooperation projects were promoted. Among 50 promoted international cooperation projects, there are five cooperation projects toward Thailand.</li> <li>• Taiwan National Applied Research Laboratories signed a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) with Thailand National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) in the field of Data Cube cooperation, applied to the census and monitoring of rice fields.</li> <li>• Under the New Southbound Smart Disaster Prevention Projects, Taiwan National Center for Earthquake Engineering (NCREE) and Thailand Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), as well as King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), co-organized a workshop on seismic reinforcement of building structures to promote seismic reinforcement technology to the Thai engineering industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Exchanges</b>	
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed the committee to visit Hat Yai, Thailand, to conduct a local cultural resource survey and cultural exchange.</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted the establishment of Mangmoom Book Publishing and subsidized the translation of Taiwanese books. 'What Kind of Car is There?' 「前面還有什麼車？」 and 'The Orange Horse' 「橘色的馬」</li> <li>• Organized 'Youth Cultural Gardeners' Project and subsidized six teams to go to Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand.</li> <li>• Launched the 'Southeast Asia and Taiwan Cultural Exchange and Cooperation Subsidy Program' granting nine teams, invited 36 people from Southeast Asia to Taiwan, and 47 Taiwanese people to Southeast Asia, including Thailand.</li> <li>• Organized the Taiwan-Thai Literature Seminar on the book 'Birds on a Wire' written by Thai writer Rewat Panpipat and held the exhibition for a year at Treasure Hill Artist Village.</li> <li>• Organized the '2020 Bangkok-Taiwan International Film Festival' in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Songkla, Phuket, and Khon Kaen. Despite the pandemic, the 53 physical events were still carried out to promote Taiwanese soft power and reinforce the influence of Taiwanese films in Southeast Asia.</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-organized the '2021 Thailand Online Museum Forum' discussing the role of museums in an aging society.</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism</b>	
2016-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2016, has launched visa exemption program for Thai nationals with a duration of stay of up to 14 days (Still effective till July 31, 2022).</li> </ul>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up Taiwan promotional center in Thailand.</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched 29 online events to promote Taiwan tourism, including inviting Thai internet celebrities to discuss Taiwanese hotspots in Clubhouse.</li> <li>• Published 'Precise Customer Development Plan,' with a plan to organize physical events and travel essays in Thailand to promote Taiwan's bicycle tourism, bubble milk tea, and tourist business area.</li> <li>• Organized the presentation results of the 'Taiwan-Thai Longtruk Art Co-Learning Program' at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC).</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Links and Connectivity</b>	
2015-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2017, established the Yushan Forum and annually organized the forum to a regional dialogue platform and facilitate governmental and non-governmental between Taiwan and its neighboring partner countries, including Thailand. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In 2017-2018, Thai former Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya was invited to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>deliver a speech in the forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In 2020, former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Kittiratt Na-Ranong was invited to deliver a speech in the forum.</li> <li>● In 2015, established the Southeast Asia Advisory Committee and annually organizes the Committee to be a platform for Taiwan and the NSP countries to exchange dialogue on the regional development of culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the first SEA Advisory Committee (2015-2016), Thanom Chapakdee, Thai visual artist and art critic, served as the member of the committee.</li> <li>○ In the second SEA Advisory Committee (2017), Pawit Mahasarinand, a chairman of the Chulalongkorn University's Department of Theatrical Arts, served as the member of the committee.</li> <li>○ In the third SEA Advisory Committee (2018-2019), Anocha Suwichakornpong, a Thai independent film director, served as the member of the committee.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● In, 2018 established Living Arts International Taiwan Office, Mekong Cultural Hub (MCH), and annually launches the initiative to offer development opportunities for creative cultural practitioners focus on Mekong Region countries, including Thailand.</li> </ul>
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*Note.* Data are compiled by the author from:

1. *Visa-Exempt Entry*, by Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2021, July 20, Ministry of Foreign Affairs ROC (<https://www.boca.gov.tw/cp-149-4486-7785a-2.html>).
2. "Taiwan, Thailand sign seven MOUs on industrial cooperation," by Central News Agency, 2019, August 20, *Taiwan News* (<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3765556>).
3. *Southeast Asia Advisory Committee*, by Ministry of Culture, n.d., Retrieved December 13, 2021 ([https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/submenu\\_173.html](https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/submenu_173.html)).
4. *An Introductory Guide to Taiwan's New Southbound Policy*, by Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017, Executive Yuan, ROC.
5. *Progress and Prospect Taiwan's New Southbound Policy*, by Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018a, Executive Yuan, ROC.
6. *The New Southbound Policy: A Practical Approach Moving Full Steam Ahead*, by Office of Trade Negotiation, 2018b, Executive Yuan, ROC.
7. *Xinnanxiang zhixing chengguo* (The New Southbound Implementation Results), by Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018c-2021, Executive Yuan, ROC, Retrieved December 13, 2021 (<https://www.ey.gov.tw/otn/52AE1A9E6029676F> [in Chinese]).
8. *Archive*, by Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, n.d., Yushan Forum: Asian Dialogue or Innovation and Progress, Retrieved December 13, 2021 (<https://www.yushanforum.org/>).
9. *Living Arts International Taiwan Office*, by Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab, n.d., Mekong Cultural Hub, Retrieved December 13, 2021 (<https://clab.org.tw/en/unit/lai/>).
10. *Thun karn suek-sa* (Scholarship), by Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-b, Retrieved December 13, 2021 (<https://www.tecthailand.com/ทุนการศึกษา> [in Thai]).

To conclude, the New Southbound Policy is the Taiwanese foreign policy strategy to reinforce Taiwan's visibility and involvement in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia. Among the comprehensive characteristics of the NSP, one of the focal points of the policy emphasizes talent exchange and cultivation, employing Taiwanese soft power on education to cultivate people-to-people ties and facilitate mutual development between Taiwan and the NSP counterparts. Among the NSP target countries, Thailand is classified as one of the priority countries in the initiative, especially in talent cultivation programs. The implementation of Taiwan's NSP toward Thailand in different areas such as economic, healthcare, science and technology, culture, tourism in general, as well as education in particular, thus are important instruments that directly and indirectly engenders in the increasing number of Thai students in Taiwanese higher education in the recent years (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1). Still, the rising number of Thai students does not reflect the effectiveness of the NSP in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and upholding its international status in the perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan, which is the utmost goal of the NSP as public diplomacy. This thesis thus aims to assess the effectiveness of the initiative in such aspect. In the next section, related literature is reviewed to create deeper understanding on this issue.

## 2.2 Literature Review

### 2.2.1 Debates on the Effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy

Under the Tsai presidency, the New Southbound Policy has become a grand strategy of Taiwan's foreign policy to cooperate with South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia and reinforce its presence in the region. Despite the Taiwanese government's efforts to promote the initiative, Taiwanese and foreign scholars, think tanks, and journalists have continuously debated the effectiveness of the NSP. This part aims to present related literature on the debate of the effectiveness of the NSP. The literature is categorized in two aspects. The first one is the literature that shows the pessimistic viewpoints toward the NSP. The latter one is the literature that indicates the optimistic views of the NSP's effectiveness.

Literature that has pessimistic viewpoints toward the New Southbound Policy suggests internal and external factors that hinder the effectiveness of the policy. The internal factors encompass **1) an unclear and too broad scope of the policy, 2) budget issues, 3) few serious efforts to acknowledge the target region, 4) the ineffectiveness of policy operation and coordinating issues, and 5) less impressive economic outcomes.** For the external factor, critics of the NSP point out **6) China's pressure** as the most influential factor that obstructs Taiwan's deployment of the NSP.

First, Taiwan's internal factors that inhibit the New Southbound Policy's effectiveness is **the scope of the policy.** The NSP is widely criticized for its scope being 'unclear.' Netiwit Chotiphathaisal and Sukrid Peansuwan (2020), famous Thai youth activists, point out that "[O]ne of the most important problems is that Taiwan has not set a clear aim for which countries in this region that it aims to target with this plan." They illustrate how Taiwan gradually expanded its policy scope from ASEAN countries, then added more 6 South Asian countries, and later ended up with 18 countries, including the additional New Zealand and Australia. Another critique comes from Kwei-Bo Huang (2018). He points out that not only do they consist of 18 countries, the NSP also aims to achieve comprehensive

cooperation on healthcare, education, human resource development, technological innovation, agriculture, and disaster preparedness, which he condemns as “too broad and ambitious to be successful (p.57).”

Second, the broad and ambitious scope of the New Southbound Policy leads to another hindering factor of the NSP’s effectiveness, which is **budget issues** (Huang, 2018; Parameswaran, 2019; Shapiro, 2018). Considering the increasing budget that had been assigned to the NSP from US\$145 million in 2017 to US\$233 million in 2018, Huang (2018) points out that it still cannot cover all the major tasks, flagship programs, and prospective areas as mentioned in the NSP’s early statement. As a result, its achievements only concentrated on the increasing number of foreign tourists and students as well as Taiwan exports toward Southeast Asia and India. Such a budget shortage also raises concern about Taiwan’s budget misallocation that focuses on markets in a specific region rather than the one with the most significant potential and greatly impact on Taiwan (Huang, 2018). In this case, he gives an example that the operation of the NSP negatively affected Taiwan’s budget on activities and cooperation with mainland China. Given that China is the most influential power on Cross-Strait relations, fewer activities and cooperation will reduce Taiwan’s understanding of China, which will not favor Taiwan’s future and competitiveness (Huang, 2018).

Third, another internal factor is a **few serious efforts to acknowledge the target region**. Encompassing 18 targeted countries in the policy, not only do the Taiwanese governments needs good preparation to acknowledge the target countries in order to set the right policy (Chao, 2016; Chotiphapaisan & Peansuwan, 2020; Shapiro, 2019), but the Taiwanese public also needs more understanding of the NSP counterparts to create the suitable environment for cooperation (Chong, 2019). However, exploring Taiwan’s educational institutions, think tanks, experts, and human resources, there are few serious efforts to acknowledge the region. For example, there are few Taiwan leading research centers and institutions conducting researches or offering higher degrees

in Southeast Asian studies.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there are inadequate efforts to support Taiwanese students to study in the NSP countries.<sup>8</sup> (Chotiphapaisan & Peansuwan, 2020). Such few endeavors are inefficient to raise Taiwanese public's understanding of South Asia and Southeast Asia. Taiwanese people have still perceived these countries as undeveloped. Lack of knowledge from both policy-makers and the public toward the target countries resulted in an exploitative relationship and thus potentially engenders the setback of the initiative. Such problems are evidently present in the case of Taiwan Formosa Plastic's chemical spill that caused negative economic, environmental, and social consequences in central Vietnam (Chong, 2019; Chao, 2016).

Fourth, **the ineffectiveness of policy operation and coordinating issues** are also recognized as one of the internal factors of the NSP's ineffectiveness. Huang (2018) points out that "the DPP government's decision-making chain and strong inter-agency coordination fail to provide the momentum necessary for a successful NSP (p.58)." He gives an example of the Office of New Southbound Policy (ONSP), which was formerly responsible for the NSP decision-making and implementation. Still, it was illegally institutionalized as it lacks monitoring from the National Security Council or the Executive Yuan. After the establishment of the Office of Trade Negotiation (OTN) in 2016, taking responsibility to promote

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<sup>7</sup> Netiwit Chotiphapaisan and Sukrid Peansuwan (2020) explain that there is only National Chi Nan University actively acknowledges Southeast Asia by establishing Taiwan's first department of Southeast Asian Studies and the research center for Southeast Asia as well as offering degrees on Southeast Asia studies at the undergraduate, master, and doctorate level. However, the leading university such as National Chengchi University, despite the establishment of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, it still has not produced significant works to support the NSP. Similar to Academia Sinica that has established a Center for Southeast Asian Studies, it does not prioritize the center since it still works under the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies.

<sup>8</sup> They point out that the problems on the shortage of human resource who acknowledges this region come from Taiwanese social values to study master's degree and doctorate degree in Western countries. In addition, the government has also not provided adequate support and occupational guarantee to motivate Taiwanese students to study in the NSP countries (Chotiphapaisan & Peansuwan, 2020).

and implement the NSP, the OSNP was left unfunctional and later be dissolved in December 2017. Given the comprehensive scope of the NSP and the mediocre bureaucratic legacy from Ma's presidency, it also implies the difficulties of Tsai's administration to manage the interagency coordination encompassing 23 ministries and departments (Huang, 2018; Shapiro, 2019). Huang (2018) also gives an instance of the NSP's ineffectiveness that already exposed from its main task to assist immigrants in Taiwan to learn their original language and obtain work opportunities in Taiwan. However, related agencies took more than six months since Tsai's inauguration to convene the project amidst the remained concerns over the coordination of related budget and mission.

In addition to the ineffectiveness of policy operation, there are criticisms about the transparency of policy operation as well. Chotiphatpaisan and Peansuwan (2020) criticize the operation of the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF), a knowledge network institute that cooperates with other countries' institutions under the New Southbound Policy. They indicate that the organization is controlled mainly by the DPP and not be under the inspection of the Legislative Yuan. It thus raises concerns about the legitimacy of the organization, which might affect the efficiency and consistency of policy implementation. Moreover, Meesuwan (2018) also indicates that the limitation of policy operation might be affected by competitions inside and between political parties such as the fractions inside the DPP and business tycoons tied with the KMT that desire open economic relations with China.

Last but not least, the New Southbound Policy is widely criticized from **the less impressive economic outcomes of the policy** (Huang, 2018, p. 60; Huang, 2019; Meesuwan, 2018). Critiques indicate that the incompetent management of the DPP government on economic aspects such as "failing to choose the right people for senior positions; exhibiting poor executive ability (making but not implementing good policies); failing to establish prioritization among her policies; and vacillating on next steps without strong determination. (Romberg, 2017 as cited in Meesuwan, 2018)" that cause fewer substantial results in the economic aspect. For instance, despite the increase of trade and investment



with the NSP counterparts, the large share of Taiwan's trade and investment has still come from China (Huang, 2019). Taiwan's NSP infrastructure projects not only were criticized by Taiwanese society for the lack of transparency and fraudulent activities but also faced challenges from target countries such as Indonesia and India (Huang, 2019). In addition, there is only one bilateral investment agreement (BIA) with the Philippines, out of 10 BIAs with Southeast Asian countries, which was renewed in December 2017 (Huang, 2018). Moreover, the Yushan Forum was also criticized for inviting few important political and economic figures and not showing any effective results other than spending money (Huang, 2018).

Regarding the external context, many pieces of literature address **China as a significant factor** that engenders the ineffectiveness of the New Southbound Policy (Black, 2019; Chao, 2016; Chao, 2016; Chotiphatpaisan & Peansuwan; 2020; Huang 2018; Jing, 2018; Meesuwan, 2018; Yang, 2018). The DPP government has a sour relationship with China since Tsai did not openly recognize the '1992 Consensus'<sup>9</sup> in her inauguration speech. The Chinese government was displeased and retaliated by convincing São Tomé and Príncipe, and Panama to end diplomatic relationships with Taiwan in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Besides, China also shut down official communication channels and halted Chinese tourists from going to Taiwan. China's dissatisfaction with Tsai's stance on the One China Principle has extended toward the NSP. Chinese academics and media publicly criticized the NSP as Taiwan's preparation for political independence (Black, 2019). Such aggravated Cross-Strait relations, along with China's incentive to promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) across South and Southeast Asia, implicitly and explicitly impedes Taiwan's NSP. South and Southeast Asian countries are thus likely to be attracted by massive economic interests from China's BRI and then hesitate to officially cooperate with Taiwan. Meanwhile, China also hinders Taiwan's government-to-government engagement with these countries. The example could see from China's opposition to the

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<sup>9</sup> The 1992 Consensus achieved by the Chen presidency and China to guarantee 'One China Principle' but still open rooms for different interpretations (Black, 2019).

Taiwan-Philippines' BIA in 2017 and China's insistence toward Vietnam and Singapore to commit to the 'One China' principle (Black, 2019; Chao, 2016; Chotiphatpaisan & Peansuwan, 2020; Huang, 2018; Jing, 2018; Meesuwan, 2018; Yang, 2018).

Nevertheless, these negative comments toward the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy were ponderously criticized in many aspects. Huynh Tam Sang (2021) disagrees with the critiques of the NSP on the failure to manage the Cross-Strait Relations and divert Taiwan's economic reliance from China. He points out that these critiques ignore Taiwan's independent and strategic posture, which affects the nature of the NSP to align Taiwan's role in the region. Sang's disagreement also resonates with Alan H. Yang and Tung Cheng-Chia (2020)'s argument that the critiques of the NSP also fail to recognize Taiwan's reciprocal relationship with the NSP countries and the core of the NSP as a comprehensive strategy focusing on people-to-people interaction across various aspects rather than a mere economic-oriented strategy. In addition, Lindsay Black (2019) also argues that such critiques overemphasize China's influence. She indicates that despite China's inhibition of Taiwan to join the BRI and AIIB and sign the FTAs with the South and Southeast Asia, there is less clear evidence that China can prevent Taiwanese enterprises from achieving business deals with the NSP countries. China's interference with the NSP might also hurt its economy and amount to the DPP's political victor (Jen, 2016 as cited in Black, 2019). Moreover, although China inhibits Taiwan from officially collaborating with other countries, it cannot impede Taiwan to seeks engagement through epistemic community and transnational actors with the NSP counterparts (Yang, 2018).

Apart from criticizing the pessimistic viewpoints toward the New Southbound Policy, these scholars, along with other experts who have positive viewpoints toward the policy, also emphasize many advantages of the initiative, which can be categorized into three main aspects.

First, various scholars and experts illustrate that **the New Southbound Policy has mutually increased benefits between Taiwan and the NSP**

**counterparts across various areas.** As South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia possess abundant natural resources and are located in important routes for energy and goods import, the NSP opens opportunities for Taiwan and its partners to mutually strengthen economic and socio-cultural linkages (Bing, 2017; Chong, 2019; Yang, 2017; Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019). Using the Cointegration testing method to analyze Taiwan import and export with ASEAN-10 countries and ASEAN-6 (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) over 1989 and 2017 period, Liew and Tang (2019) also support that the NSP is generally sustainable and does not violate their international budget constrain. It thus effectively integrates Taiwan and ASEAN international trade and will mutually benefit them in the long run.

The increasing mutual benefits from the New Southbound Policy are also evident in the significant growing level for trade and investment as well as visitor flows between Taiwan and the NSP countries,<sup>10</sup> the Taiwan-Philippines BIA achievement in 2017, and the successful establishment of the NSP programs such as the construction of water purification plant in East Java, the promotion of a Modern Agriculture Demo Farm in West Java, the establishment of oversea Taiwanese hospitals under ‘One Country, One Center’ program in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and India, *et cetera* (Yang & Chiang, 2019). According to this evidence, Yang (2018) indicates that Taiwan’s engagement with the NSP countries helps enhance and sustain deeper regional integration. Moreover, the NSP also reinforces a ‘social engineering initiative’ to reform Taiwan such as promoting Southeast Asian language in primary school, granting *Halal* certificates, and improving welfare and rights of migrant workers,

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<sup>10</sup> Total trade values between Taiwan and the NSP targeted countries has significantly increased from US\$95, 832.77 million in 2016 to US\$149,097.19 million in 2021 (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, n.d.-a). The numbers of visitors from the NSP’ countries to Taiwan have risen from 1,799,632 in 2016 to 2, 783,780 in 2019. It substantially decreased to 465,720 in 2020 and 68,556 in 2021 due to Taiwan’s entry restriction from the COVID-19 pandemic. Taiwanese visitors to the NSP countries have grown from 2,233,784 in 2016 to 3,213,462 in 2019. It also decreased to 555,642 in 2020 and 44,269 in 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic control regulation in each country. (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2022).

providing supports for living convenience of Southeast Asians in Taiwan such as the availability of English and Southeast Asian languages service at National Immigration Agency, New Immigrants Hall, as well as various police departments (Fulco, 2018). Such a reform initiative, Yang (2017) indicates that it would help to build 'a better Taiwan' and wider the worldview of Taiwanese people's perceptions of other countries, which will reinforce better accommodation of a country's multiculturalism (Parameswaran, 2019).

Second, another effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy is that **it is a successful maneuver of Taiwanese soft power that results in the increase of Taiwan's visibility and favorability in the target countries** (Bing, 2017; Chiang, 2017; Yang & Hsiao, 2020). Bing (2017) indicates that different from the offensive diplomacy in the Chen presidency that estranged some countries from Taiwan, Tsai's NSP has opted soft power strategy emphasizing Taiwan's democratic achievement and its experiences in culture, education, business, science, and technology to offer concrete and cooperative benefits to the NSP partners. Such the NSP's soft power approach has raised a positive image of Taiwan in the international audiences. Exploring attitudes toward Taiwan among scholars from Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and India, Chiang (2020) shows that the NSP upholds Taiwan's positive image across the region. For example, the people-to-people engagement of the NSP resonates with Taiwan's existing narrative as a democratic and civil society supporter. Taiwan's economic success and advanced technology can also contribute economic development of many countries in the region. Even though there are some concerns about China's factor, they acknowledge that the NSP does not emphasize Taiwan's independence stance and indicates the need for clever ways to collaborate with Taiwan without provoking China's pressure. Moreover, by assessing the positive attitudes of the NSP students in general and Vietnamese students in particular, Lin and Sung (2020) and Nguyen et al. (2020) respectively point out that the NSP significantly attracts the NSP students in general and Vietnamese students, in particular, to study in Taiwan. After studying in Taiwan, these students then have positive perceptions of Taiwan.

Last but not least, many scholars and experts also point out that **the New Southbound Policy is an effective strategic policy to diversify and strengthen Taiwan's foreign relations with other countries** (Bing, 2017; Black, 2019; Chen, 2020; Chong, 2019; Parameswaran, 2019; Yang, 2017; Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019). Chong (2019) argues that engaging with the NSP partners helps Taiwan diversify its strategic risks. For example, a mutual presence between Taiwan and the NSP countries will affiliate these NSP to become an important stakeholder in Cross-Strait stability. As a result, it will create greater leverage for Taiwan to prevent a severe situation in Cross-strait since the increasing of the NSP presence in Taiwan will render higher diplomatic costs for China to mobilize the use of armed force in the region (Bing, 2017; Yang, 2017).

The New Southbound Policy also bolsters Taiwan's relations with other countries. Chong (2019) also indicates that the NSP assists in reinforcing immediate Taiwan and its neighbors' relationship. Black (2019) argues that China's antagonistic stance toward the NSP will push Taiwan to further align with Japan, China's rival. Such evidence obviously presents when Tsai Ing-wen officially visited Japan in 2015 to meet Japanese key officials. In late 2016, Japan renamed 'the Interchange Association' that coordinates diplomatic relations with Taiwan to 'Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association.' In 2017, two countries also enhanced the cooperative relationship between the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) to expand business opportunities in Southeast Asia. Apart from this, Chen (2020) further points out that the NSP also positively affects the relationship between Taiwan and the United States. He shows that the people-centered approach of the NSP and Tsai's efforts to promote it regardless of the large budget allocation and disapproval from her supporters have credibly signaled Taiwan's commitment to the non-provocative policy, which is congruent with the United States interests in Cross-Strait relations.

Besides, the New Southbound Policy helps Taiwan strengthen its relationship with other countries from the contribution and establishment of regional institutional platforms and community networks as well. Chen (2020),

Chong (2019), and Parameswaran (2019) commonly agree that Taiwan's NSP can contribute to and complement the United States' Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP). Such contribution was presented in Taiwan and the United States' establishment of the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF) as a mechanism of Taiwan and the United States' efforts to provide assistance for infrastructure construction in Southeast Asia.

Reviewing these series of literature, it is evident that amidst the efforts of the Tsai presidency to mobilize the New Southbound Policy as a grand strategy to reinforce Taiwan's presence in the Asia-Pacific region, there are ongoing debates on the effectiveness of the NSP. Some Taiwanese and foreign scholars see the NSP as ineffective due to the internal and external limitations, while others view the policy as effectual to mutually benefit Taiwan and the NSP counterparts as well as facilitate Taiwan's favorable image and relations with other countries. Considering this set of literature, some gaps need further development. Given that literature discussed above illustrates the debate on the effectiveness of the NSP in terms of economic and foreign strategy, only a few pieces of literature (e.g., Bing, 2017; Chiang, 2017; Lin & Sung, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Yang & Hsiao, 2020) analyze the NSP as soft power operation. Among a set of the NSP literature in aspect of soft power, although some pieces assess the effectiveness of the NSP in shaping positive attitudes of the NSP countries' experts and students toward Taiwan in general and Vietnamese students in specific, there is still no literature gauging the effectiveness of the NSP in upholding the attractiveness of Taiwan and its international status in Thai students' perceptions in particular. This thesis thus aims to specifically fill this gap and contribute to the literature on the debate on the effectiveness of the NSP at large.

### 2.2.2 The Concept of Soft Power and Taiwan's Public Diplomacy

In the 1990s, Joseph S. Nye Jr., an American political scientist, proposed the concept of '**soft power.**' By exploring the decline of American power after the end of the Cold War, Nye (1990) indicates that the nature of world politics has much more complexed from the increase of economic independence, the

emergence of transnational actors, the rise of nationalism, the widespread of technology, as well as the change in nature of political issues which focuses more on the international cooperation to cope up with transnational issues such as ecological change, health epidemics, and terrorism. The use of the traditional instrument of power, especially military force, thus is limited and cannot be sufficiently employed to achieve particular ends of a country. Nye otherwise points out that in the complex world politics, effective communication with intangible forms of power such as national cohesion, universalistic culture, and international institutions are increasingly important. Such power has the ability to attract or shape other' preferences to follow or agree with the condition that a state prefers to achieve its goals. This particular type of power, Nye terms it as **co-optive power** or **'soft power'** (Nye, 1990).

After coining the concept of soft power in the 1990s, Joseph Nye elaborates his idea further in the book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, published in 2004. Different from 'hard power' which is the ability of coercion in the influence of inducement 'carrot' and threat 'stick' through tangible resources such as military or economic resource, **soft power**, Nye (2004) argues that, refers to **"the ability to shape the preference of others"** to **"getting others to want the outcome that you want"** by **"co-opting people rather than coercing them"** (Nye, 2004, p. 5). This ability rests on intangible resources, which are a country's culture, political values, and institutions (Nye, 2004, p. 11). In addition to these resources, Nye (2011) further explains in the book *The Future of Power* that economic and military resources also could generate soft power from a country's economic successful development or 'myth of invincibility' of its military strength (Nye, 2011, pp. 85-87). Such soft power resources can create attraction, persuasion, and sometimes duty toward other countries and then shape their behaviors in accordance with a country's interests. Soft power is thus increasingly important in setting agenda to justify the use of hard power, create a national image, and build a good relationship with other actors in order to attain national goals (Nye, 2004).

Regarding the aforementioned soft power resources, there is a widespread misunderstanding between power resources and its power as such. It is undeniable that people always measure how much power of people based on how many resources they possess, but this is not how power is exercised. Alexander L. Vuving (2009) illustrates further how soft power actually works based on Nye's soft power concept. Vuving points out that there is a subtle distinction between power resources and soft power currency. Unlike soft power resources, which are the assets of power, power currency is the property of resources or activities that produce power. He then classifies three types of power currencies that generate soft power: **1) benignity, 2) brilliance, and 3) beauty** (Vuving, 2009, p. 8). First, *benignity* is an aspect of power currencies that comes from 'reciprocal altruism' between the agents. When an agent helps, supports, or be nice to others, it thus produces 'sympathy and gratitude,' which encourages reciprocity and cooperation. Second, *brilliance* is an aspect of power currencies that comes from a human's tendency to learn from others' success. When a country performs a strong military capability, economic success, advanced technological development, or attractive culture and values, it generates 'admiration' of other countries to imitate or adapt its practices, which help to prevent hostility and facilitate mutual understanding. Last, *beauty* is an aspect of power currencies that comes from the tendency to join a like-minded community, to seek moral support, guidance, or aesthetic experiences. When a country compellingly articulates ideals, values, or visions, it creates 'inspiration' toward others. Consequently, a country will be perceived as a representative and gain creditability, legitimacy, and even moral authority in world politics (Vuving, 2009).

Complementing Vuving's explanation of how soft power generates through power currencies, Nye (2011) also presents two models of how soft power works: **1) the direct model and 2) indirect models**. In the direct model, government elites may be directly attracted and persuaded by the benignity, brilliance, and beauty of other's government leaders. Such effect will shape elite's decisions and policy outcomes. For the indirect model, which is a more common form of soft power operation. Soft power generally works in a two-step model.



When the public and third parties are attracted and influenced by other countries' cultures, values, and policies, they will later create the environment to affect their own government's decision. This process exposes the critical characteristic of soft power operation. That is, soft power heavily relies on receivers' perception of whether they perceive delivered messages positively or negatively. Such attribute causes soft power to be difficult to wield.

The difficulty of wielding soft power is not only from the outcome that heavily depends on the target's acceptance but also from its resources which are outside the government's control, and its results that may take a long time. However, the maneuver of soft power is still attractive and more effective than hard power, which is increasingly disfavored in contemporary politics (Wagner, 2014). Soft power also gains more attentiveness from small states that face difficulty in accessing hard power resources. Since its ability rests on intangible resources, soft power thus opens opportunities for small states to engender its influence in world politics (Wagner, 2014). In the effort of wielding soft power, **public diplomacy**, the diplomatic activities to engage with the individuals, private groups, NGOs, or the public at large, is a vital instrument to influence other countries' public opinion and government (Nye, 2004). In the article *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, Nye (2008) indicates that public diplomacy can be carried out through 1) daily communications, 2) special themes and strategic communications including political campaigns, and 3) the development of the long-term relationship with key individuals such as scholarships, exchanges, seminars, and so on in order to create an attractive national branding and enhance the prospect to attain particular outcomes.

For the effective way to wield soft power through public diplomacy, Nye (2008) also points out that **two-way communication** is a more effective technique to launch public diplomacy as it helps understand target audiences. In addition, in the information age, when advanced technologies are available for people to access numerous information, credibility has thus become a significant soft power resource of government to compete with other stories. To enhance its

credibility, a government should avoid using propagandistic messages in its public diplomacy, which is counterproductive to soft power and undermines its reputation. Apart from the direct soft power policy, as the public in the postmodern era is more skeptical toward the authority, the government also should cooperate with a private agency such as NGOs, which may gain more trust from the public than the government in order to broaden communication channels to reach the target audience. Moreover, the government should openly accept criticisms toward its policies as well since the avoidance of criticism could undermine the government's credibility and lose its resource to attract foreign elites (Nye, 2008). According to the aforementioned description, a **'smart public diplomacy,'** therefore, should involve **"the role of credibility, self-criticism, and the role of civil society"** to efficiently wield soft power (Nye, 2008, p. 108).

With regard to Taiwan, 'soft power' has been adopted by Taiwanese practitioners and governmental officials since the 1990s. Considering its special status from lacking formal diplomatic relations with major powers and membership of important international organizations (Rawnsley , 2012), soft power is thus greatly attractive to Taiwan as a 'weapon of the weak' for **promoting Taiwan's attractiveness to its allies and international audiences** in order to compete with China's dominance and **enhance Taiwan's status in the international arena** (Rawnley, 2012; Wang & Lu, 2008). Despite employing Nye's definition of soft power as a power "to change others' preferences through persuasion" (Wang & Lu, 2008, p. 431), Taiwan interprets the scope of soft power broader than Nye's argument by covering economic power and domestic components that constitute soft power (Wang & Lu, 2008). Taiwan's soft power resources have been discussed in various literature (Chu, 2011; deLisle, 2010; Institute for National Policy Research, n.d.; Lee, 2005; Otmazgin, 2021; Rawnley, 2012; Wang & Lu, 2008). Remarkably, most literature agrees that **democracy** is the core component of Taiwan's soft power, making it distinctive from other democratic countries as "the only democracy in the Chinese world (Institute for National Policy Research, n.d.)." Another important component is Taiwanese **culture**, which is unique from the combination of traditional Chinese culture,

indigenous culture, Japanese and Dutch heritage, as well as American and Southeast Asia influences (Otmazgin, 2021). Additionally, most literature also identifies other Taiwan's soft power elements, including **diplomacy, economic accomplishment, IT advancement, high quality of human resources, the participation of civil society in global affairs, and national pride** (Wang & Lu, 2008).

Based on the components of soft power, Taiwan has implemented numbers of public diplomacy to enhance its attractiveness in the international arena such as establishing Taiwan's Government Information Office (GIO) to create Taiwan's international image to be distinct from China, promoting democratic values in the international community, actively providing foreign aid and exporting its experiences on economic achievement to other countries, as well as continuously investing in cultural exchange programs. Moreover, Taiwan has also embedded public diplomacy initiative in its foreign policy such as President Chen's concept of 'people's diplomacy,' to support Taiwanese people to engage with global societal network (Wang & Lu, 2008). Such strategy of public diplomacy has also been employed by the recent Tsai incumbency as well, that is the '**New Southbound Policy.**' The NSP is not only Taiwan's foreign policy strategy but also a public diplomacy initiative that seeks cooperation with other countries' civil society based on Taiwan's achievement, as it is stated in the overall goals of the NSP as follows.

*(1) Foster links between Taiwan and the nations of ASEAN and South Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia in the areas of economic and trade relations, science and technology, and culture; share resources, talent, and markets; and create a new cooperation mode that seeks mutual benefits and win-win situations. By these undertakings, we seek to forge a "sense of economic community."*

*(2) Establish mechanisms for wide-ranging negotiation and dialogue; form a consensus for cooperation with the nations of ASEAN and South Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia; effectively resolve*

*related problems and disagreements; and gradually build up mutual trust and a sense of community.*

(Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017, p. 32)

Apart from the concrete aim of the policy to facilitate cooperation and mutual benefits between Taiwan and the NSP counterparts, these overall goals, based on the promotion of Taiwan's soft power resources such as economic development, technological advancement, or culture, also implicate the objectives on Taiwan's soft power maneuver under the NSP implementation, which are **1) to improve the attractiveness of Taiwan as well as to enhance ASEAN, South Asia, Australia and New Zealand people's attitudes toward Taiwan, and 2) to augment Taiwan's soft power and uphold on its international standing in sight of the NSP counterparts.** Besides, the function of the NSP is also in compliance with Nye's argument of smart public diplomacy since the policy does not use a propagandic message to promote Taiwan. It rather emphasizes two-way interaction between Taiwan and its NSP counterparts in the public spheres such as students and scholars, NGOs, and private enterprises.

As for the literature mentioned above, since hard power like military force is costly and difficult to mobilize in the contemporary international politics, soft power is then increasingly crucial for a country to generate its attractiveness to shape other countries' behavior to achieve its goals. Considering Taiwan as a small country with distinctive status in the international politics, soft power is appeal to Taiwan for generating its attractiveness to other countries to uphold its international standing. The recent Taiwan's New Southbound Policy is also designated as Taiwan's public diplomacy. The NSP in aspect of public diplomacy has two major goals, which are to 1) improve Taiwan's attractiveness and the attitudes of the NSP countries' people toward Taiwan as well as 2) strengthen Taiwan's international status in the sight of the NSP counterparts. Since talent development programs, to attract the NSP students to study in Taiwan, is one of the core components of the NSP initiative, this thesis thus aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the NSP on the aforementioned two particular goals on higher

education students from Thailand, one of the priority countries of the NSP. In the next section, the literature on soft power from international higher education is reviewed to discuss the important factors that potentially influence international students' attitudes toward the study host countries.

### 2.2.3 Soft power on International Higher Education and Influential Factors on International Students' Perception of the Host Country

Higher education has become a source of soft power since the Middle Ages. The establishment of the first universities in Italy and Paris had stimulated the flow of students and the diffusion of Latin as the universal language of scholarships development across the European continent (Wojciuk, 2018). In the Cold War, the United States government had also launched educational exchange by providing scholarships, training programs, and cultural exchange programs for European and the Third World students in order to counter the Soviet Union ideological influence as well as to project the United States' favorable image and sustain its relations with other countries through exchange students (Bu, 1999).

Due to the advancement of scientific and technological innovation that has engendered a new knowledge-based economy, advancing human development has been necessary for knowledge-intensive economic activities. The modernized and internationalized educational system has thus become a significant soft power resource of a state to compete with other states through people's minds (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014). Amirbek and Ydyrys (2014) indicate that foreign students are 'effective transmitters (p. 515)' as they are acquainted with culture and values and prone to express sympathy and favor toward a country where they studied, which is called as 'Trojan Horse' (Amirbek and Ydyrys, 2014; Deodato & Borkowska, 2014). This concept reflects Nye's discussion that apart from cultivating positive attitudes toward a country they studied, exchange students who had studied in democratic countries tend to promote democracy after returning to their home country (Nye, 2011, pp. 96-97). Moreover, Anna Wojciuk (2018) also agrees that promoting higher education to attract foreign students and scholars is an 'effective approach' to "influence foreign public opinion in a way that supports a country's

national interest, building credibility, dialogue, exchange, the authenticity of the message, and possibly also intercultural dialogue and understanding (p. 357).” Such solidarity arguments point out that a higher education program is a significant resource of a country’s soft power to promote its favorable image on foreign public opinion to achieve its national interests.

Even though scholars commonly agree that wielding soft power through the higher education program is effective in projecting a positive image of a country in foreign students, the perceptions of foreign students toward a country where they study depend on **context and students’ experiences** to a large extent. Altbach (1991) illustrates that the experience of foreign students varies based upon **levels of study, the nature of institutions, national and culture,<sup>11</sup> gender, background experiences, as well as the problem of adjustments such as physical and mental health and the universities’ provision of non-academic service for students to cope up with such issues.** The following Anna Wojciuk’s research also resonates with this argument. Exploring student’s attitudes toward a host country of international campus in different regions (2018), she concludes that the effectiveness of international education as soft power to influence foreign students’ perceptions to support a country’s interests depends on **“the quality and content of education, collaboration, and research opportunity, and also how students will feel on the campus, how they will adapt to the micro-bubble of different organization and, possibly, culture (p. 357).”**

To investigate foreign students’ perceptions of a country in which they study, a concept of ‘Push and Pull model’ is adopted by many scholars to identify factors that contribute to foreign students’ perceptions of a destination country where they pursue a degree. The early literature that significantly applies this concept to international education is Mary E. McMahon’s research on the impact of postwar context on international study. By analyzing the flow of students from

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<sup>11</sup> Altbach (1991) points out that students from some national group have ability to adjustment than other. For example, Malaysian students with Chinese background appear easier pattern of adjustment than students from Malay background.

18 developing countries to the United States, McMahon (1992) points out that students' decision to study abroad is influenced by host and sending countries' **economic comparison and economic linkage, sending country's priority on education and educational opportunities, as well as host country's political interest in sending country and its institutional support on international students.** Based on McMahon's push and pull model, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) further develop the understanding of students' decision to study abroad. Among his concept of three stages of students' decision process of studying abroad,<sup>12</sup> the second stage of the decision process is emphasized to identify '**the pull factors**' that attract students' decision to study in a particular country.

Regarding pull factors on international higher education, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) indicate **six important pull factors** influencing students' decisions to study in a particular country. The first factor is **knowledge and awareness**, including the availability and easiness to obtain information as well as the recognition of a qualified educational system of a certain country in the home country. The second factor is **personal recommendations**, referring to the recommendation of a country by parents, relatives, or friends who are possibly influenced by the reputation of the institution or the presence of parents or relatives that graduated from institutions of a country. The third factor is **cost issues**, covering financial and social costs. The financial costs include tuition fees, living expenses, travel costs, and the availability of part-time work, while social costs involve with safety, racial discrimination, and the presence of students from the home country. The fourth factor is the **environment**, encompassing physical, lifestyle, and educational environment. The fifth factor is **geographic proximity**, referring to the physical proximity and time zone difference between host and

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<sup>12</sup> The first stage is students' decision to study domestically or internationally, which is largely influenced by 'push' factors. The second stage is students' decision on the destination country. In this stage, 'pull factors' is more important as it causes a particular country to become more attractive than others. The last stage is students' decision on the institution, which is also attracted by pull factors of specific institutions (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

home country. The final factor is **social links** regarding parents, relatives, or friends living in host countries.

Resonating with Mazzarol and Soutar's pull factor argument, Kondakci (2011), based on the two-dimensional framework on international student mobility, found that **'pre-departure'** factors that attract students to study in a particular country are **job opportunity, geography and linguistic proximity, academic quality, cultural preferences, and world enlightenment**. Besides, he also figures out that apart from these pre-departure factors, **'post-departure'** factors from student's experiences and satisfaction after arriving host country, including **'admission procedures, residence life, dining, perception on discrimination and exclusion in a particular society, suitability of curriculum, the progress of research, having a good friend, cultural adaptation and part-time work (p. 258)'** also significantly affect students' perceptions of a host country. In addition to these Kondakci's post-departure factors, most literature also found that **cultural exchange, friendship with local students, support from university staffs, academic faculty, and counselors on international students' needs** importantly assist international students to cope with difficulties on social integration and reinforce intercultural interaction, as well as create deeper understanding and positive feelings of international students toward host country (Arthur, 2017; Bartram, 2007; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kinnell, 1989; Urban & Palmer, 2016).

With regard to soft power on an international education program in Taiwan, to evaluate the effectiveness of Taiwan's higher education scholarship in cultivating positive attitudes on its central American allies (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua,<sup>13</sup> and Belize) students, René Mauricio Reyes Torres (2021) adopts Mazzarol and Soutar as well as relevant literature on influential factors on international students' perception mentioned above and categorized them into 2

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<sup>13</sup> On December 10, 2021, Nicaragua signed the Joint Communiqué on the Resumption of Diplomatic Relations with the People's Republic of China and ended the diplomatic relationship with Taiwan (BBC News, 2021).



categories. The first category is **pull factors**, factors that influence foreign students' perception before coming to Taiwan, covering **knowledge and awareness, personal recommendations, geographical proximity, and social links**. The second category is **fostering factors**, factors that affect foreign students' attitudes after coming to Taiwan, including **cost issues and environment**. Besides, based on articles from Gobllie & Gong (2020), Hercog & van de Laar (2016), and Kondakci (2011), which agree that an opportunity to enhance professional development is an important factor for student's decision to study in a particular country, Torres also adds **career development**, referring to a perception of a country for their career development and the opportunity to find a job and work in a host country, as another fostering factor.

As a result, Torres (2021) found that Taiwan's higher educational scholarship effectively cultivates favorable attitudes in its central American allies' students. The results present positive perceptions before coming to Taiwan through 'the availability of information about Taiwan, the perceived high quality of Taiwan's higher education system, positive recommendations from social links, and benefit from the scholarship's financial support.' Positive perception still remains after coming to and staying in Taiwan from several fostering factors, including 'favorable environment such as safety, freedom, culture, entertainment, favorable treatments from university staffs, local Taiwanese classmates, and professors, easiness to contact families and friends, as well as the opportunity for career development.' These fostering factors also overwhelm deteriorating factors such as 'racial discrimination, negative experiences with university staff, local Taiwanese classmates, professors, unpleasant climate, and perceived averseness of Taiwanese employers to hire international and their home students.'

Regarding relevant literature on higher educational program in the New Southbound Policy, Lin and Sung (2020) indicates five main influential factors that attract the NSP students' decisions to Taiwan, which are **academic factors** (perceived high quality of the university, university reputation), **economic factors** (the availability of scholarships and grants), **political and policy factors**

(democratic system, free society, university's open and friendly environment, the New Southbound Policy in which promotes Taiwan's higher education), **cultural factors** (Chinese culture and Chinese speaking environment), and **societal factors** (reference group). Such factors are also present in specific research on Vietnamese students. Nguyen et al. (2020) found that **the cost of studying abroad, quality training and research, home and host country distance, safe and attractive living environment, and language advantage** are the critical factors that influence Vietnamese students to study in Taiwan. Results of Hung and Yen's research (2020) also resonate with Nguyen et al. but also found **job opportunities and medical service quality** as additional motivations of Vietnamese students to study in Taiwan.

Concerning the NSP students' attitudes toward Taiwan, Lin and Sung (2020) found that more than 80% of their research participants have positive experiences while studying and living in Taiwan because Taiwanese people are friendly toward international students and their universities also actively assist foreign students in coping up with problems they face in Taiwan. Still, their research also points out that **cultural and language differences** are the main adaptation challenges of the NSP students in Taiwan. Such challenges include **eating habits, Chinese language learning in daily life, and insufficient English courses**. Dealing with the challenges, the NSP students use proactive **participation in social activities provided by the university, student clubs, or colleagues, and social media** in order to enhance intercultural communication, develop the interpersonal relationship in Taiwan, and receive emotional support from their family and friends in the home country.

It is noteworthy that apart from Lin and Sung's analysis showing that **the New Southbound Policy** is one of the political factors that motivate the NSP students to obtain an academic degree in Taiwan, Nguyen et al. (2020) also observe the impact of the NSP on Vietnamese students' decisions to study in Taiwan. They found that only 11 out of 21 Vietnamese students are relatively aware of the policy. Most Vietnamese students understand the NSP in the aspect

of educational and vocational sectors by providing them **scholarships, training programs, and job opportunities** in Taiwan after graduation. However, they overlook other aspects of the policy, such as industrial and financial sectors. Still, they suggest that the policy has a positive impact in terms of attracting Vietnamese students to study in Taiwan. Overall, Nguyen et al. (2020) conclude in accordance with Lin and Sung (2020) that despite some negative attitudes before coming to Taiwan,<sup>14</sup> Vietnamese students show **positive feelings** toward the island after studying and living in Taiwan for a while. These positive attitudes are derived from **Taiwan's socio-cultural aspects**, such as **civilized working style** as well as **peaceful and safe society**.

Considering scholars' agreement on the effectiveness of international higher education as a soft power strategy mentioned above, the core of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy on talent cultivation aiming to attract the NSP students to study higher educational degrees in Taiwan has the potential to cultivate the favorable attitude in these students toward Taiwan. After reviewing the literature on the analysis of international students' perceptions toward host country, identifying influential factors, especially pull (pre-departure) factors and fostering (post-departure) factors is a significant analytical concept to assess international students' decisions and attitudes toward a country where they pursue a degree. This concept is also adopted to evaluate the effectiveness of Taiwan's policies, such as the Taiwanese higher education scholarship and the NSP, on foreign students' decision process and attitudes toward Taiwan. However, the literature on this issue, especially the effectiveness of NSP on foreign students, is still limited since a few studies focus only on its impact on the NSP students in general and Vietnamese students in specific. This thesis thus intends to make a further contribution to the scholarship on the soft power on higher education, the analysis on international students' perceptions, and the impact of the NSP toward its target countries' students, especially students from Thailand in particular.

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<sup>14</sup> One participant of Nguyen *et al.* (2020) reported her negative attitudes before coming to Taiwan from cases that Vietnamese brides were badly treated from Taiwanese husbands (p. 244).

## 2.3 Conclusion

Chapter 2 presents several points for discussion. First, the basic information about the New Southbound Policy in general and its implementation toward Thailand in particular, illustrated in the first section of the chapter, allow the author to derive the puzzle and conduct the thesis to solve such issue, which is to evaluate how much the NSP effective in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perception of Thai students in Taiwan.

Second, sets of literature, discussed in the second section of the chapter, including the debate on the effectiveness of the NSP, the concept of soft power and Taiwan's public diplomacy, as well as soft power on higher education and influential factors on international students' perceptions toward host country, make an understanding of Taiwan's NSP as soft power strategy and the scholarly conversations on the effectiveness of the NSP and higher education as soft power project. Since the number of studies on the effectiveness of the NSP as a soft power instrument is still limited, and there is no study evaluating the effectiveness of the NSP in improving Thai students' perceptions toward Taiwan. This thesis is thus potential to fill these gaps of the existing scholarly conversations.

Last but not least, reviewing the literature, especially the literature on the influential factors on international students' perception, assists the author in constructing the conceptual framework since it helps the author to figure out the potential factors as well as the possible roles of the NSP that impact Thai students' perceptions of studying in Taiwan. Such potential factors are thus delineated to construct the interview questionnaires for quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify the influential factors that affect Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan and then evaluate the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy, which possibly reinforcing those factors and influencing Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan. In the following two chapters (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), the quantitative and qualitative analysis of this research are presented.



### Chapter 3 Quantitative Analysis

After conducting the interview process to evaluate the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan, the results of the analysis are presented in the following two chapters (Chapter 3 Quantitative Analysis and Chapter 4 Qualitative Analysis).

In this chapter, the quantitative analysis of the interview data of the 30 participants is demonstrated. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the interview process and describes the sampling distribution among the 30 Thai higher educational students in Taiwan (including gender, age, living place, school, and academic majors). The second section presents the distribution analysis of driving factors of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan and the influence of the NSP, as well as the results of before and after arrival perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. The third section examines the cross-tabulation analysis of the key variables on before and after arrival perception trajectory of Thai students' impression of Taiwan. And, the last section is to conclude and discuss the finding of this chapter.

The main results of this chapter show that studying in Taiwan is generally effective in improving Thai higher education students' positive perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status regardless of interviewees' key variables (except for gender, Taiwanese scholarship recipients, time living in Taiwan, and social links in Taiwan). The New Southbound Policy is also an important mechanism in driving Thai higher education students' decisions and positive perceptions of studying Taiwan before arrival. Still, the policy is less influential in improving their perceptions of Taiwan after arrival since most of the influential fostering and deteriorating factors of students' perceptions are not easily changed by the policy.

### 3.1 Sampling Selection and Distribution

Evaluating the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan, this research employed the **interview survey method** to derive the attitudes and opinions of Thai students toward Taiwan. To find the interview participants, the **snowball sampling** procedure was applied in this research. At the beginning of the interview process, the selected 4 Thai higher education students who previously developed connections and networks with the interviewer were interviewed. After the interview, they were asked to suggest additional participants for the research. However, many scholars often criticize snowball sampling as it is nonrandom and unable to guarantee sample diversity since it possibly excludes the population with small networks and tends to overrepresent the network of the participants who are first interviewed (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Therefore, the sampling selection criteria were developed to compensate for the disadvantages above and diversify the sampling pool to avoid selection bias (such as gender, geographic proximity, and levels of education) in the data gathering process.

The criteria are present as follows:

- a) Participants will be Thai nationals and have no Taiwanese parents.
- b) Participants will come from different higher educational institutes in Taiwan
- c) Participants will reside in the different cities in Taiwan.
- d) Participants will study at different levels of education (undergraduate degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree)
- e) Participants will be balanced in gender (male, female, and LGBTQ+).

With mentioned sampling selection procedure above, the participants thus were initially contacted based on the interviewer's network and through the suggestion of the previous participants based on mentioned criteria. To comply with the research ethics, the potential participants were given the necessary information, such as the interviewer's self-introduction, purposes of the interview,

and examples of interview questions, and asked for their willingness to be a part of the research and their allowance to use the information for analysis.

After they agreed to be research participants, the date, time, and place to conduct the interview were appointed at the convenience of the interviewees. Nevertheless, due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the geographic distance between the interviewer and the interviewees' residence, 83% (23 of the 30) of the participants were willing to do the interview online via the Google Meet application, while the other 16% of the interviewees from the interviewers' network allowed to conduct the face-to-face interview.

During the interview process, at the beginning of the interview, the participants were informed of basic information about the research and interview and asked for permission to record the voice memos of the interview. Since the time range of the interview process was not limited in the first place, the time range of the interviews between respondent no.1 and respondent no.8 was quite varied from 21 minutes to 1 hour 50 minutes. Even though the time difference between the interviews hardly affects the nature of the interview data, the interview process after the respondent no.8, the interviewer decided to limit the time of the interview to no longer than 60 minutes in order to make the interview process much more convenient for both interviewer and interviewees.

As a result, during 30 days of the data gathering process, from March 24, 2022, to April 24, 2022, there were 30 Thai higher education students and alumni in Taiwan participating in the research. The ratio of the gender of participants (female: male: LGBTQ+) is **15:11:4**. The age range of participants is between **18 and 37 years old** (86% of participants are between 24 and 30 years old). The ratio of educational levels of participants (undergraduate: master: doctoral degree) is **3:10:2**, of which 67% of respondents are master's degree students. The 30 participants in the research come from **7 different cities** around Taiwan, including 37% of participants from Taipei, 27% from Hsinchu, and the other 36% of participants from New Taipei, Hualien, Taoyuan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. They are also located in **15 different universities**, including 20% of participants



from National Tsing Hua University, 13% from National Chengchi University, 10% from National Taiwan University, and the other 57% from other 12 universities around Taiwan. Besides, the interview participants are also **diversified in their academic major** as 20% of respondents are studying/studied Business Administration, 16% are studying/studied Diplomacy/International Relations/Asia-Pacific Studies, 13% are studying/studied Engineering (all-fields), 13% are studying/studied Technology/ Information Systems and Applications. The other 38% are studying/studied in other 7 different majors.

Despite the fairly balanced sample distributions in terms of gender, age, school, living place, and study major, the sample selection in this research still may have selection bias and self-fulfillment bias since Thai students who came to study in Taiwan probably have had positive impression of Taiwan before their arrival.

### 3.2 Distribution Analysis

After interviewing the 30 Thai higher education students in Taiwan, this section is to present the distribution analysis of the main driving factors of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan and the influence of the New Southbound Policy, as well as its results on the before and after arrival perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan. At the end of the section, a series of tables and figures will be provided to summarize the main points of the analysis.

Before coming to Taiwan, the interviewees held relatively positive perceptions of Taiwan since the average score of Taiwan's attractiveness was approximately **7.47** (on the 0 to 10 scale).<sup>15</sup> These positive perceptions were driven by the main pulling factors, including the desire to develop Chinese language skills (**83%, 25 of 30**), the positive perceptions of safety in Taiwan (**73%, 22 of 30**), the positive perceptions of a better quality of life in Taiwan (**67%, 20 of 30**), and close proximity to home country (**53%, 16 of 30**). Regarding the social links, **43%** of 30 respondents reported that they had friends

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<sup>15</sup> When 0 means unattractive at all and 10 means very attractive.

or family residing in Taiwan when they arrived. Similar to personal recommendations, **40%** of 30 participants said they were recommended to study in Taiwan by their social circle. On the contrary, **60%** of participants informed that they chose to study in Taiwan by themselves. Therefore, social links and personal recommendations, in this case, have a lesser degree of influencing Thai students' decisions to study in Taiwan.

In addition, Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan before arrival were also explicitly and implicitly influenced by **the specific pulling factors from the New Southbound Policy**, as **93%** of 30 respondents had explicit and implicit recognition of the NSP itself and/or the content of the NSP. This is because even though only **37%** of 30 respondents said that they knew about the NSP before coming to Taiwan, and **36%** of them pointed out that the NSP influenced their decisions to study in Taiwan, **93%** of 30 interviewees knew the specific contents of the NSP, especially the provision of Taiwanese Scholarship for Thai students and researchers and the allowance of visa exemption for Thai nationals to travel to Taiwan. Due to such recognition of the NSP and the promotion of the policy toward Thailand, the NSP reinforced positive pre-departure perceptions and influenced Thai students' decision to study in Taiwan in different factors, including positive past experience of visiting Taiwan between 2016 and 2019 (**85%, 17 of 20**),<sup>16</sup> positive perception of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships (**73%, 22 of 30**), positive perception of easiness to obtain information about Taiwan's higher education (**67%, 20 of 30**), positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand related activities such as Taiwan Expo and Taiwan Higher Education Fairs (**54%, 7 of 13**),<sup>17</sup> and scholarship financial benefit (**50%, 13 of 26**).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Considered from 20 out of 30 respondents who visited Taiwan between 2016 and 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Considered from 13 out of 30 respondents who had participated in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities.

<sup>18</sup> Considered from 26 out of 30 respondents who are Taiwan's scholarship recipients.

Holding the relatively positive perceptions reinforced by the aforementioned factors, Thai students had many favorable aspects toward Taiwan before arrival, such as transportation (**73%, 22 of 30**), politics (**57%, 17 of 30**), and technology (**50%, 15 of 30**). Meanwhile, **40%** of 30 respondents reported that they did not have any unfavorable aspect of Taiwan, and only **37%** of 30 respondents had unfavorable attitudes toward Taiwan's climate. Concerning Taiwan's international affairs, even though around **63%** of 30 Thai students saw that Taiwan does not consider Thailand as its priority country, they had relatively positive perceptions of the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan since the score of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations before arrival is **6.33** (on the 0 to 10 scale).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, before coming to Taiwan, most of Taiwan's international images in Thai students' perceptions were also relatively positive, including Taiwan's image of a leading democratic country (**4.37**, on the 1 to 5 scale),<sup>20</sup> a successful development country (**4.27**), an advanced technology country (**4.17**), an LGBTQ-friendly country (**3.97**), a high-quality of education country (**3.93**), and a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries (**3.83**) and Thailand (**3.77**). There was only the image of Taiwan as a multicultural country that were perceived as neutral (an average score of **3.20**).

After coming to Taiwan, respondents' overall perceptions of Taiwan had significantly improved since the average score on the impression of Taiwan increased to **8.23**, on the 0 to 10 scale.<sup>21</sup> (the positive perceptions increased by **7.6%** from pre-departure perceptions). Among the overall positive perceptions, **67%** of 30 students' perceptions improved as they gave higher scores after arrival. The other **17%** of 30 students' perceptions were constant after arrival since the given score was the same as before arrival. These perceptions had been sustained by main fostering factors in aspects of cost issues, geographic

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<sup>19</sup> When 0 means not close at all and 10 means very close.

<sup>20</sup> Average scores of Taiwan's international image are calculated from the Five-Pointed Likert Scale (when 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means very agree with the defined statements).

<sup>21</sup> When 0 means not impressive at all and 10 means very impressive.

proximity, physical environment, educational environment, and career development in Taiwan.

First, regarding financial and social costs, positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan after arrival had been fostered by the feeling of safety (**100%, 30 of 30**), the affordable living expenses in Taiwan from their scholarship and conditions (**97%, 29 of 30**), the sense of freedom (**93%, 28 of 30**), and inexperience of being racist in Taiwan (**73%, 22 of 30**). Second, regarding geographic proximity, the easiness of communicating back to the home country (**100%, 30 of 30**) was also an essential factor in sustaining students' positive perceptions. Third, for physical, cultural, and societal environments, the main fostering factors were the attractiveness of Taiwanese political and societal values (**93%, 28 of 30**) and Taiwanese culture (**63%, 19 of 30**). Last but not least, concerning an educational environment, the fostering factors of Thai students' perceptions were positive perception of professors (**97%, 29 of 30**), university staff (**90%, 27 of 30**), and Taiwan classmates (**90%, 27 of 30**), the quality of study program meeting the expectation (**77%, 23 of 30**), the sufficient provision of suitable facilities and environment for study (**73%, 22 of 30**), and a better quality of programs and distinctive study programs compared to home country (**63%, 19 of 30**).<sup>22</sup>

Besides, the sustaining positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan had also been supported by the promotion of the New Southbound Policy in the aspect of living environment and career development in Taiwan, including the living convenience in Taiwan for Southeast Asian people (**83%, 25 of 30**), the positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Thai students (**83%, 25 of 30**) and Southeast Asian students (**80%, 24 of 30**), the kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people (**80%, 24 of 30**), positive perception of Taiwan as a place to develop as a

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<sup>22</sup> Considered from respondents who answer that the current study program is better than a similar program in your home country (16 respondents) and there is no similar program in a home country (3 respondents).

professional in their area of interest (**67%, 20 of 30**), the intention to find a job and current professions in Taiwan (**53%, 16 of 30**), as well as the allowance for students to do part-time jobs or internships (**50%, 15 of 30**). Moreover, after coming to Taiwan, there are **63%** of 30 respondents recognized the presence of the NSP, which increased by **26%** from the pre-departure perceptions. It included **23%** of 30 participants who knew about the policy before arrival, **27%** of 30 participants who had just learned about the policy after arrival, and **13%** of 30 participants who knew about the NSP before and then had known more about the policy after arrival. Such a knowledge of the NSP was also a significant factor in fostering the positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan since these students inform that the NSP is helpful in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan (**95%, 18 of 19**),<sup>23</sup> and in improving positive attitudes toward Taiwan (**68%, 13 of 19**).<sup>24</sup>

Despite the relative improvement of Thai students' perceptions, **17%** of 30 respondents reported worsened perceptions toward Taiwan after arrival as they gave a lower score on the impression of Taiwan compared to the score on Taiwan's attractiveness before arrival. Such an increase in negative perceptions is driven by the presence of main deteriorating factors, which were the insufficient provision of English courses for international students (**84%, 21 of 25**),<sup>25</sup> the unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media (**83%, 25 of 30**), unpleasing climate (**67%, 20 of 30**), negative experience with university staff, professors, or Taiwanese classmates (**60%, 18 of 30**), the unattractiveness of the Taiwanese lifestyle (**57%, 17 of 30**), and the difficulty to adapt with the Taiwanese eating habit (**50%, 15 of 30**).

After experiencing Taiwan, the positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan had significantly enhanced in many aspects, such as transportation

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<sup>23</sup> Considered from 19 out of 30 participants who knew the NSP itself before and/or after arrival.

<sup>24</sup> Considered from 19 out of 30 participants who knew the NSP itself before and/or after arrival.

<sup>25</sup> Considered from 25 out of 30 participants who studied/are studying in the international and bilingual program.

(**90%**, **27 of 30**, increased by 17% from pre-departure perceptions), technology (**63%**, **19 of 30**, increased by 13% from pre-departure perceptions), living environment (**60%**, **18 of 30**, increased by 13% from pre-departure perceptions), Taiwanese people (**60%**, **18 of 30**, increased by 17% from pre-departure perceptions), and culture (**53%**, **16 of 30**, increased by 7% from pre-departure perceptions). On the other hand, some of Taiwan's unfavorable aspects had also increased, such as climate (**67%**, **20 of 30**, increased by 30% from pre-departure perceptions), food (**43%**, **13 of 30**, increased by 23% from pre-departure perceptions), living environment (**17%**, **5 of 30**, increased by 13% from pre-departure perceptions), and other issues such as disaster (earthquake), Taiwanese perceptions toward LGBTQ+, driving style, working conditions, and camped habitat (**30%**, **9 of 30**, increased by 20% from pre-departure perceptions).

Regarding Taiwan's international status, even though **63%** of 30 respondents still considered that Taiwan does not recognize Thailand as a priority country, there was a perceptions dynamic on this topic. **47%** of 30 participants maintained their perceptions that Taiwan does NOT consider Thailand a priority country. The other **20%** of 30 participants still maintained their perceptions that Taiwan DOES consider Thailand a priority country. Another **17%** of 30 interviewees had improved their perceptions from Taiwan does NOT to DOES consider Thailand as a priority country. And, the last **17%** of 30 participants, by contrast, had worsened the perceptions from Taiwan DOES to does NOT consider Thailand as a priority country.

Despite the relatively negative perceptions of the previous topic, Thai students had **improved** their perceptions of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations after arrival. The score on this issue was **6.97** (on the 0 to 10 scale), which increased by **6.4%** from pre-departure perceptions. Among the relatively positive perceptions, **30%** of the 30 respondents had improved their perceptions that the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan is closer after arrival. **63%** of the 30 students still maintained the same perceptions as they gave the same score as the pre-departure perceptions. And, the last **7%** of the 30 participants had

worsened their perceptions of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations after arrival.

In addition, the score of Taiwan's international image in the perceptions of Thai students had also been **improved** in almost all aspects after arrival, including the image of a leading democratic country (**4.50** on the 1 to 5 scale,<sup>26</sup> increased by 2.60% from pre-departure perceptions), a successful development country (**4.47**, increased by 4.00% from pre-departure perceptions), an advanced technology country (**4.37**, increased by 4.00% from pre-departure perceptions), a multicultural society (**3.90**, increased by 14.00% from pre-departure perceptions), a high-quality of education country (**4.00**, increased by 1.40% from pre-departure perceptions), and a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries (**4.10**, increased by 5.40% from pre-departure perceptions) and Thailand (**4.03**, increased by 5.20% from pre-departure perceptions). However, the image of Taiwan as an LGBTQ-friendly country had worsened to **3.53** (decreased by 8.80% from pre-departure perceptions). Besides, after studying in Taiwan, **83%** of 30 Thai students emphasized that Taiwan is a country, and **90%** of the 30 respondents also expressed that Taiwan deserves to be an official member of the United Nations. In the following part of this section, a series of tables and figures are presented to summarize the key points of the analysis above.

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<sup>26</sup> Average scores are calculated from the Five-Pointed Likert Scale (when 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means very agree with the defined statements).

**Table 3.1 Influential Factors on the Perceptions of Thai Higher Education Students Summary**

Factor Effect	Factor Category		Factor	Percentage	Number of Respondents	Total Number of Respondents
<b>Pulling Factors</b>	<b>General factors</b>	Knowledge and Awareness	Desire to develop Chinese language skills	83.33%	25	30
			Positive perception of safety in Taiwan	73.33%	22	30
			Positive perception of a better quality of life in Taiwan	66.67%	20	30
		Geographic Proximity	Close proximity to home country	53.33%	16	30
	<b>The Influence of the NSP</b>	Knowledge and Awareness	Reinforcing explicit and implicit recognition of the policy itself and/or the content of the policy	93.33%	28	30 <sup>27</sup>
			Reinforcing positive past experience of visiting Taiwan (between 2016 and 2019)	85.00%	17	20 <sup>28</sup>
			Reinforcing positive perception of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships	73.33%	22	30
			Reinforcing positive perception of easiness of obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education	66.67%	20	30
			Reinforcing positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities	53.84%	7	13 <sup>29</sup>
			Financial Cost	Scholarship financial benefit	50.00%	13
<b>Fostering Factors</b>	<b>General Factors</b>	Geographic Proximity	Easiness to communicate back to home country	100.00%	30	30
		Social Cost	Safety	100.00%	30	30
				Sense of Freedom	93.33%	28

<sup>27</sup> The percentage is considered from the total number of respondents who knew about the NSP itself (11 respondents) and/or some aspects of the policy (only 1 out of 30 respondents did not know any aspects of the NSP) before arrival.

<sup>28</sup> There are 20 out of 30 participants who had been to Taiwan between 2016 and 2019.

<sup>29</sup> There are 13 out of 30 participants who had participated in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities before arrival.

<sup>30</sup> There are 26 out of 30 participants who are the Taiwanese scholarship recipients



			Inexperience of being racist	73.33%	22	30
		Financial Cost	Affordable living expenses in Taiwan from their scholarship stipend and conditions	96.67%	29	30
		Physical, Cultural, and Societal Environment	Political and societal values	93.33%	28	30
			Culture	63.33%	19	30
		Educational Environment	Positive perception toward professors	96.67%	29	30
			Positive perception toward university staff	90.00%	27	30
			Positive perception toward Taiwanese classmates	90.00%	27	30
			Quality of study program meeting the expectation	76.67%	23	30
			Sufficient provision of suitable facilities and environment for study	73.33%	22	30
			Better quality of programs and distinctive study programs compared to home country	63.33%	19	30 <sup>31</sup>
	<b>The Influence of the NSP</b>	Social Cost	Reinforcing kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people	80.00%	24	30
		Financial Cost	Allowance to do internship/part-time work while studying	50.00%	15	30
		Physical, Cultural, and Societal Environment	Reinforcing the convenience of living in Taiwan for Southeast Asian people	83.33%	25	30
		Career Development	Reinforcing the positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Thai students	83.33%	25	30
			Reinforcing the positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian students	80.00%	24	30
			Positive perception of Taiwan as a place to develop as a professional in their area of interest	66.67%	20	30
			Intention to find a job in Taiwan/ Currently working in	53.33%	16	30 <sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The percentage is considered from respondents who answer that the current study program is better than a similar program in your home country (16 respondents) and there is no similar program in a home country (3 respondents).

			Taiwan			
		Knowledge and awareness	Positive perception of the NSP in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan	94.74%	18	19 <sup>33</sup>
			Positive perception of the NSP in improving positive attitudes toward Taiwan	68.42%	13	19 <sup>34</sup>
<b>Deteriorating factors</b>	<b>General Factors</b>	Physical, Cultural, and Societal Environment	Unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media	83.33%	25	30
			Unpleasing climate	66.67%	20	30
			Unattractiveness of the Taiwanese lifestyle	56.67%	17	30
			Difficulty to adapt with the Taiwanese eating habit	50.00%	15	30
		Educational Environment	Insufficient provision of English courses for international students	84.00%	21	25 <sup>35</sup>
			Negative experience with university staff, professors, or Taiwanese classmates	60.00%	18	30

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.1 provides the summary of pulling factors, fostering factors, and deteriorating factors and the influence of the New Southbound Policy that affects the before and after arrival perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. The table also includes the number and percentage of participants whose perceptions were influenced by each specific factor.

<sup>32</sup> The percentage is considered from respondents who answer that they intend to find a job in Taiwan in the future (13 respondents) and who are currently working in Taiwan (3 respondents)

<sup>33</sup> There are 19 out of 30 participants who knew the NSP itself before and/or after arrival.

<sup>34</sup> There are 19 out of 30 participants who knew the NSP itself before and/or after arrival.

<sup>35</sup> There are 25 out of 30 respondents who studied/are studying in international programs and bilingual programs.

**Table 3.2 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of Taiwan’s Attractiveness**

<b>Attractiveness of Taiwan</b>	<b>Before Arrival</b>	<b>After Arrival</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>%Difference</b>
Average Score ( $\bar{X}$ )	7.47	8.23	+0.76	+7.6%
Minimum Score ( <i>Min</i> )	5	7	+2	+20%
Maximum Score ( <i>Max</i> )	10	10	0	0
Median ( <i>Me</i> )	8	8		
Mode ( <i>Mo</i> )	8	8		
Standard Deviation ( <i>SD</i> )	1.04	0.86		

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.2 shows the summary of before and after arrival scores of Thai higher education students’ perceptions of Taiwan’s attractiveness. Calculating by a scale of 0 to 10 (when 0 means not attractive at all and 10 means very attractive), the table provides the average score ( $\bar{X}$ ), minimum score (*Min*), maximum score (*Max*), median (*Me*), mode (*Mo*), and standard deviation (*SD*) of before and after arrival perceptions. It also presents the difference in score and percentage between students’ perceptions of Taiwan’s attractiveness before and after arrival.

**Table 3.3 Before and After Arrival Perceptions Trajectory of Taiwan’s Attractiveness**

<b>Perceptions Trajectory</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Participants’ perceptions improved after arrival	20	66.67%
Participants’ perceptions were constant after arrival	5	16.67%
Participants’ perceptions worsened after arrival	5	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.01%</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.3 summarizes a before and after arrival perceptions trajectory of Taiwan’s attractiveness among Thai higher education students in Taiwan. The table includes the number and percentage of participants whose perceptions of Taiwan’s attractiveness were improved, constant, and worsened after arrival.

**Table 3.4 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of Favorable Aspects of  
Taiwan**

Favorable Aspects of Taiwan	Before Arrival		After Arrival		Difference	%Difference
	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants		
Politics	17	56.67%	17	56.67%	0	0
Economic	13	43.33%	13	43.33%	0	0
Technology	15	50.00%	19	63.33%	+4	+13.33%
Education	14	46.67%	14	46.67%	0	0
Transportation	22	73.33%	27	90.00%	+5	+16.67%
Living environment	14	46.67%	18	60.00%	+4	+13.33%
Culture	14	46.67%	16	53.33%	+2	+6.67%
Climate	4	13.33%	4	13.33%	0	0
Food	5	16.67%	7	23.33%	+2	+6.67%
Entertainment	3	10.00%	3	10.00%	0	0
Taiwanese people	13	43.33%	18	60.00%	+5	+16.67%
None	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	7	23.33%	7	23.33%	0	0

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.4 provides the summary of before and after arrival perceptions of Taiwan's favorable aspects among Thai higher education students. The table includes the number and percentage of participants who had favorable attitudes toward each aspect of Taiwan, as well as the number and percentage of the difference between students' perceptions of favorable aspects of Taiwan before and after arrival.

**Table 3.5 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of Unfavorable Aspects of Taiwan**

Unfavorable Aspects of Taiwan	Before Arrival		After Arrival		Difference	%Difference
	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants		
Politics	3	10.00%	2	6.67%	-1	-3.33%
Economic	0	0	1	3.33%	+1	+3.33%
Technology	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education	1	3.33%	1	3.33%	0	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Living environment	1	3.33%	5	16.67%	+4	+13.33%
Culture	2	6.67%	3	10.00%	+1	+3.33%
Climate	11	36.67%	20	66.67%	+9	+30.00%
Food	6	20.00%	13	43.33%	+7	+23.33%
Entertainment	1	3.33%	3	10.00%	+2	+6.67%
Taiwanese people	1	3.33%	3	10.00%	+2	+6.67%
None	12	40.00%	2	6.67%	-10	-33.33%
Other	3	10.00%	9	30.00%	+6	+20.00%

Source: Created by author.

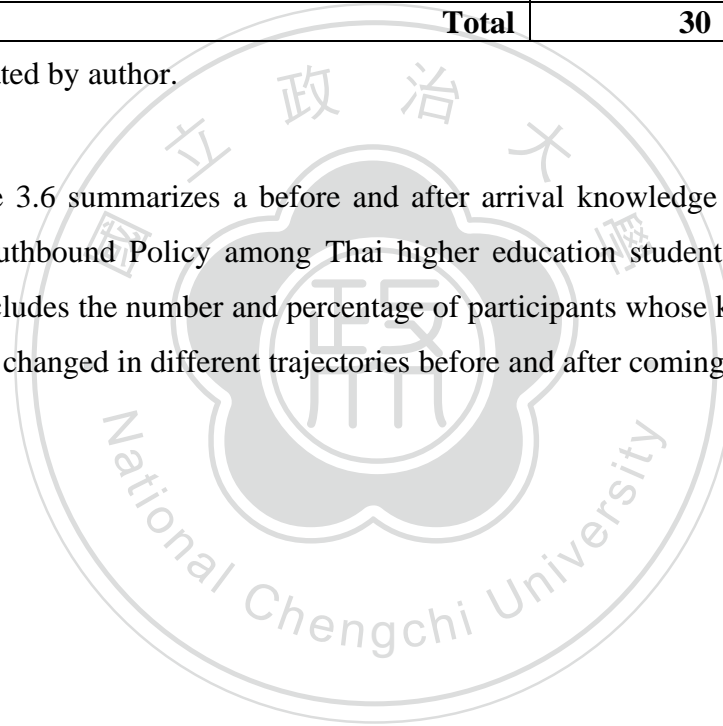
Table 3.5 provides the summary of before and after arrival perceptions of Taiwan's unfavorable aspects among Thai higher education students. The table includes the number and percentage of participants who had unfavorable attitudes toward each aspect of Taiwan, as well as the number and percentage of the difference between students' perceptions of unfavorable aspects of Taiwan before and after arrival.

**Table 3.6 Before and After Arrival Knowledge Trajectory of the New Southbound Policy**

<b>Perceptions Trajectory</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Participants <b>did not know</b> about the NSP before arrival but <b>knew more</b> about the NSP after arrival	8	26.67%
Participants <b>knew about the NSP</b> before arrival and <b>knew more</b> about the NSP after arrival	4	13.33%
Participants <b>knew about the NSP</b> before arrival but <b>did not know more</b> about the NSP after arrival	7	23.33%
Participants <b>did not know</b> about the NSP before and after arrival	11	36.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.6 summarizes a before and after arrival knowledge trajectory of the New Southbound Policy among Thai higher education students in Taiwan. The table includes the number and percentage of participants whose knowledge of the NSP had changed in different trajectories before and after coming to Taiwan.



**Table 3.7 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of the Importance of Thailand in Taiwan’s Perceptions**

Q: Do you think Taiwan considers Thailand as a priority partnership country	Before Arrival		After Arrival		Difference	% Difference
	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants	Number of Participants	% Of Total Number of Participants		
Yes	13	36.67%	13	36.67%	0	0
No	17	63.33%	17	63.33%	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.7 shows the summary of before and after arrival perceptions of the importance of Thailand in Taiwan’s perceptions from the question: *Do you think Taiwan considers Thailand as a priority partnership country?*. The table includes the number and percentage of participants who responded to each answer, as well as the number and percentage of the difference between students’ responses to this question before and after arrival.

**Table 3.8 Before and After Arrival Perception Trajectory of the Importance of Thailand in Taiwan’s Perceptions**

<b>Perception Trajectory</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Participants who <b>maintained</b> that Taiwan does NOT consider Thailand as a priority country (answer ‘No’ before-after arrival)	14	46.67%
Participants who <b>maintained</b> that Taiwan DOES consider Thailand as a priority country (answer ‘Yes’ before and after arrival)	6	20.00%
Participants who <b>improved</b> the perceptions that Taiwan considers Thailand as a priority country (change from ‘No’ to ‘Yes’ after arrival)	5	16.67%
Participants who <b>worsened</b> the perceptions that Taiwan considers Thailand as a priority country (change from ‘Yes’ to ‘No’ after arrival)	5	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.01%</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.8 summarizes a before and after arrival perceptions trajectory of the importance of Thailand in Taiwan’s perceptions from the question: *Do you think Taiwan considers Thailand as a priority partnership country?*. The table includes the number and percentage of participants whose perceptions of this question had changed in different trajectories before and after coming to Taiwan.



**Table 3.9 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of the Closeness of Thailand and Taiwan Relations**

<b>Perceptions of the Closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations</b>	<b>Before Arrival</b>	<b>After Arrival</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>%Difference</b>
Average Score ( $\bar{X}$ )	6.33	6.97	+0.64	+6.40%
Minimum Score ( <i>Min</i> )	3	5	+2	+20.00%
Maximum Score ( <i>Max</i> )	9	9	0	0
Median ( <i>Me</i> )	6	7		
Mode ( <i>Mo</i> )	5	8		
Standard Deviation ( <i>SD</i> )	1.45	1.30		

Source: Created by author.

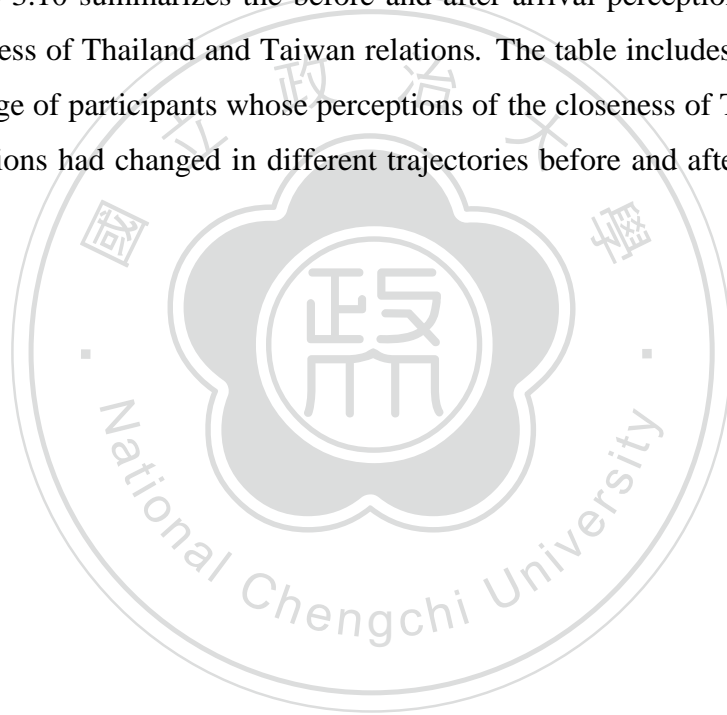
Table 3.9 shows the summary of before and arrival Thai higher education students' perceptions of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations. Calculating by a scale of 0 to 10 (when 0 means not close at all and 10 means very close), the table provides the average score ( $\bar{X}$ ), minimum score (*Min*), maximum score (*Max*), median (*Me*), mode (*Mo*), and standard deviation (*SD*) of before and after arrival perceptions. It also presents the difference between students' perceptions of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations before and after arrival.

**Table 3.10 Before and After Arrival Perceptions Trajectory of the Closeness of Thailand and Taiwan Relations**

<b>Perceptions Trajectory</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Participants' perceptions improved after arrival	9	30.00%
Participants' perceptions were constant after arrival	19	63.33%
Participants' perceptions worsened after arrival	2	6.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.01%</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.10 summarizes the before and after arrival perceptions trajectory of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations. The table includes the number and percentage of participants whose perceptions of the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations had changed in different trajectories before and after coming to Taiwan.



**Table 3.11 Before and Arrival Perceptions of Taiwan’s International Image**

Statement	Before Arrival					After Arrival				
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Taiwan is a leading democratic country	0	0	0	19 (63%)	11 (37%)	0	0	1 (3%)	13 (43%)	16 (53%)
Taiwan is a successful economic development country	0	0	5 (17%)	12 (40%)	13 (43%)	0	0	2 (7%)	12 (40%)	16 (53%)
Taiwan is an advanced technology country	0	0	7 (23%)	11 (37%)	12 (40%)	0	0	5 (17%)	9 (30%)	16 (53%)
Taiwan is a multicultural country	1 (3%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)	8 (27%)	3 (10%)	0	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	16 (53%)	6 (20%)
Taiwan is an LGBTQ-friendly country	1 (3%)	0	6 (20%)	15 (50%)	8 (27%)	0	3 (10%)	11 (37%)	13 (43%)	3 (10%)
Taiwan is a high-quality of education country	0	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	15 (50%)	7 (23%)	0	0	9 (30%)	12 (40%)	9 (30%)
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	22 (73%)	3 (10%)	0	0	3 (10%)	21 (70%)	6 (20%)
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Thailand	1 (3%)	0	5 (17%)	23 (77%)	1 (3%)	0	0	4 (13%)	21 (70%)	5 (17%)

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.11 presents the summary of before and arrival perceptions of Taiwan’s international image among Thai higher education students. The table includes the number and percentage of the participants who had different levels of agreement on the defined statement before and after coming to Taiwan.

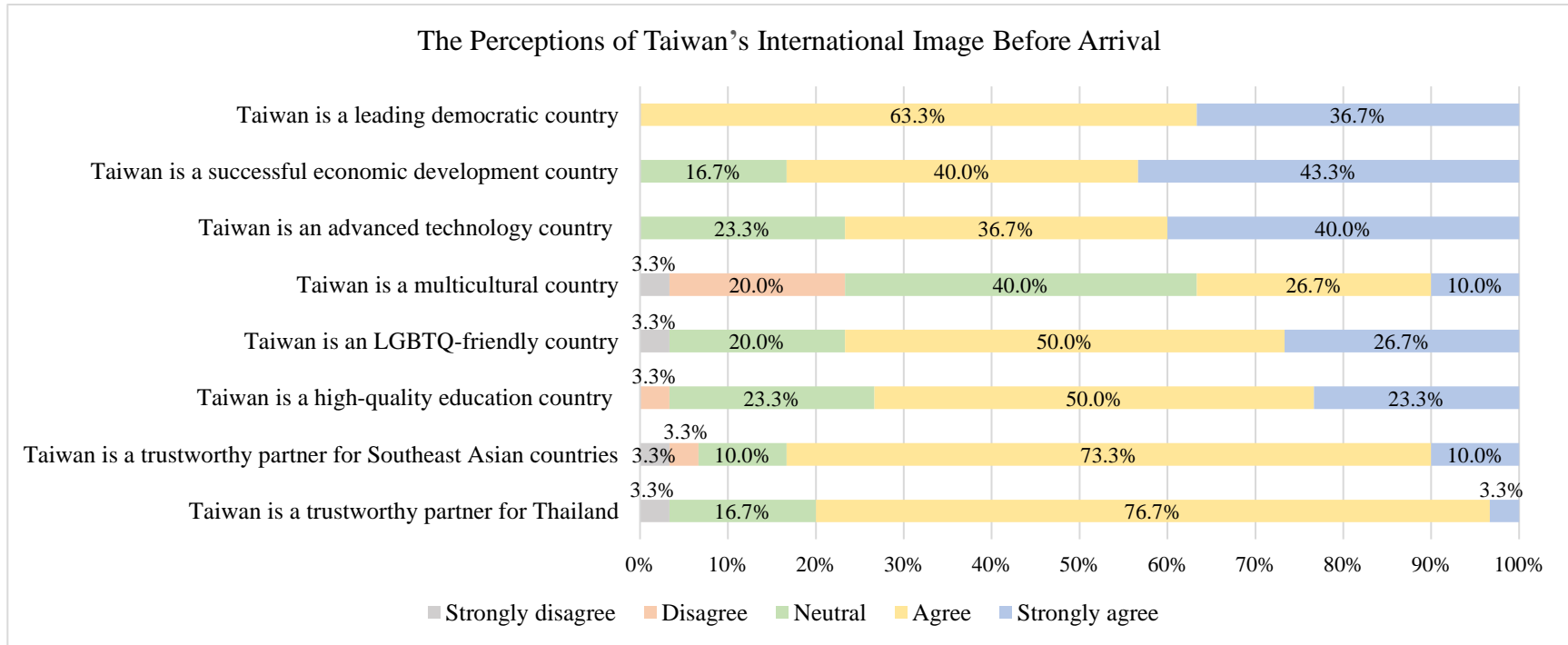
**Table 3.12 Before and After Arrival Perceptions of Taiwan’s International Image (2)**

Statement	Before Arrival		After Arrival		Difference	%Difference
	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	SD	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	SD		
Taiwan is a leading democratic country	4.37	3.86	4.50	4.01	+0.13	+2.60%
Taiwan is a successful economic development country	4.27	3.80	4.47	3.98	+0.20	+4.00%
Taiwan is an advanced technology country	4.17	3.71	4.37	3.91	+0.20	+4.00%
Taiwan is a multicultural country	3.20	2.83	3.90	3.44	+0.70	+14.0%
Taiwan is an LGBTQ-friendly country	3.97	3.54	3.53	3.10	-0.44	-8.80%
Taiwan is a high-quality education country	3.93	3.48	4.00	3.55	+0.70	+1.40%
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries	3.83	3.39	4.10	3.61	+0.27	+5.40%
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Thailand	3.77	3.30	4.03	3.54	+0.26	+5.20%

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.12 shows the summary of before and arrival Thai higher education students’ perceptions of Taiwan’s international image. Calculating by Five-Point Likert Scale (when 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree), the table provides the Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (*SD*) of before and after arrival perceptions toward the defined statements. It also presents the difference between students’ perceptions of Taiwan’s international image before and after arrival.

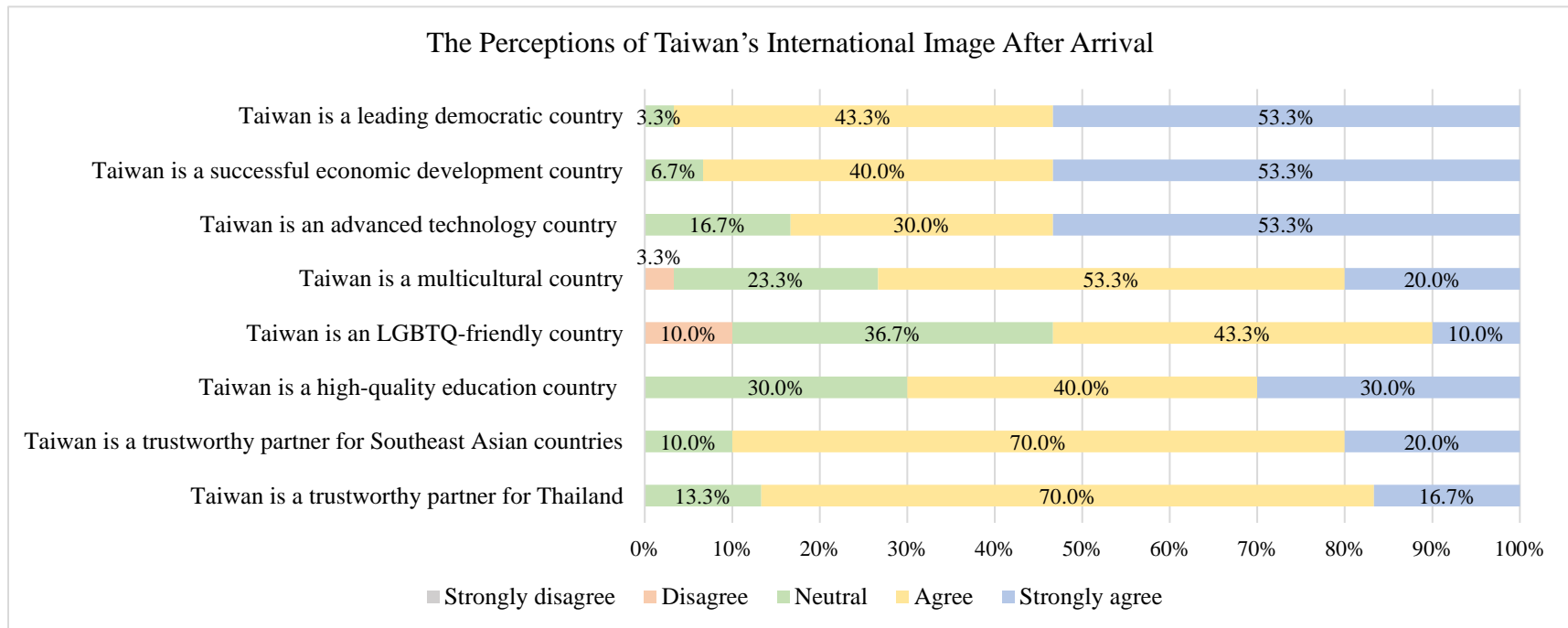
**Figure 3.1 The Perceptions of Taiwan’s International Image Before Arrival**



Source: Created by author.

Figure 3.1 shows the summary of the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan’s international image before arrival. The figure includes the percentage of the participants who had different levels of agreement on the defined statements of Taiwan’s international image before coming to Taiwan.

**Figure 3.2 The Perceptions of Taiwan’s International Image After Arrival**



Source: Created by author.

Figure 3.2 shows the summary of the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan’s international image after arrival. The figure includes the percentage of the participants who had different levels of agreement on the defined statement of Taiwan’s international image after coming to Taiwan.

**Table 3.13 The Perceptions of Taiwan’s International Status After Arrival**

<b>Do you think Taiwan is a country?</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	25	83.00%
No	5	17.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by Author.

Table 3.13 presents the perceptions of Taiwan’s international status among Thai higher education students after arrival from the question: *Do you think Taiwan is a country?*. The table includes the number and percentage of participants who responded to each answer.

**Table 3.14 The Perceptions of Taiwan’s Participation in the International Arena**

<b>Do you think Taiwan deserves an official member of the United Nations?</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	27	90.00%
No	3	10.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by author.

Table 3.14 presents the perceptions of Taiwan’s participation in the international arena among Thai higher education students after arrival from the question: *Do you think Taiwan deserves an official member of the United Nations?*. The table includes the number and percentage of participants who responded to each answer.

In conclusion, the results of distribution analysis in this section suggests that in general, **studying in Taiwan** improved Thai higher education students' positive perceptions of since overall impression score toward Taiwan generally increased in several aspects. Such a dynamic in the perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan has been sustained by the presence of positive pulling factors and fostering factors that outweighed the emergence of deteriorating factors, as presented in Table 3.1. **The implementation of the New Southbound Policy** toward Thailand is **significantly effective in influencing positive pre-departure perceptions** of Thai students toward Taiwan' attractiveness and international status by reinforcing the most influential pulling factors, especially the positive past experiences of visiting Taiwan and the availability of scholarships, which significantly influenced Thai higher education students' positive perceptions and decisions to pursue a degree in Taiwan. However, despite reinforcing some specific factors in Taiwan (e.g., the attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asians, the living convenience for Southeast Asians in Taiwan, the prospect of career development in Taiwan, as well as the effectiveness of the NSP in deepening Thailand and Taiwan relations), **the policy may not be influential that much in improving Thai students' post-departure perceptions** of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status. This is because most fostering factors (e.g., easiness of communicating back to the home country, positive perceptions of safety in Taiwan, and the attractiveness of Taiwanese political values) and deteriorating factors (e.g., the unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media and lifestyle and unpleasing climate) that crucially influenced the perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan in different aspects **are not easily affected by the policy.**



### 3.3 Cross-Tabulation Analysis

After reviewing the distribution analysis from the interview data of the 30 Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan, this section gives a deeper discussion on cross-tabulation analysis between independent variables (**gender, ages, degree, academic institutes, program languages, academic majors, living places, Taiwanese scholarship recipients, time living in Taiwan, Mandarin ability, social links in Taiwan, part-time jobs, and knowledge about the New Southbound Policy**) and impression of Taiwan to observe the correlation of each independent variable on the before and after arrival perception trajectory of Thai students' impression of Taiwan.

**Table 3.15 Before and After Arrival Perception Trajectory (Impression of Taiwan)**

<b>Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory (Impression of Taiwan)</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative<sup>36</sup></b>
Improved Perception	20	66.67	66.67
Constant Perception	5	16.67	83.34
Worsened Perception	5	16.67	<b>100.01</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.01</b>	

Source: Created by author.

Regarding the interview data of 30 Thai students' before and arrival impression of Taiwan, 20 participants improved their impression, 5 participants contained constant impression, and 5 participants worsened their impression of Taiwan. In terms of the percentage, approximately 67% of 30 participants' impression improved, 17% of participants' impression was constant, and the other 17% of participants' impression worsened.

<sup>36</sup> The "Cumulative" column presents the cumulative percentage of before and after arrival perception percentage.

**Table 3.16 The Cross-Tabulation between Gender and Impression of Taiwan**

Gender	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Female	12	1	2	15
	80.00%	6.67%	13.33%	50.00%
Male	7	2	2	11
	63.64%	28.57%	28.57%	36.67%
LGBTQ+	1	2	1	4
	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	13.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 15 (50% of 30) were female, 11 (37% of 30) were male, and 4 (13% of 30) were LGBTQ+. The sample distribution in terms of gender thus relatively balanced. Among female participants, 12 (80% of 15) improved their impression, 1 (7% of 15) had a constant impression, and other 2 (13% of 15) worsened it. Regarding male participants, 7 (64% of 11) improved their impression of Taiwan, 2 (29% of 11) maintained constant impression, and other 2 (29% of 11) worsened it. With respect to LGBTQ+ participants, 1 (25% of 4) improved their impression, 2 (50% of 4) maintained constant impression, and another one (25% of 4) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that female and male participants largely had improved impression of Taiwan respectively. Regarding the constant impression, despite the equal majority of male and LGBTQ+ participants in number, LGBTQ+ maintained constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Similar to the worsened impression, despite the equal majority of female and male participants in number, male and LGBTQ+ mainly worsened their impression respectively in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group.

**Table 3.17 The Cross-Tabulation between Age and Impression of Taiwan**

Age	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
18-24	5	2	3	10
	50.00%	20.00%	30.00%	33.33%
25-30	13	3	2	18
	72.22%	16.67%	11.11%	60.00%
Over 30 years old	2	0	0	2
	100.00%	0	0	6.67%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 10 (33% of 30) were between 18 and 24 years old, 18 (60% of 30) were between 25 and 30 years old, and 2 (7% of 30) were over 30 years old. The sample distribution in terms of age thus fairly balanced. Among 18 to 24-year-old participants, 5 (50% of 10) improved their impression of Taiwan, 2 (20% of 10) maintained constant impression, and other 3 (30% of 10) worsened it. Regarding 25 to 30-year-old participants, 13 (72% of 18) improved their impression, 3 (17% of 18) had a constant impression, and other 2 (11% of 18) worsened it. With respect to over 30-year-old participants, 2 (100% of 2) improved their impression of Taiwan.

The cross-tabulation above shows that all over 30-year-old participants had improved impression of Taiwan. Meanwhile, the majority of 25 to 30-year-old and a half of 18 to 24-year-old participants also had improved impression respectively. With respect to constant impression, despite the majority of 25 to 30-year-old participants in number, 18 to 24-year-old participants maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Moreover, 18 to 24-year-old participants also worsened their impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.18 The Cross-Tabulation between Degree and Impression of Taiwan**

Degree	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Undergraduate	3	2	1	6
	50.00%	33.33%	16.67%	20.00%
Master	13	3	4	20
	65.00%	15.00%	20.00%	66.67%
Doctorate	4	0	0	4
	100.00%	0	0	13.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 6 (20% of 30) were undergraduate students, 20 (67% of 30) were master's degree students, and 4 (13% of 30) were doctorate students. Among undergraduate students, 3 (50% of 6) improved their impression of Taiwan, 2 (33% of 6) maintained constant impression, and another one (17% of 6) worsened it. Regarding master's degree students, 13 (65% of 20) improved their impression, 3 (15% of 20) had constant impression, and other 4 (20% of 20) worsened it. With respect to doctorate students, 4 (100% of 4) improved their impression of Taiwan.

The cross-tabulation above shows that all doctorate students had improved impression of Taiwan. Meanwhile, the majority of master's degree and a half of undergraduate students also had improved impression of Taiwan respectively. With respect to constant impression, despite the majority of master's degree students in number, undergraduate students maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. In addition, master's degree students had worsened impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.19 The Cross-Tabulation between Academic Institutes and Impression of Taiwan**

Academic Institutes	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Public University	16	4	5	25
	64.00%	16.00%	20.00%	83.33%
Private University	4	1	0	5
	80.00%	20.00%	0	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 25 (83% of 30) studied in public universities and 5 (17% of 30) studied in private universities. Among those who studied in public universities, 16 (64% of 25) improved their impression toward Taiwan, 4 (16% of 25) maintained constant impression, and 5 (20% of 25) worsened it. Regarding participants who studied in private universities, 4 (80% of 5) improved their impression, and 1 (20% of 5) had constant impression of Taiwan.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the majority of participants who studied in public and private universities had improved impression of Taiwan respectively. However, despite the majority of participants who studied in public university in number, participants who studied in private university had improved impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. With respect to constant impression, despite the majority of participants who studied in public universities in number, participants who studied in private universities also maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample groups. In addition, participants who studied in public universities worsened their impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.20 The Cross-Tabulation between Program Languages and Impression of Taiwan**

Program Languages	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
English	14	3	4	21
	66.67%	14.29%	19.05%	70.00%
Mandarin	3	1	1	5
	60.00%	20.00%	20.00%	16.67%
Bilingual	3	1	0	4
	75.00%	25.00%	0	13.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 21 (70% of 30) studied in English program, 5 (17% of 30) studied in Mandarin program, and 4 (13% of 30) studied in Bilingual program. Among participants who studied in English program, 14 (67% of 21) improved their impression of Taiwan, 3 (14% of 21) maintained constant impression, and 4 (19% of 21) worsened it. Regarding participants who studied in Mandarin program, 3 (60% of 5) improved their impression, 1 (20% of 5) had constant impression, and another one (20% of 5) worsened it. With respect to participants who studied in Bilingual program, 3 (75% of 4) improved their impression, and another one (25% of 4) maintained constant impression of Taiwan.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the majority of participants from English, Mandarin, and Bilingual program had improved impression of Taiwan respectively. However, despite the majority of participants from English program in number and the equal number of participants from Mandarin program, participants from Bilingual program had improved impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Similar to the constant impression, despite the majority of participants from English program in number and the equal number of participants from Mandarin program,

participants from Bilingual program maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Moreover, with respect to the worsened impression, despite the majority of participants who from English program in number, participants from Mandarin program worsened their impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group.

**Table 3.21 The Cross-Tabulation between Living Place and Impression of Taiwan**

Living place	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Taipei	7	1	3	11
	63.63%	9.09%	27.27%	36.67%
Hsinchu	5	2	1	8
	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%	26.67%
New Taipei	2	1	0	3
	66.67%	33.33%	0	10.00%
Hualien	3	0	0	3
	100.00%	0	0	10.00%
Taoyuan	2	0	0	2
	100.00%	0	0	6.67%
Kaohsiung	0	1	1	2
	0	50.00%	50.00%	6.67%
Pingtung	1	0	0	1
	100.00%	0	0	3.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 11 (37% of 30) lived in Taipei, 8 (27% of 30) lived in Hsinchu, 3 (10% of 30) lived in New Taipei, 3 (10% of 30) lived in Hualien, 2 (7% of 30) lived in Taoyuan, 2 (7% of 30) lived in Kaohsiung, and 1 (3% of 30) lived in Pingtung. The sample distribution in terms of living place thus relatively balanced. Among those who lived in Taipei, 7 (64% of 11) improved their impression of Taiwan, 1 (9% of 11) maintained constant

impression, and 3 (27% of 11) worsened it. Regarding participants who lived in Hsinchu, 5 (63% of 8) improved their impression, 2 (25% of 8) had constant impression, and another one (13% of 8) worsened it. For participants who lived in New Taipei, 2 (67% of 3) improved their impression, and 1 (33 of 3) had constant impression. With respect to participants who lived in Kaohsiung, 1 (50% of 2) had constant impression, and another one (50% of 2) worsened it. For participants from Hualien, Taoyuan, and Pingtung, all participants (100% of 3, 2, and 1 respectively) had improved impression of Taiwan.

The cross-tabulation above shows that all participants from Hualien, Taoyuan, and Pingtung had improved impression of Taiwan. the majority of participants from Taipei, Hsinchu, and New Taipei also had improved impression respectively. Still, despite the majority of participants from Taipei and Hsinchu in number, participants from New Taipei had improved impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. With respect to constant impression, despite the majority of participants from Hsinchu in number and the equal number of participants from Taipei and New Taipei, participants from Kaohsiung maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Similar to the worsened impression, despite the majority of participants from Taipei in number and the equal number of participants from Hsinchu, participants from Kaohsiung worsened their impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group.



**Table 3.22 The Cross-Tabulation between Academic Major and Impression of Taiwan**

Academic major	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Social Sciences and Humanities	10	3	4	17
	58.82%	17.65%	23.53%	56.67%
Health Sciences/ Sciences and Technology	10	2	1	13
	76.92%	15.38%	7.69%	43.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 17 (57% of 30) majored in Social Sciences and Humanities and 13 (43% of 30) majored in Health Sciences/Sciences and Technology. The sample distribution in terms of academic major thus relatively balanced. Among those who majored in Social Sciences and Humanities, 10 (59% of 17) improved their impression of Taiwan, 3 (18% of 17) maintained constant impression, and 4 (26% of 17) worsened it. Regarding participants who majored in Health Sciences/Sciences and Technology, 10 (77% of 13) improved their impression, 2 (15% of 13) had constant impression, and 1 (8% of 13) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the number of participants who majored in Social Sciences and Humanities and Health Sciences/Sciences and Technology equally had improved impression of Taiwan. However, participants who majored in Health Sciences/Sciences and Technology improved their impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. On the other hand, participants who majored in Social Sciences and Humanities maintained constant impression and had worsened impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.23 The Cross-Tabulation between Taiwanese scholarship recipients and Impression of Taiwan**

Taiwanese scholarship recipients	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Yes	19	5	2	26
	73.08%	19.23%	7.69%	86.67%
No	1	0	3	4
	25.00%	0	75.00%	13.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 26 (87% of 30) were Taiwanese scholarship recipients, and 4 (13% of 30) were NOT Taiwanese scholarship recipients. Among those who were Taiwanese scholarship recipients, 19 (73% of 26) improved their impression of Taiwan, 5 (19% of 26) maintained constant impression, and 2 (8% of 26) worsened it. Regarding participants were NOT Taiwanese scholarship recipients, 1 (25% of 4) improved their impression, and 3 (75% of 4) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the majority of participants who were Taiwanese scholarship recipients had improved impression of Taiwan the most. Moreover, Taiwanese scholarship recipients also maintained constant impression the most. On the other hand, participants who were NOT Taiwanese scholarship had worsened impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.24 The Cross-Tabulation between Time Living in Taiwan and Impression of Taiwan**

Time living in Taiwan	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Less than a year	2	2	4	8
	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	26.67%
1 to 3 years	16	3	0	19
	84.21%	15.79%	0	63.33%
Over 3 years	2	0	1	3
	66.67%	0	33.33%	10.00%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 8 (27% of 30) had lived in Taiwan for less than a year, 19 (63% of 30) had lived in Taiwan for 1 to 3 years, and 3 (10% of 30) had lived in Taiwan for over than 3 years. Among those who had lived in Taiwan for less than a year, 2 (25% of 8) improved their impression of Taiwan, 2 (25% of 8) maintained constant impression, and 4 (50% of 8) worsened it. Regarding participants who had lived in Taiwan for 1 to 3 years, 16 (84% of 19) improved their impression, and 3 (16% of 19) maintained constant impression. With respect to participants who had lived in Taiwan for over than 3 years, 2 (67% of 3) improved their impression, and 1 (33% of 3) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the majority of participants who had lived in Taiwan for 1 to 3 years and over 3 years improved their impression of Taiwan respectively. Regarding the constant impression, despite the majority of participants who had lived in Taiwan for 1 to 3 years in number, participants had lived in Taiwan for less than a year maintained their constant impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Moreover, participants had lived in Taiwan for less than a year also worsened their impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.25 The Cross-Tabulation between Mandarin Ability and Impression of Taiwan**

Mandarin Ability	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Yes	13	4	3	20
	65.00%	20.00%	15.00%	66.67%
No	7	1	2	10
	70.00%	10.00%	20.00%	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 20 (67% of 30) had Mandarin ability, and 10 (33% of 30) did NOT have Mandarin ability. Among those who had Mandarin ability, 13 (65% of 20) improved their impression toward Taiwan, 4 (20% of 20) maintained constant impression, and 3 (15% of 20) worsened it. Regarding participants who did NOT have Mandarin ability, 7 (70% of 10) improved their impression, 1 (10% of 10) maintained constant impression, and 2 (20% of 10) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that both participants who had and did NOT have Mandarin ability largely improved their impression of Taiwan respectively. However, despite the majority of participants who had Mandarin ability in number, participants who did NOT have Mandarin ability had improved impression the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group. Participants who had Mandarin ability sustained constant impression of Taiwan the most. Besides, despite the majority of participants who had Mandarin ability in number, participants did NOT have Mandarin ability worsened their impression the most compared to the proportion of their sample group.

**Table 3.26 The Cross-Tabulation between Social Links and Impression of Taiwan**

Social links in Taiwan	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Yes	6	3	4	13
	46.15%	23.08%	30.77%	43.33%
No	14	2	1	17
	82.35%	11.76%	5.88%	56.67%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 13 (43% of 30) had social links in Taiwan, and 17 (57% of 30) did NOT have social links in Taiwan. The sample distribution in terms of social links in Taiwan was relatively balanced. Among those who had social links in Taiwan, 6 (46% of 13) improved their impression toward Taiwan, 3 (23% of 13) maintained constant impression, and 4 (31% of 13) worsened it. Regarding participants who did NOT have social links in Taiwan, 14 (82% of 17) improved their impression, 2 (12% of 17) maintained constant impression, and 1 (6% of 17) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that the majority of participants who did NOT have social links in Taiwan significantly improved their impression of Taiwan the most. Participants who had social links in Taiwan also largely improved their impression of Taiwan to a lesser degree. On the other hand, participants who had social links in Taiwan sustained constant impression and had worsened impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.27 The Cross-Tabulation between Part-Time Jobs and Impression of Taiwan**

Part-time job	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Yes	11	3	1	15
	73.33%	20.00%	6.67%	50.00%
No	9	2	4	15
	60.00%	13.33%	16.67%	50.00%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 15 (50% of 30) had part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan, and the other 15 (50% of 30) did NOT have part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan. The sample distribution in terms of part-time jobs in Taiwan was equally balanced. Among those who had part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan, 11 (73% of 15) improved their impression of Taiwan, 3 (20% of 15) maintained constant impression, and 1 (7% of 15) worsened it. Regarding participants who did NOT have part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan, 9 (60% of 15) improved their impression, 2 (13% of 15) maintained constant impression, and 4 (17% of 10) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that both participants who had and did NOT have part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan largely improved their impression of Taiwan respectively. Participants who had part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan also sustained their constant impression of Taiwan the most. On the other hand, participants who did NOT have part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan worsened their impression of Taiwan the most.

**Table 3.28 The Cross-Tabulation between Knowledge about the New Southbound Policy and Impression of Taiwan**

Knowledge about the New Southbound Policy	Before-After Arrival Perception Trajectory			Total
	Improved	Constant	Worsened	
Yes	13	3	3	19
	68.42%	15.79%	15.79%	63.33%
No	7	2	2	11
	63.64%	18.19%	18.19%	36.67%
<b>Total</b>	20	5	5	<b>30</b>
	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Created by the author.

From 30 Thai students and alumni in Taiwan, 19 (63% of 30) had knowledge about the New Southbound Policy, and the other 11 (37% of 30) did NOT knowledge about the New Southbound Policy. The sample distribution in terms of knowledge about the New Southbound Policy was relatively balanced. Among those who had knowledge about the New Southbound Policy, 13 (68% of 19) improved their impression of Taiwan, 3 (16% of 19) maintained constant impression, and 3 (16% of 19) worsened it. Regarding participants who did NOT have knowledge about the New Southbound Policy, 7 (64% of 11) improved their impression, 2 (18% of 13) maintained constant impression, and 2 (18% of 11) worsened it.

The cross-tabulation above shows that both participants who had and did NOT have knowledge about the New Southbound Policy largely improved their impression of Taiwan respectively. Regarding the constant and worsened impression, despite the majority of participants who had knowledge about the New Southbound Policy in number, participants who did NOT have knowledge about the New Southbound Policy sustained constant impression and had worsened impression of Taiwan the most in percentage compared to the proportion of their sample group.

In conclusion, this section provides a deeper discussion on the cross-tabulation between the key variables and the before-after arrival impression of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. After reviewing the cross-tabulation analysis, the results suggest that the key variables that strongly affect before and after arrival impression of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan are **gender, Taiwanese scholarship recipients, time living in Taiwan, and social links**. The findings could be concluded as follow:

- a) Female and male participants are more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than LGBTQ+ participants.
- b) Participants who are Taiwanese scholarship recipients are more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who are not Taiwanese scholarship recipients.
- c) Participants who have lived in Taiwan over 1 years are more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who have lived in Taiwan less than a year.
- d) Participants who do not have social links in Taiwan are more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who have social links in Taiwan.

In addition, regardless of **age, degree, schools, program languages, living places, academic majors, Mandarin ability, part-time jobs, and knowledge about the New Southbound Policy**, the majority of Thai higher education students tended to have improved impression of Taiwan. Still, despite the positive trajectory on these variables, there are some important perception dynamics that are worth to highlight:

- a) Participants who are over 24 years old are more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who are between 18 to 24 years old.
- b) Participants who are undergraduate and doctorate students more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who are master's degree students.



- c) Participants who study in private university more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who study in public university.
- d) Participants who are undergraduate and doctorate students more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who are master's degree students.
- e) Participants who study Health Sciences/Sciences and Technology more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who study Social Sciences and Humanities.
- f) Participants who have part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan more likely to improve their before-after arrival impression of Taiwan than those who do not have part-time.

Such results also resonate the previous distribution analysis that **study in Taiwan generally improved Thai higher education students' positive perception of Taiwan** regardless of age, degree, schools, program languages, living places, academic majors, Mandarin ability, part-time jobs, and knowledge about the New Southbound Policy. Only some particular variables (gender, Taiwanese scholarship recipients, time living in Taiwan, and social links in Taiwan) that significantly affected their before-after arrival perception trajectory of Taiwan. Regarding **the New Southbound Policy**, even though the cross-tabulation analysis shows that the explicit knowledge of the NSP did not have remarkably effect on Thai students' before-after impression of Taiwan, **the policy still implicitly reinforced particular variables**, including Taiwanese scholarship recipients and part-time jobs while studying in Taiwan that influenced positive perception trajectory of Thai students toward Taiwan.

### 3.4 Discussion

This chapter aims to apply quantitative analysis to answer the following research questions:

*Is the New Southbound Policy effective in improving Taiwan's positive image and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan? If yes, which factors improve Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan? And if not, which factors deteriorate Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan?*

By conducting interviews with 30 Thai higher education students in Taiwan to derive the influence of the New Southbound Policy on their perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status, the interview participants are diversified by their gender, ages, living places, academic majors, and academic institutes. However, this research still has a selection bias and self-fulfillment bias from the possibility of the existing positive impression of Taiwan among Thai students who chose to study in Taiwan before their arrival.

Based on the results of distribution analysis and cross-tabulation analysis, it suggests that **studying in Taiwan** generally improved Thai higher education students' positive perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status regardless of interviewees' key variables (except for gender, Taiwanese scholarship recipients, time living in Taiwan, and social links in Taiwan). Positive impression of Thai students toward Taiwan has been influenced and improved by positive pulling factors and fostering factors respectively that potentially outweighed the deteriorating factors.

The implementation of **the New Southbound Policy** toward Thailand was also a significant mechanism in reinforcing some specific pulling factors (the recognition of the policy, positive past experience of visiting Taiwan between 2016 and 2019, the availability of Taiwan's scholarships, the easiness of

obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education, positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities), which **importantly influenced Thai students' positive perceptions and decisions to study in Taiwan before arrival**. Still, despite reinforcing some fostering factors from the implementation of the policy in Taiwan (kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people, allowance to do internship/part-time work while studying, the living convenience in Taiwan for Southeast Asian people, the positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Thai students and Southeast Asian students, positive perception of Taiwan as a place for career development, intention to find a job or currently working in Taiwan, positive perception of the NSP in deepening Thailand and Taiwan relations and improving positive attitudes toward Taiwan), the NSP **may not be influential as expected** in improving Thai students' impression of Taiwan after arrival since the nature of most fostering factors and deteriorating factors (e.g., culture, geographical proximity, climate, or food) on students' perception are not simply influenced by the policy).

To conclude, the quantitative analysis of the interview data on the perceptions of Thai students and alumni in Taiwan shows that studying in Taiwan generally improved Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status. The implementation of the New Southbound Policy toward Thailand also significantly reinforced specific pulling factors, which influenced Thai students' positive perceptions and decisions to study in Taiwan. Still, the NSP may not be as influential as expected in improving Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan after arrival since most of the predominant fostering factors and deteriorating factors that affected the students' perceptions are difficult to be changed by the policy. Such results implicate that the NSP as a Taiwan's public diplomacy is effective to some extent to improve Thai students' positive feelings toward Taiwan, and then they could become Taiwan's international advocacy which would help increase Taiwan's soft power in the future. In the next chapter, the qualitative analysis of the interview data is discussed to support the aforementioned argument in detail.

## Chapter 4 Qualitative Analysis

After discussing the results of the quantitative analysis in the previous chapter, this chapter (Chapter 4) presents the qualitative analysis of the interview data from the 30 participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the main pulling factors and the influence of the New Southbound Policy, which had driven Thai higher education students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status before arrival. The second section describes the main fostering factors and the influence of the NSP, which have driven Thai higher education students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status after coming to Taiwan. The third section explains the deteriorating factors that may be seen as concerns and worsened Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan after arrival. The fourth section discusses a before and after arrival perceptions analysis and case studies of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan before and after arrival. The last section summarizes this qualitative analysis's key points and discussion.

The findings of this qualitative analysis also supported the results of quantitative analysis in the previous chapter that the New Southbound Policy is effective to some degree in improving positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status. The NSP is effective in influencing positive pre-departure perceptions and attracting Thai students to study in Taiwan. However, it may not be as influential as expected in enhancing positive post-departure perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan due to the nature of predominant fostering and deteriorating factors that are difficult to change by the policy.

#### 4.1 Main Pulling Factors and the Influence of the New Southbound Policy on Pre-Departure Perceptions of Taiwan

Considering the interview data of the 30 Thai higher education students' perceptions before coming to Taiwan, several pulling factors had driven positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan. One category of the main pulling factors of the participants' perceptions was the **knowledge and awareness** of respondents toward Taiwan. The first knowledge and awareness factor was a **desire to develop Chinese language skills**. Around **83%** of 30 Thai students reported that the increasing importance of the Chinese language nowadays had driven them to study in Taiwan, which would benefit them in developing their Chinese language skills. The second factor was **positive perception of safety in Taiwan**. **73%** of 30 interviewees expressed that they heard that Taiwan is safe. For example, respondent no.7, a 27-year-old master's degree student from National Tsing Hua University, stated:

*Regarding safety, I heard from a senior that a woman can walk back to her room at night without fear because there are a lot of surveillance cameras. The crime rate is also low. Coming here alone, I thus do not have to worry that something terrible will happen.*

The third factor was a **positive perception of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships**. **73%** of 30 respondents reported that one of the main reasons that they chose Taiwan to study was the availability of many kinds of scholarships as respondent no.1, a 28-year-old master's degree student from National Chengchi University, expressed that:

*The scholarships are attractive because there are many fields of scholarship, even the social sciences. Most people think Taiwan is famous for its sciences and technology, so scholarships may fund only engineering or similar fields. But there are also scholarships for social sciences as well. For example, my university also has a reputation in social sciences.*

The fourth important factor under knowledge and awareness was a **positive past experience of visiting Taiwan**. **73%** of 30 participants (22 respondents) had been to Taiwan for many purposes, including travel, business, and internship. Moreover, **86% of the 22 respondents** reported that their past experiences in Taiwan influenced their decision to study in Taiwan at this time. For instance, respondent no.28, 27-year-old alumni from National Cheng Kung University, reported that:

*There was a lot of influence (on my decision) since I did not know much about Taiwan before. I just knew that it is probably similar to China and Japan. Until I had the opportunity to work as an exchange volunteer of AIESEC<sup>37</sup> during Taipei Universiade 2017, I liked it. So, I decided to pursue a master's degree here.*

The fifth factor was **positive perception of a better quality of life in Taiwan**. Approximately **67%** of 30 participants suggested that studying in Taiwan will bring about a better quality of life, especially in terms of transportation, compared to Thailand.

The sixth factor was **a positive perception of easiness of obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education**. Approximately **67%** of 30 participants informed that the information about Taiwan's higher education is easy to obtain. For example, respondent no.7 stated that:

*(Information on Taiwan's higher education) is easy to find. I rarely talked to the agency. I noticed that most questions that many friends asked us are available on the internet, but information on the internet lacks students' experience in Taiwan. For example, when I applied for the ISA<sup>38</sup> at the time, we did not know about the experience of studying (in the university). So, I have to contact the*

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<sup>37</sup> AIESEC or Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales, is an international non-profit youth organization to explore and develop their leadership potential. The organization provides opportunities for youth to experience teaching, interning, and volunteering in 126 countries and territories (AIESEC, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Master of Information Systems and Applications

*program manager for more information about studying here. Then, he gave me a contact of a Thai student here. (I think) that is also a good way (to find more information).*

The last knowledge and awareness factor was a **positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities**. 13 out of 30 respondents (**43%**) had participated in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities such as Taiwan Expo, Taiwan Higher Education Fairs, and other Taiwan and Thailand-related activities. Approximately **54% of 13 respondents** who participated in the activities expressed that these activities also influenced their decisions to study in Taiwan. For example, respondent no. 26, a 20-year-old undergraduate student from National Taiwan University who participated in Taiwan Higher Education Fair before, said that:

*The event included all universities in Taiwan. At that time, I was in high school and looking for a university to study in Taiwan. Participating in that event helped me to know the speakers who came to lecture and gained a lot of knowledge not only about the university but also the life in Taiwan.*

Apart from these main factors, the lesser degree factors of knowledge and awareness of Taiwan also included positive perception of Taiwanese people's friendliness (43%), high quality of education (40%), the opportunity to work in Taiwan after graduation (37%), easiness to obtain a Taiwanese visa (13%), cost of living (13%), food (10%), entertainment (7%), climate (7%), and permission to do part-time work while studying (7%). Besides, students also reported additional reasons that influenced them to study in Taiwan, such as the provision of international programs and interesting courses, transportation, affordable tuition fee, outstanding expertise in an interesting field, personal interest in Cross-strait relations, the MOU between universities, and the availability of enrollment during the spring semester.

Another main pulling factor of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan was related to **geographic proximity**. **53%** of 30 students pointed out that they chose

Taiwan for studying because of the **close proximity to their home country** as respondent no.29, a 26-year-old master's degree student from National Taipei University, expressed that “the distance (between Thailand and Taiwan) is not that far, only three-hour by plane. If there is no pandemic, we can often go back (to Thailand).”

The last main pulling factor of Thai students' perceptions was associated with **financial costs**, which was **scholarship financial benefits**. **90%** (27) of 30 respondents were/are scholarship recipients, including MOE scholarship (7 respondents), International Higher Education Scholarship Programs of Taiwan ICDF (3 respondents), University Scholarship (16 respondents), and Royal Thai Government Scholarship (1 respondent). When asking the scholarship recipients if they did not receive a scholarship, would they still have come to Taiwan, more than half of the students (**52% of 27**) answered ‘no.’ For example, respondent no.15, an ICDF scholarship recipient at Yuan Ze University, stated that “Receiving a scholarship is the main factor (to study in Taiwan) because I don't want to increase the financial burden for myself.” Such a reason shows that financial benefits from a scholarship were an essential incentive for Thai students to study in Taiwan.

With regard to the **personal recommendations and social links** category, literature from Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Torres (2021) suggest that personal recommendations and social links from students' local social circles were the important pulling factors in driving students' decisions and opinions toward study destination, especially in the case of students from Central American Allies in Taiwan. However, considering Thai higher education students in Taiwan, **40%** of 30 participants reported that they were recommended by family, friends, professors, and others (agency) to study in Taiwan. Similar to social links, **43%** of 30 interviewees said they had friends or family residing in Taiwan while they came to study here. On the contrary, **60%** of 30 students (18 respondents) reported that **they chose to study in Taiwan by themselves**. In this case, personal recommendations and social links had influenced Thai students'



decisions and perceptions to study in Taiwan to a lesser degree. Most of the participants' decisions and perceptions of Taiwan before arrival largely influenced their knowledge and awareness as well as past experiences related to Taiwan.

In addition, the **New Southbound Policy** also influenced Thai higher education students' decisions and perceptions of Taiwan. One pulling factor that was influenced by the NSP was that it reinforced **explicit and implicit recognition of the policy and/or the content of the policy**. **37% of 30** students (11 respondents) reported that they knew about the NSP before coming to Taiwan, and **36% of 11** respondents who knew about the NSP before their arrival pointed out that the NSP influenced their decisions to study in Taiwan. For instance, respondent no. 17, a 24-year-old master's degree student from National Sun Yat-sen University, explained their pre-departure knowledge of the NSP:

*The New Southbound Policy is the policy to go south to create economic ties and build a diplomatic alliance by funding or anything to attract Southeast Asian people to experience Taiwan in order to develop good relations between Taiwan and the Southbound countries in a bilateral and multilateral way.*

Besides, they also pointed out that the NSP also affected their decision to study in Taiwan because:

*The policy reduces the rules of entry and exit between the countries, making it easier for us to travel between Taiwan and Thailand. Before the pandemic, there is also a visa exemption for Thai people (to enter Taiwan), which is extended every year. This evidently attracts more and more Thai people to come to Taiwan. If it were difficult to enter this country, I would not want to come. Therefore, it was also a result of the New Southbound Policy that made me come here.*

Even though more than half of the participants did not know about the New Southbound Policy as such before coming to Taiwan, when being asked

about the specific contents of the NSP, **93% of 30** respondents knew about **the provision of the Taiwanese scholarship for Thai students and researchers** and **the allowance of visa exemption for Thai nationals to travel to Taiwan**. Other policies and activities also somewhat received attention, such as the organization of the Taiwan Expo in Thailand (67% of 30), the promotion of Thai laborers and technical workers to work in Taiwan (43% of 30), and the organization of the Thailand-Taiwan International Film Festival (33% of 30). Such an explicit and implicit recognition of the NSP helped in reinforcing the main pulling factors of Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan in multiple ways as follows.

First, the New Southbound Policy helped in reinforcing **a positive perception of the easiness of obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education**. To attract the New Southbound countries' students to study in Taiwan in order to facilitate people-to-people connectivity, since 2017, the Taiwanese government has also been working hard on promoting Taiwan's higher education in these countries, including Thailand, by cooperating with Taiwan Education Center to promote Taiwan's higher education, organizing Taiwan Higher Education Expo, and establishing Taiwan Connection to collaborate with local higher education institutes in a talent exchange program (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017; Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-a). Respondent no.26 reported the easiness of obtaining Taiwan's higher information after 2017:

*It was difficult to find (information) in the past since Taiwan's higher education was not very popular among Thai people. However, from 2017 to 2018, I feel that the information is much easier to find, including the Taiwan exam (TOCFL), which is used to submit the scholarship as well.*

Moreover, respondent no. 17 also reported that one of their incentives to study in Taiwan was from **the MOU between the universities**<sup>39</sup> that facilitated the application process to study in Taiwan. These two reasons clearly suggested that since the implementation of the NSP, information on Taiwan's higher

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<sup>39</sup> The MOU between National Sun Yat-sen University and Thammasat University.

education is easier to obtain for Thai people, and this also helped in reinforcing the positive perception of Thai students toward Taiwan before arrival.

Second, the New Southbound Policy helped in **reinforcing a positive perception of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships and scholarship financial benefits**. Apart from promoting Taiwan's higher education itself, under the NSP, the Taiwanese government also provides various types of scholarships for attracting Thai people to study and conduct research in Taiwan, such as MOE scholarships, ICDF scholarships, and university scholarships. (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017; Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-a). Considering the participants of the research, most students (87%, 26 respondents) had/have received Taiwanese scholarships. Half of the Taiwanese scholarship recipients also emphasized the important incentive of such financial benefits that attracted them to pursue a degree in Taiwan. The availability of the Taiwanese scholarship and its financial benefit under the NSP program was thus significantly effective in driving the Thai students' decision and positive perceptions toward Taiwan before arrival.

Last, the New Southbound Policy also helped in **reinforcing a positive past experience of participating in Thailand and Taiwan-related activities and a positive past experience of visiting Taiwan**. Under the implementation of the NSP, the Taiwanese government has also promoted cooperation and engagement with the NSP countries in terms of economic cooperation, talent exchanges, resource sharing, and institutional links in order to develop Taiwan's integration in the region (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017). These kinds of cooperation have appeared in form of activities and policies to deepen the relationship between the countries. In Thailand, the famous activities and policies under the NSP, such as the organization of the Taiwan Expo, Taiwan Higher Education Fair, and Thailand-Taiwan International Film Festival, as well as the visa exemption for Thai nationals to visit Taiwan since 2016 (Office of Trade Negotiation, 2017; Office of Trade Negotiation, 2018c-2021; Taiwan Education Center Thailand, n.d.-a). Considering the results of interview data, more than half

of the participants reported their experiences of visiting such activities in Thailand (8 of 13 respondents) and visiting Taiwan between 2016 and 2019 (17 of 20 respondents) influenced their decision to pursue a degree in Taiwan. Therefore, it suggests that the promotion of the NSP in the programs above was effective in attracting Thai students' decisions to study in Taiwan and reinforcing their positive perception of Taiwan before their arrival.

In conclusion, the main pulling factors that had driven positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan before arrival were: a desire to develop Chinese language skills, a positive perception of safety in Taiwan, a positive perception of the availability of Taiwan's scholarships, a past experience of visiting Taiwan, a positive perception of a better quality of life in Taiwan, a positive perception of easiness of obtaining information about Taiwan's higher education, a positive past experience of participating in Taiwan and Thailand related activities, close proximity to home country, as well as scholarship financial benefits. Furthermore, the New Southbound Policy was also a significant driving force through the explicit and implicit recognition of the policy and its contents, which helps strengthen several pulling factors to reinforce decisions and positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan.

#### **4.2 Main Fostering Factors and the Influence of the New Southbound Policy on Post-Departure Perceptions of Taiwan**

After coming to Taiwan, the main fostering factors had improved or sustained the positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. These fostering factors can be divided into six categories: **geographic proximity, cost issues (financial and social costs), physical environment, educational environment, and career development.**

First, regarding the **geographic proximity** factors, **the easiness of communicating back to the home country** was an essential factor that fosters positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan after arrival, as **100%** of Thai students unanimously agreed that it is easy to communicate back to Thailand

while studying in Taiwan. Almost 47% of respondents said they talk to their family and friends in Thailand daily.

Second, considering the interview data from 30 Thai higher education students in Taiwan, about **social costs**, **100%** of Thai students unanimously and positively agreed with the **safety** of living in Taiwan. Almost **93%** of interviewees also had positive feelings toward **the freedom of expressing themselves** while living in Taiwan. Besides, **73%** of respondents also reported they had **never encountered racist experiences** in Taiwan. Respondent no. 8, a 25-year-old doctorate student from Tzu Chi University, positively mentioned safety in Taiwan “(Here is) safe. I can peacefully walk back home at night. There are a lot of surveillance cameras, so I do not have to worry that someone will hurt me. If they hurt me, I believe the police can catch the culprit.” Furthermore, resonating with Torres’ research (2021), **home country links** were not an important social factor in driving positive perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan since only 23% of respondents considered it as important.

Regarding **financial costs**, positive perceptions had been improved or sustained after arrival by **the affordable cost of living based on their scholarship stipend and their conditions**, with **97%** of 30 respondents agreeing with this topic. Another financial cost factor was **the allowance to do an internship or part-time work in Taiwan**. Despite the agreement on the affordable cost of living in Taiwan, **50%** of 30 Thai students had still done **an internship or part-time job** while they studied/are studying in Taiwan.

Third, referring to **the physical, cultural, and societal environment** factors, Taiwanese culture and political and societal values were the main significant factors in improving and sustaining positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan after arrival. almost **93%** of students found that **Taiwanese political and societal values resonated with them**, and **63%** of 30 respondents viewed **Taiwanese culture as attractive**. Respondent no.25, a 37-year-old doctorate student from National Pingtung University, stated about Taiwanese culture and political and societal values:

*(Taiwanese culture) is interestingly different from Chinese culture in Thailand, which is quite simple, and cultural event is held every three years. Different from Thailand, the event is held every year for tourism. Moreover, (Taiwanese political and societal values) also resonated with me, but LGBTQ+ is not very open in Taiwanese society as we rarely see transgender in Taiwan.*

Fourth, many **educational environment factors** had fostered positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan after arrival. First, more than **90%** of Thai students informed that **professors (97%), university staff (90%), and Taiwanese classmates (90%)** are friendly, hospitable, and helpful toward them. Second, **77%** of Thai students reported that **the quality of their study program meets their expectations**. Third, **73%** of students also stated that their universities **sufficiently provide suitable facilities and environments for study**. Last, **53%** and **10%** of 30 participants respectively said their study program's quality is **better than the similar program in their home country**, and some stated that there is **no similar program in their home country**. Respondent no.8 pointed out their positive perceptions of university staff, professors, and Taiwanese classmates that:

*80% of university staff are ready to help us, depending on whether we can understandably communicate with them. Professors in Taiwan are very attentive toward international students. For a small class that is taught in Chinese, the professor possibly takes care of international students by teaching in two languages. If you cannot understand the PowerPoint slides, you can ask the professor later. Taiwanese friends are also friendly and intended to help us. [...] If I cannot find a case study to do research, they are ready to help me find one so that we can graduate together.*

Last, the main fostering factor was also related to the **career development** factor. **60%** of 30 Thai students considered **Taiwan as a place that can professionally develop a career in their area of interest**. Approximately **83%** and **80%** of respondents also respectively believed Taiwanese employers are

**prone to hiring Thai students and Southeast Asian students.** Moreover, **43%** of 30 participants reported that **they intend to find a job in Taiwan after graduation**, while the other **10%** of 30 participants are **currently working in Taiwan**. Respondent no. 28, who studied Business Administration, gave an opinion about Taiwan as a place to develop a career of interest:

*Taiwan can be a place to professionally develop a career in my interested field because Taiwan is a technology country. Even though I am not in the engineering field but in management, I think the company must have a management line. In the countries where technology has developed, I think the office will have been developed as well.*

In addition, the New Southbound Policy had also fostered positive perceptions of Thai higher education toward Taiwan after their arrival in multiple ways. First, the NSP helped **reinforce the kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people (80% of 30 respondents) and the convenience of living in Taiwan for Southeast Asian people (83% of 30 respondents)**. Under the New Southbound Policy, the Taiwanese government not only aims to foster Taiwan's international relations but also to build on the country from the inside (Yang, 2018; Yang, 2019). Since the result of the policy has attracted a significantly growing number of Southeast Asian people to reside in Taiwan, many efforts have been carried out not only to better accommodate the community of Southeast Asians in Taiwan but also to uphold the multicultural identity of Taiwan as a part of Asia, such as the promotion Southeast Asian languages in the basic education system, the award of *Halal* certificates, and the improvement of Southeast Asian immigrant's welfare and rights, which is evidently seen from the provision of public services such as National Immigration Agency and New Immigrants Hall in English and Southeast Asia languages (Fulco, 2018; Yang, 2018; Yang, 2019). Such attempts have potentially created the understanding and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asia and the living convenience for Southeast Asians in Taiwan, as respondent no.24, a 29-year-old, Master's degree student from Yuan Ze University expressed:

*I used to teach Thai culture in elementary school. At that time, I wore a traditional Thai costume and entered the classroom. Without saying any word, a boy raised his hand and said, “tài guó, tài guó (泰國), lǎo shī (老師), are you from tài guó (泰國)? [...] I opened the picture about Songkran day; they also knew everything. I think their textbook possibly teaches about Thailand, or children in Taoyuan may have a social environment that is closed to Thai culture.*

She also explained further about the living convenience for Southeast Asian people in Taiwan:

*In Taoyuan, we communicate by TRA<sup>40</sup>. Most people also prefer to walk and ride an Ubike for exercise. Each place has Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian languages. For example, train stations have many signs in Southeast Asian languages, such as beware of gaps between platforms. [...] Taoyuan city government offices also have many languages, including Thai. Despite the wrong translation, it still can convey what it does mean. Thai people who do not know Chinese can easily live in Taoyuan as there are a lot of signs in Thai and many Thai restaurants [...].*

Second, the New Southbound Policy had reinforced positive perceptions of **reducing financial costs and opening opportunities for career development** in Taiwan, including allowance to do internship/part-time work while studying, a positive perception of Taiwan as a place that can professionally develop a career in their area of interest, a positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian students and Thai students, as well as the intention to find a job and current professions in Taiwan after graduation. Under the NSP, Taiwan has not only promoted economic cooperation with the NSP countries by encouraging trade and investment exchanges between the two sides (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017). It has also aimed to attract talents from the NSP countries to contribute to its economic development and reinforce people-to-people ties

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<sup>40</sup> Taiwan Railways Administration



between Taiwan and the region (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2017). To achieve such goals, the Taiwanese government has relaxed the visa process and internship requirements for the NSP students opening opportunities for them to work in Taiwan after graduation (Nguyen et al., 2020; The New Southbound Talent Development Program, n.d.-a). The Ministry of Labor has also increased the acceptance quota for international and overseas Chinese students' employment (Office of Trade Negotiations, 2018c-2021). As a result, it implicitly and explicitly increased the positive perception of Southeast Asian students by reducing their financial costs and opening opportunity for career development in Taiwan. For example, respondent no.29 also gave an opinion about the prospect of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian and Thai students:

*If you can speak Chinese, I think there is a chance (to work in Taiwan) as we certainly can speak English and the Southeast Asian languages. If we can speak Chinese too, it is also a plus for us. Moreover, it also depends on the company policy. If the company opens a branch in Southeast Asian countries, they definitely need Southeast Asian people.*

Last, the **New Southbound Policy itself** also helped reinforce positive perceptions of students toward Taiwan. After coming to Taiwan, **63% of 30** (19 respondents) reported **they recognized the NSP**, which **increased by 26%** from the pre-departure perception. 12 respondents reported their increased knowledge about the policy after arrival (including 8 participants who had just learned about the policy after arrival and 4 participants who knew about the NSP before and then knew more about it after arrival). Respondent no.27, an 18-year-old, undergraduate student from National Chengchi University, explained their gained knowledge of the NSP after coming to Taiwan:

*There is about the promotion of education and investment. Part of the reasons for initiating the NSP is that during the KMT incumbency, Taiwan has relied on investment from mainland China. The current government has attempted to not rely on the mainland*

*economy. So, they have thus changed their economic dependence from mainland China to Southeast Asia.*

When being asked deeper about whether they think the NSP is helpful in improving positive attitudes toward Taiwan, approximately **68% of 19 participants** who had knowledge of the NPS before and after arriving in Taiwan agreed that **the knowledge of NSP had improved their positive perceptions of Taiwan**. For example, respondent no.21, a 24-year-old, master's degree student from National Dong Hwa University, expressed:

*I like the policy as the (Taiwanese) government supports money for students from Southeast Asian countries to study in Taiwan. I feel that the government's funding here is an opportunity for developing countries and other Asian people to develop skills in the future to find jobs either in their own country or Taiwan. This is what actually impressed me that the government pays attention to education not only for local students but for foreigners who come to study in Taiwan as well.*

Moreover, when being asked further whether they think the NSP is helpful in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan, almost **95% of 19 respondents** who had knowledge of the NPS before and after coming to Taiwan agreed that **the NSP had deepened the relationship between Taiwan and Thailand** as respondent no.24 also indicated:

*(The NSP) is much more helpful (in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan) because Taiwan and Thailand cannot have government-to-government relations. Therefore, the policy will deepen the relationship in the public sphere, especially in tourism and education. Even though there is no official relationship, people still have positive feelings for each other. The policy would thus achieve its goals.*

In conclusion, the main fostering factors that had improved and sustained positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan after arrival were: the easiness of communicating back to their home country, a feeling of

safety, an affordable cost of living in Taiwan, a sense of freedom in Taiwan, the attractiveness of Taiwan's political and societal values, a positive perception toward university staff, professor, and Taiwanese classmates, a prospect of Taiwanese employment to hire Thai students and Southeast Asian students, the quality of program meeting the expectation, a sufficient provision of facilities and environment for study, the less experience of racism in Taiwan, the attractiveness of Taiwanese culture, the better quality of programs and distinctive study programs compared to home country, a positive perception of Taiwan as a place for career development, an intention to find job and current profession in Taiwan, and the allowance to do part-time work. Apart from these factors, the New Southbound Policy was also a mechanism for reinforcing positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan through the recognition of the policy in improving positive perceptions of Taiwan and deepening Thailand and Taiwan relations, the buildup of kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people and the living convenience in Taiwan for Southeast Asians, as well as the reinforcement of fostering factors in term of reducing financial costs and enhancing the opportunity for career development in Taiwan.

#### **4.3 Main Deteriorating on Post-Departure Perceptions of Taiwan**

After reviewing the fostering factors of Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan in the previous section, this section is to observe the presence of deteriorating factors that worsened or are seen as concerns in the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan. The deteriorating factors are presented as follows:

##### **Insufficient provision of English courses for international students:**

Despite the positive trajectory of most of the educational environment factors, the inadequate provision of English courses for international students was seen as an essential concern among Thai students in Taiwan since **84%** of 25 students who studied/ are studying in the international program or bilingual program reported they had faced/are facing this problem in their university. Respondent no. 21 explained this problem:

*In my university, a minimum of three students are required to open a course. My program has only three foreign students, so they open a few courses for us. Only one or two courses are taught in English, which is sometimes not interesting. So, we have to study the courses outside the faculty or study with Ph.D. students.*

**Unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media:** In the aspect of physical, cultural, and societal environment factors, although Taiwanese culture and political and societal values had overwhelmingly been praised by Thai students, approximately **83%** of 30 participants found that Taiwan's entertainment media is unattractive. For example, when being asked whether Taiwan's entertainment media is amusing, respondent no.9, a 25-year-old, undergraduate student from Yuanpei University of Medical Technology, expressed, "Not at all. When watching their (Taiwanese) media, I feel it lacks many things. Regarding marketing, their advertisements are not glamorous and still old-fashioned. Their concerts are mediocre, unexciting, and unattractive."

**Unpleasing climate:** The second deteriorating physical, cultural, and societal environment factor of Taiwan in the perceptions of Thai students was related to climate. **67%** of 30 students informed that Taiwan's climate is unpleasing. Respondent no. 27 also expressed his unpleasure toward Taiwan's climate:

*I knew from the beginning that Taiwan is a subtropical country, so the overall climate should be not bad. However, when I arrived, I just knew that in Taiwan, it could continually rain for a whole week. I do not like this kind of weather and temperature. I thought that it would be a humid subtropical climate, but I did not expect it to be this humid, especially in Taipei.*

**Negative experience with university staff, professors, or Taiwanese classmates:** Even though more than 90% of Thai students had positive perceptions toward university staff, professors, and Taiwanese classmates while studying in Taiwan, when being asked about their negative experiences with the people above, **60%** of 30 participants reported that they had negative experiences

with university staff, professors or Taiwanese classmates. For example, respondent no.2, a 30-year-old master's degree student from Taipei National University of the Arts, explained her negative experience with Taiwanese classmates:

*They (Taiwanese classmates) are pretty selfish. Even though we were in the same class, when they knew that we needed help because we are foreign students, they did not help as much as they should. They just ignored or pretended as if nothing happened, so they would not get involved in the problem.*

Moreover, respondent no.13, a 24-year-old, master's degree student from National Sun Yat-Sen University, also pointed out her problem with university staff "I asked for help, and they were not willing to help. Because I just first came here, I still could not speak Chinese. They could not speak English as well but ridiculously responded, 'why you cannot speak Chinese'"

**Unattractiveness of the Taiwanese lifestyle:** Apart from Taiwanese entertainment media and climate, the third physical, cultural, and societal environment factor potentially deteriorated Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan was Taiwanese lifestyle. Approximately **57%** of Thai students reported that the Taiwanese lifestyle is quite unattractive. Respondent no.23, a 25-year-old, master's degree student from National Taipei Medical University, stated the Taiwanese lifestyle is quite boring because:

*From personal experience, I feel that the lifestyle of Taiwanese people is the same repeatedly. The entertainer personality of Taiwanese people is less than Thai people, such as going to work in the morning, having lunch at noon, and returning home in the evening. That is all. When they go to hang out, they also go to the same bar and restaurant and dress in the same colors, such as black, white, and earth tones. If you look at the background, Thai people are much more entertainers. During working, we are also more entertaining.*

**Difficulty in adapting to the Taiwanese eating habit:** The last Taiwanese physical, cultural, and societal environment factor that was seen as a concern among Thai students was eating habits. Approximately **50%** of 30 Thai students reported that they had a problem with Taiwanese eating habit adaptation. Respondent no. 1 indicated her eating adaptation problem:

*It is because I am not used to (Taiwanese) food. Thai people like to eat spicy food, but some (Taiwanese) food is tasteless and oily. Living here has also changed my eating breakfast habit. Living in Thailand, I had eaten rice, grilled pork, and rice topped with curry as breakfast. However, when I come to Taiwan, I do not eat breakfast, and only drink coffee because Taiwanese breakfast is not tasty.*

In conclusion, the main deteriorating factors that potentially worsened and were seen as concerns in the perception of Thai higher education students in Taiwan were: the insufficient provision of English courses for international students, the unattractiveness of Taiwanese entertainment media, the unpleasing climate, negative experiences with university staff, professors, or Taiwanese classmates, the unattractiveness of the Taiwanese lifestyle, and difficulty in adapting to the Taiwanese eating habits.

#### **4.4 Pre-Departure and Post-Departure Perceptions of Taiwan Analysis**

Before their arrival, overall Thai higher education students held positive perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness. Being asked how much Taiwan's attractiveness is before coming to Taiwan, the average score given by the participants was **7.47** on the 0 to 10 scale. The top three most favorable aspects of Taiwan before their arrival were **Transportation** (by **73%** of 30 respondents), **Politics** (by **57%** of 30 respondents), and **Technology** (by **50%** of 30 respondents). Respondent no. 15 gave her opinion on the three favorable aspects of Taiwan (politics, technology, and transportation):

*In the aspect of transportation, because I have traveled to Taiwan before, [...] I thus experienced that public transportation here is*

*accessible everywhere, even in the countryside. Even though there is no MRT,<sup>41</sup> there are at least buses to reach the remote area. This is what I am impressed with. [...] Regarding technology, Taiwan is famous for being the world's number one semiconductor manufacturer. There are many famous Taiwanese brands in kinds of computers. It is also a country that pays attention to technology. This is also a reason why I chose to study here.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Taiwanese politics is also famous in Thailand's Twitter society, so I have some awareness of Taiwanese politics. I also like that its country's policy is quite democratic.*

Concerning the unfavorable aspect of Taiwan before arrival, **40%** of 30 respondents reported that they **did not have any unfavorable aspects** of Taiwan. Participants were mostly concerned about Taiwan's **climate** before coming to Taiwan as **37%** of 30 respondents mentioned it. For example, respondent no. 5, a 24-year-old, master's degree student from Tzu Chi University, told about her worries about Taiwan's climate "There are a lot of typhoons and the air is humid as it is an island. I asked my seniors, and they said that it rains a lot so that the clothes are not dry."

Regarding the perception of Taiwan's international status, even though **63%** of 30 Thai students viewed that **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as its priority country**, Thai students still held somewhat positive perceptions of **the closeness between Thailand and Taiwan relations before their arrival** since the average score given on this issue was **6.33** on the 0 to 10 scale. Respondent no. 17 gave the reason why they viewed Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country but still gave 8 points on the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan before arrival:

*I heard from several media. Theoretically, I think Thailand is not Taiwan's top-ranked priority country. This could be considered from many aspects. If we look from a diplomatic or economic*

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<sup>41</sup> Taipei Mass Rapid Transit

<sup>42</sup> She is currently majoring in Industrial Engineering and Management at Yuan Ze University.

*aspect, Thailand may not be at the top. However, if we look at tourism, Thailand may be so. Moreover, even though Thailand may not be at the top at the government level, it may be at the level of people, with a closer relationship since Thai people and Taiwanese people are pretty intimate.*

Besides, before coming to Taiwan, Thai students also had relatively positive perceptions of Taiwan's international image. By rating the 1 to 5 score of agreement on the defined statements, the average score of most statements received a positive trajectory from students' perceptions, including Taiwan's image of a leading democratic country (4.37), a successful development country (4.27), an advanced technology country (4.17), an LGBTQ-friendly country (3.97), a high-quality of education country (3.93), and a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries (3.83) and Thailand (3.77). Only the image of Taiwan as a multicultural country received a neutral perception (3.20) from the participants. Apart from these images, students also gave their additional depictions of Taiwan, such as a small country that has struggled to be independent of China, a country that is similar to China and Japan, bubble milk tea, *et cetera*.

After coming to Taiwan, the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan had evidently improved as the average score of Taiwan's impression given by the participants rose to 8.23 on the 0 to 10 scale (increased by 7.6% from pre-departure perceptions). Among all participants, 67% (20) of 30 respondents had **improved** their perceptions since they gave a higher score on their impression of Taiwan after arrival. 17% (5) of 30 participants have a **constant** perception. The other 17% (5) of 30 have **worsened** their perception as they gave a lower score on their impression of Taiwan after arrival. The top three favorable aspects of Taiwan had slightly changed after their arrival. **Transportation** (90% of 30 respondents) and **Technology** (63% of 30 respondents) still ranked in the top three and had received more favorable from Thai students. In addition, the **Living environment** (60% of 30 respondents) and **Taiwanese people** (60% of 30 respondents) had significantly received more positive attitudes. They then ranked the third in favorable aspects of Taiwan



among the participants. In the case of **Politics**, it still maintained the same favorable level (**57%** of 30 respondents) as the before arrival perceptions. Respondent no.9 expressed her improved opinion toward Taiwan's living environment and Taiwanese people:

*The living environment here is clean and easy to commute—no traffic jams and convenience. There are 7-11 every 300 meters [...] Taiwanese people like Taiwanese friends, professors, or other people are kind and willing to help. [...] When I have an emergency problem, everyone helps out without expecting anything in return.*

Meanwhile, several unfavorable aspects of Taiwan had also increased after their arrival. The top three unfavorable aspects of Taiwan were **Climate** (**67%** of 30 respondents), **Food** (**43%** of 30 respondents), and **Living environment** (**17%** of 30 respondents). Respondent no.23 gave their opinion on the negative attitude toward Taiwan's living environment "Regarding the living environment, the rent is expensive compared to Thailand. But the environment is not that good as everything is packed, old, and not up to the standard. If it is livable, it will be very expensive." Apart from these aspects, **30%** of participants also reported other unfavorable aspects of Taiwan, including disasters such as earthquakes, Taiwanese perception of LGBTQ+, Taiwanese driving style, working conditions, and cramped habitat.

With regard to the perceptions of Taiwan's international status, **63%** of respondents viewed **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country**. Still, there are changes in Thai students' perceptions as **47%** (14) of 30 respondents had constant perceptions that Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country. In comparison, **20%** (6) of 30 respondents also had constant perceptions that Taiwan does consider Thailand as a priority country. Another **17%** (5) of 30 respondents had improved their perceptions from Taiwan does NOT to DOES consider Thailand as a priority country. And, the last **17%** (5) of 30 participants had worsened the perceptions from Taiwan DOES to does NOT

consider Thailand as a priority country. However, mentioning the relationship between Taiwan and Thailand, the score given by the participants on the closeness of Taiwan and Thailand relations had slightly improved to **6.97** on the 0 to 10 scale (increased by **6.4%** from pre-departure perceptions). Among the 30 participants, **30%** (9) of 30 respondents' perceptions **improved**. **63%** (19) of 30 respondents' perceptions were **constant**. And, the last **7%** (2) of 30 respondents' perceptions **worsened**. Respondent no.26 explained his improved opinion on the closeness of Taiwan and Thailand relations from 5 to 7 after arrival "I see a lot of Thai restaurants or Thai tea (in Taiwan), and many Taiwanese people like to eat Thai food. So, I think that Taiwanese people can easily access Thainess."

Furthermore, after their arrival, most aspects of Taiwan's international image in the perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan had also significantly **improved**. By rating the 1 to 5 score of agreement on the defined statement, the average score of most statements after arrival has increased, including the image of a leading democratic country (**4.50**), a successful development country (**4.47**), an advanced technology country (**4.37**), a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries (**4.10**) and Thailand (**4.03**), a high-quality of education country (**4.00**), and a multicultural society (**3.90**). The significant improvement was in **the image of Taiwan as a multicultural society**, in which the average score increased by **14.00%** from pre-departure perceptions. Respondent no.24 stated, "I had never known before (arrival) that Taiwan has a diverse culture. I just came to know when I got on the train and heard many languages and realized that there are indigenous people (in Taiwan) too."

However, there was also a worsened international image of Taiwan in the perceptions of Thai students after arrival, **the image of Taiwan as an LGBTQ-friendly country**. The average post-departure score was **3.53**, decreased by 8.80% from pre-departure perceptions. Respondent no.21, an LGBTQ+ student, gave a reason for their worsened perception:

*I primarily thought that Taiwan was a country that strongly embraced the LGBT community before coming. But when I arrived,*

*I discovered that the reality was not so. Many friends who are also LGBT in Taiwan sometimes have to hide their identities and are not accepted by society. This feeling was quite clear and evidently changed before and after arrival. Even for Taiwanese people who are LGBT, the societal environment also does not embrace them that much.*

Apart from these images, Thai students also reported several international images of Taiwan after arrival, such as Taiwan as a harmonious society in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan as a diverse country that welcomes foreigners, Taiwan as a country that is enthusiastic about helping the third world countries, or Taiwan is a country that similar to Thailand, but it has good management in developing a country, *et cetera*.

In the end, when being asked about Taiwan's international status, **83%** of 30 Thai higher education students viewed **Taiwan as a country**. Besides, **90%** of 30 respondents also agreed that Taiwan **deserves an official member of the United Nations**. Respondent no.25 emphasized his opinion on Taiwan's international status:

*Taiwan, by definition, is a complete country. It has its own territory, regime, and government that does not rely on other governments. It also wholly has its own sovereignty, armed forces, and people. So, it deserves the right to vote in the United Nations as a country that deserves great honor.*

In conclusion, studying in Taiwan has dynamically changed the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan before and after arrival. Such an effect not only changed the perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness but also the perceptions of Taiwan's international image and status. In the following paragraphs, the five case studies of Thai higher education which show apparent interactions between pull factors, fostering factors, and deteriorating factors, as well as the perception dynamic of Taiwan before and after arrival, are presented as examples of analysis.

### Case 1 Respondent no.20 (Improved Perception)

Respondent no.20, a 27-year-old, master's degree student from National Taiwan University expressed her opinion toward Taiwan before arrival:

*Before coming to Taiwan to study, I saw that Taiwan is a country that has a good quality of life. Taiwanese culture is a mix between Japan and China. Taiwanese people are also quite friendly. Taiwan's education is quite good. Transportation is also convenient. It is a country that is quite friendly to foreigners and international students, which is suitable for study.*

Her opinion was driven by positive pulling factors that influenced her decision and perception of Taiwan, predominantly **positive past experiences in visiting Taiwan**. She had been to Taiwan before in 2017 for traveling and received positive attitude toward Taiwan's environment and lifestyle. Later, in 2018, she came to Taiwan to **do an internship**. After experiencing the teaching style here, she thus decided to pursue a master's degree in Taiwan. In her case, positive past experiences in visiting Taiwan, reinforced by the New Southbound Policy in promoting **tourism** and **education**, significantly influenced her decision and positive perception of studying in Taiwan. Other pulling factors included high quality of education, Chinese language development, safety, a better quality of life, friendliness of Taiwanese people, opportunity to work in Taiwan after graduation, as well as knowledge and awareness of the NSP itself and its contents (the organization of Taiwan Expo, the provision of scholarships, visa exemption, agricultural cooperation, and the organization of Thailand-Taiwan international film festival).

Such pull factors reinforced her positive perception of Taiwan, as she gave **8 points** out of 10 for Taiwan's attractiveness before arrival. Her perception of favorable aspects of Taiwan were **Politics, Transportation, Living environment, Culture, and Taiwanese people**. On the other hand, her unfavorable aspects were Taiwan's **Climate, Food, and Disaster**. Regarding her perception of Taiwan's international affairs before arrival, she perceived that

**Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority** and gave only **6 points** out of 10 for the closeness of Taiwan and Thailand relations, considered from the popularity of Japanese culture in Taiwan and the lack of official relations between Thailand and Taiwan. In addition, she **agreed** (4 points out of 5) with **most of the defined statements** about Taiwan's international image, only **the image of a multicultural country** that she perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5).

After coming to Taiwan and staying for a year and eight months, she gave an overall opinion toward Taiwan:

*After staying in Taiwan, I have learned more about the Taiwanese way of life and diverse culture. [...] Democracy also causes people to be open-minded, and have rights and freedom of expression. This also affects the education that professors and educational institutes open-minded to students' feedback. They thus welcome Southeast Asian people to come here. The environment here is suitable for everyone to live in. Even with disasters or bad weather, they are also well-prepared for it.*

Such positive perception of Taiwan after arrival had been supported by most of the fostering factors such as safety, the attractiveness of Taiwanese lifestyle, culture, political and societal values, and entertainment, the quality of education, and a positive perception toward university staff, professors, and Taiwanese classmates, career development, *et cetera*. The **New Southbound Policy** had also reinforced her positive perception of Taiwan in the aspect of **living convenience** since she mentioned the easiness of finding Southeast Asian food and products in Taiwan. She also viewed the NSP as helpful in **reinforcing her positive attitude toward Taiwan** since the Taiwanese government is more interested in Thailand and Taiwan's importance. Besides, she agreed that the NSP is **helpful in deepening the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan** from the increase in investment exchanges and mutual recognition in the public sphere between Thailand and Taiwan. Still, after arrival, she also had a negative experience from being racist by Taiwanese classmates, unpleasant weather, and insufficient provision of English courses.

Being fostered by several positive factors that outweighed the deteriorating factors, her positive perception of Taiwan had thus improved to **10 points** out of 10 after arrival. Many favorable aspects of Taiwan had been added more on her list, including **Technology, Education, and Entertainment**, while the unfavorable aspects were still the same as before arrival. With regard to her perception of Taiwan's international affairs, she changed her opinion to **Taiwan does recognize Thailand as a priority country**. She also gave a higher score to **8 points** out of 10 on the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations. Her perception of Taiwan's international image had also improved since she **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) with the image of Taiwan as **a leading democracy country, an advanced technology country, and a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries and Thailand**. Only did the image of **a successful economic development** worsen to **neutral** (3 points out of 5). The rest was still retained the same. Besides, she added her idea to identify Taiwan as an open-minded country that welcomes everyone. In the end, she viewed **Taiwan as a country that deserves an official member of the United Nations** since Taiwan is governed by itself and is not a part of China.

In conclusion, the positive perception of respondent no.20 toward Taiwan **had improved** after studying in Taiwan. Such perception had been driven by pull factors and sustained by fostering factors, with the significant reinforcement of the New Southbound Policy. The presence of several positive factors outweighed the negative experiences from racist experiences, weather, and insufficient provision of courses.

### **Case 2 Respondent no.16 (Constant Perception)**

Respondent no.16, a 21-year-old, undergraduate student from the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, expressed her perception of Taiwan before her arrival "Not only the urban planning or transportation are well-ordered, but their people are also disciplined and complied with the law. According to my findings, Taiwan ranks the first in terms of technology and education in Asia."

Her positive perception and decision to study in Taiwan were driven by several important factors. First, **the positive past experience of participating in Thailand and Taiwan activities**, since participating in the Taiwan Expo gave her more information about Taiwan's higher education and influenced her decision to study in Taiwan. Second, **the availability of scholarships and scholarship financial benefits** were also the important driving force for her decision since she mentioned that if she did not receive Taiwan's scholarship she would not come to study in Taiwan. Third, the **positive past experience of traveling to Taiwan** in 2019 was also quite influential in affecting her positive perception as she was impressed with the transportation, well-ordered, and cleanliness of Taiwan. Such influential factors were also driven by the implementation of **the New Southbound Policy** in promoting **talent exchanges** and **tourism** in Thailand. Other pulling factors were Chinese language development, safety, the opportunity to work in Taiwan after graduation, as well as the implicit recognition of the content of the NSP in terms of the organization of the Taiwan Expo, the provision of scholarships, and visa exemption for Thai nationals.

Being driven by these positive pull factors, she gave **8 points** out of 10 to Taiwan's attractiveness before her arrival. She was attracted by Taiwan's **Technology, Transportation, Living environment**, as well as **Taiwanese people**. Meanwhile, she was only concerned about the **Climate**. Referring to Taiwan's international relations, she saw that **Taiwan does consider Thailand as a priority country** and gave **8 points** out of 10 to **the closeness between Thailand and Taiwan relations**, which was pondered by the attentiveness of Taiwan in promoting its education among Thai students. Moreover, her perception of Taiwan's international image was also on a positive trend. She **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) with the image of Taiwan as **a leading democratic country** and **agreed with the rest defined statements** (4 points out of 5). Only the image of **an LGBTQ-friendly country** was concerned as **neutral** (3 points out of 5).

After staying in Taiwan for a year and 8 months, she concluded her perception of Taiwan that:

*Overall is good. The quality of life here is good. I like the most about transportation. [...] Unlike Thailand, here is convenient to use a Ubike, and the buses are quite thorough. People I met were also impressive. Even though some Taiwanese people are afraid to speak English when they know we are foreigners, those who are dared to speak are quite friendly and helpful. Despite some negative experiences,<sup>43</sup> the good things are overwhelmed. The university offers many opportunities for international students, such as being a TA.<sup>44</sup> In fact, there is a lot of opportunity within the university, such as student clubs. Still, except for an international student's club, they are all in Chinese, which is inaccessible for international students.*

Her post-departure had been in a relatively positive trajectory supported by fostering factors, including the affordable cost of living, easiness of communicating back to the home country, safety, a sense of freedom, the attractiveness of Taiwanese lifestyle, culture, political and societal values, the adaption to eating habit, quality of education, positive perception of Taiwan as a place for career development. Still, there were the presence of negative factors, including the unpleasant climate, the unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media, insufficient English courses, negative experiences with Taiwanese classmates, and the negative tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian and Thai students. She mentioned the low opportunity for Southeast Asians to work in Taiwan if lack Chinese language skills. In her case, the New Southbound Policy **did not evidently reinforce** her positive perception after arrival. Despite her agreement with the attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward

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<sup>43</sup> She explained her experiences while studying gender and sexuality in the classroom, despite having a concrete policy to support LGBTQ+, Taiwanese culture and norms and people still do not accept it that much as she found a group of boys ignorantly discussing this issue. Besides, students and a teacher still have a mistaken understanding of menstruation.

<sup>44</sup> Teaching assistant



Southeast Asia and the living convenience in Taiwan for Southeast Asians, her answer focused more on the easiness of cultural adaptation rather than the experiences that were possibly affected by the New Southbound Policy.

Being sustained by positive fostering factors and balanced from the emergence of negative factors, respondent no.16 still retained the same score (**8 points**) of Taiwan's impression after her arrival. Her favorable aspects of Taiwan had changed to **Transportation, Culture, Food, and Taiwanese people**. The unfavorable aspects were still **climate** and added another concern about the **Taiwanese perception of LGBTQ+**. She indicated that despite the legal rights of LGBTQ+, the norms in Taiwanese society still do not accept this issue that much. Regarding Taiwan's international affairs, despite retaining the same score of the closeness between Taiwan and Thailand relations (**8 points**), she changed her perception that **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country**. For instance, holding Thai nationality does not give a priority in finding a job in Taiwan. Nevertheless, her perceptions of Taiwan's international image had **improved** in aspects of **a successful economic development country and an advanced technology country**, with which she **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) after arrival. For the rest statements, she still retained the same perception. Only the image of an **LGBTQ-friendly country** was worsened to **disagree** (2 points out of 5). In the end, she considered **Taiwan as a country that deserves an official member of the United Nations** since Taiwan is governed by itself and does not depend on another country.

In conclusion, the positive perception of respondent no.16 toward Taiwan **was constant** after studying in Taiwan. Her perception had driven by positive pull factors, with the significant reinforcement of the New Southbound Policy before her arrival. The positive perception had been sustained by positive fostering factors, balanced with the presence of deteriorating factors after her arrival.

### Case 3 Respondent no.10 (Worsened Perception)

Respondent No. 10, a 28-year-old, master's degree student from National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, described her perception of Taiwan before her arrival:

*It is a democratic country with a good education. I heard from friends that people are nice. The cost of living here is not too extravagant. The country has developed technology. I have seen in the polls that the country also ranked among the top countries where people live happily. People enjoy the freedom of expression.*

Her positive perception of Taiwan was driven by several factors, including **social links** as her friends were living in Taiwan, the availability of scholarships, high quality of education, Chinese language development, the positive perception of a better quality of life, and the positive perception of the affordable cost of living in Taiwan. In her case, the New Southbound Policy **was not evidently appeared** as an influential factor in upholding her positive perception and decision of studying in Taiwan before arrival. Despite participating in Taiwan and Thailand-related activities and visiting Taiwan in 2018, she reported that these two activities had not influenced her decision to pursue a degree in Taiwan. Moreover, despite being a recipient of the university scholarship, she also informed that without a scholarship, she would still decide to study in Taiwan due to the affordable cost of living. Scholarship financial benefit thus did not affect her decision as much as it should. Her involvement with the NSP only appeared as the implicit knowledge of the policy in terms of the organization of the Taiwan Expo, the provision of Taiwanese Scholarship, the promotion of Thai laborers and technical workers to work in Taiwan, the allowance of visa exemption for Thai nationals to travel to Taiwan, and the organization of Thailand-Taiwan International Film Festival.

Being driven by these factors, she gave **8 points** out of 10 for Taiwan's attractiveness before her arrival. Her favorable aspects of Taiwan were **Politics, Economics, Technology, and Education**, while her unfavorable aspect was only

**Food.** Regarding Taiwan's international affairs, she believed that **Taiwan does consider Thailand a priority partnership country** in the aspect of Taiwan's main foreign labor supplier. She also gave **6 points** out of 10 for the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations. With respect to Taiwan's international image, she **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a successful economic development country and a high quality of education country. Other images were perceived as **agree** (4 points out of 5), except for the image of Taiwan as a multicultural country that she perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5)

After 6 months of studying in Taiwan, she reported her worsened perceptions of Taiwan:

*At first, I had friends who studied here. They said that people are nice and overly complimented Taiwan. I am not sure whether it is the difference between study fields. My friends can speak Mandarin and they also studied engineering, so people are similarly tough. However, I had changed my fields,<sup>45</sup> so I encountered some strange people. [...]. Regarding education, it looks down on students, just like only paying the tuition fee and waiting for graduation. But other universities are possibly different. We know that LGBT people are able to legally married here. Despite the legal support, people still do not accept it. Some progressive heads are open-minded. Still, the LGBTQ+ seem unable to express themselves that much.*

Her post-departure perception had been driven by several fostering and deteriorating factors. Her positive perception of Taiwan had been influenced by positive factors, such as the positive perception of safety and freedom of expression in Taiwan, the attractiveness of Taiwanese lifestyle, culture, political and societal values, sufficient provision of facilities and environment for study, positive perception with university staff and Taiwanese friends, *et cetera*. The New Southbound Policy **did not apparently reinforce** her positive perception of Taiwan. Even though she mentioned the living convenience for Southeast Asians in Taiwan from definite rules to follow, she raised a concern about **the**

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<sup>45</sup> She is currently studying International Master of Business Administration.

**inconvenience of living here for those who cannot speak Chinese.** In addition, she also did not know about the policy after staying in Taiwan.

Despite the presence of fostering factors, her post-departure perception had evidently worsened from the major emergence of deteriorating factors, especially **the quality of the program that does not meet the expectation and does not better than a similar program compared to the home country**, as she explained:

*I thought that as a top university, it would be more competitive. I do not know because they saw us as stupid kids or something else. For example, their exam was looking down on students. The exam was exactly similar to the examples that they gave us before. It is good that we can get good grades and be easy to graduate. However, at the university level, it should not be like this. I think (the program) in Thailand is probably better as it is more difficult (than the current program).*

Apart from this factor, she also reported other negative perceptions, including the perceived averseness of Taiwanese people toward foreign people, the unattractiveness of Taiwan's entertainment media, the difficulty of eating habits adaptation, insufficient provision of English courses, negative experience with professors, the negative perception of Taiwan as a place for career development, and the negative tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Thai and Southeast Asian students.

As a result, respondent no.10 gave **7 points** out of 10 to Taiwan's attractiveness after arrival. Her favorable aspects of Taiwan were only **Politics, Economics, and Technology**, while her unfavorable aspect was still the same. Regarding Taiwan's international affairs, she **negatively changed** her perception that **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country** and gave a lower score of **5 points** out of 10 for the closeness of Taiwan and Thailand relations. She pointed out that Thailand is not Taiwan's priority partnership country, except for the aspect of labor. With respect to Taiwan's international image, her

perception was relatively worsened. She **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a successful economic development country and an advanced technology country. She **agreed** (4 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a leading democratic country and a trustworthy partnership for Southeast Asian countries and Thailand. The other three images she perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5). Despite her worsened perception, she still saw **Taiwan as a country** and Taiwan **deserves an official member of the United Nations**.

In conclusion, the positive perception of respondent no.10 toward Taiwan had **somewhat worsened** after studying in Taiwan. Such perception had been driven by the emergence of several deteriorating factors that outweighed the presence of positive pull factors and fostering factors under a slight impact from the New Southbound Policy.

#### **Case 4 Respondent no.13 (Worsened Perception)**

Respondent no.13, a 24-year-old, master's degree student from National Sun Yat-sen University, reported her perception of Taiwan before her arrival:

*Before coming to Taiwan, I knew that Taiwan is a developed country with a good democracy and educated people. Its government is efficient in setting up the administrative system. They also support LGBTQ+. But, in international politics, it is not strong and does not have the bargaining power as China.*

Such a relatively positive perception of Taiwan was driven by pulling factors, including **social links** as her father is working in Taiwan, Chinese language development, safety, **and the positive past experience of traveling to Taiwan in 2015**, which influenced her decision to study in the current university. In this case, the New Southbound Policy **did not evidently influence** her decision to study in Taiwan since her decision primarily relied on general factors and her experience of visiting Taiwan before the policy's implementation. Her involvement with the NSP only presented in the implicit recognition of the content of the policy, regarding the organization of the Taiwan Expo, the encouragement of Taiwanese companies to invest in Thailand, the provision of

scholarships, visa exemption for Thai nationals, and the organization of the Thailand-Taiwan International Films Festival.

Being driven by the factors above, she positively gave **8 points** out of 10 for Taiwan's attractiveness before arrival. Her favorable aspects of Taiwan were **Technology, Transportation, and Taiwanese people**, while her unfavorable aspect was **Food**. Regarding Taiwan's international status, she saw that **Taiwan does consider Thailand as a priority country** and gave **6 points** out of 10 on the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations, which was considered from the organization of the Taiwan Expo as well as the number of scholarships and visa exemption that were provided for Thai people at that time. Besides, in the case of Taiwan's international image, she **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a high-quality education country. She **agreed** (4 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a leading democratic, successful economic development, advanced technology, and LGBTQ-friendly country. The other three images she perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5).

After staying in Taiwan for five years, she had a relatively worsened perception of Taiwan as she said:

*I think Taiwan is a developed country with well-educated people. Still, people are not as open-minded as in Thailand, such as LGBT issues. Even though the government supports it, people still do not support it that much. For example, people will judge when they see men and men holding hands. Unlike Thailand, even though the government does not support it, Thai people view it as normal. Some people are still racist as they see Southeast Asian people as laborers. So, Thai, Vietnamese, or Indonesian students were sometimes racially humiliated. [...] However, what I like the most is democracy. I was impressed when the Kaohsiung people voted to remove the governor two years ago.*

Such perception had been driven by several fostering and deteriorating factors. Her positive perception of Taiwan had still been maintained by fostering factors, such as safety, a sense of freedom, the attractiveness of Taiwanese

culture, and societal and political values, a pleasant climate, a suitable environment for study, *et cetera*. The **New Southbound Policy** also implicitly reinforced **her positive perception of career development and living convenience for Southeast Asian people** in Taiwan as she pointed out the current availability of the English language in public spaces in the Kaohsiung city. Moreover, she reported the explicit recognition of the NSP after arrival. She viewed that it is helpful in deepening Thailand and Taiwan relations because it attracts Thai people to work or study in Taiwan. This will increase awareness of Taiwan among the Thai people.

Despite the presence of fostering factors, the emergence of deteriorating factors seemingly outweighed those positive factors, especially **the perceived averseness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asian people and negative experiences of being racist**. She described her negative experiences of being racist by Taiwanese people:

*He (the Taiwanese professor) treated us inferior to other national students. When I was an undergraduate student, [...] we had a class that taught in Chinese. At that time, I still was not good at Chinese. Other white people classmates were also not that good. However, it turned out that the professor treated them better even though we were in the same situation. We are not Chinese. Still, it is apparent that he treated white people better than Southeast Asians.*

Apart from these factors, other deteriorating factors were the unattractiveness of the Taiwanese lifestyle and entertainment media, the difficulty of eating habit adaptation, insufficient English courses, the quality of education that does not meet expectations, negative experience with university staff, and the negative tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian and Thai students.

As a result, respondent no.13 reported her worsened perception of Taiwan's impressiveness to **7 points** out of 10. Her favorable aspects of Taiwan were added **Political** aspect, while her unfavorable aspect was still the same.

Regarding Taiwan's international affairs, even though the score on the closeness between Thailand and Taiwan was still the same, she had **worsened** her perception that **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country**. She pointed out that because of Thailand's position leaning toward China, Taiwan possibly does not prioritize Thailand at the top that much. Still, her perception of Taiwan's international image slightly improved. She **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a leading democratic country. The other statements were mostly perceived as agreeing (4 points out of 5), while only the image of Taiwan as a trustworthy partnership country for Southeast Asia and Thailand is perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5). In the end, she viewed **Taiwan as a country** since it has complete components of being a state. She also agreed that **Taiwan deserves an official membership in the United Nations**. For example, in the case of COVID-19, it is quite unfair that Taiwan needs to help itself as it lacks UN membership.

In conclusion, the positive perception of respondent no.13 toward Taiwan had **slightly worsened** after studying in Taiwan. Such perception had been driven by the emergence of several deteriorating factors that outweighed the presence of positive pull factors and fostering factors under a partial impact of the New Southbound Policy.

#### **Case 5 Respondent no.23 (Worsened Perception)**

Respondent no.23, a 25-year-old, master's degree student from Taipei Medical University, explained their perception of Taiwan before arrival "Overall, it is a country that is suitable for living. The country is ready to develop people in the fields of education, society, and politics."

Their positive perception of Taiwan before arrival was driven by several pull factors, including, social links (friends residing in Taiwan), a positive perception of the high quality of education, a desire to develop Chinese language, and the close proximity to their home country. Despite their lack of explicit knowledge of **the New Southbound Policy**, the policy implicitly attracted their decision to study in Taiwan from **the easiness of obtaining information about**



**Taiwan's higher education, the availability of scholarships, and the MOE scholarship financial benefits.** Considering the comparison between cost and university ranking in Taiwan, the respondent said that it is not worth paying, so without the scholarship, they would not come to study in Taiwan. Moreover, they also reported their implicit knowledge of the NSP content, including the organization of the Taiwan Expo, the provision of scholarships, the promotion of Thai labor and technician to work in Taiwan, visa exemption for Thai nationals, the cooperation between Thai and Taiwan hospitals to share medical technology and personnel training. They also added additional information about Thailand and Taiwan-related activity, which are the student exchange collaboration between Taipei Medical University and Mahidol University.

Being driven by these positive pulling factors, they gave **8 points** out of 10 for Taiwan's attractiveness before arrival. The favorable aspects of Taiwan were **Politics, Education, Transportation, and Culture**, while their unfavorable aspects were **Living environment and Climate**. Regarding Taiwan's international affairs, they believed that **Taiwan does consider Thailand as a priority country** and gave **6 points** out of 10 on the closeness of Taiwan and Thailand relations, which was considered from the exchange of agricultural products and skilled labor between Thailand and Taiwan. With regard to Taiwan's international image, their perception was quite varied. They **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a leading democratic country. Most of the statements, they perceived as **agreed** (4 points out of 5), except the image of a successful economic development country and an advanced technology country were perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5), and the image of a multicultural country was perceived as **disagreeing** (2 points out of 5). They also added the additional image of Taiwan as a country of diverse cuisines and famous for tea, especially Taiwanese tea.

After studying in Taiwan for 6 six months, they described their perception of Taiwan after their arrival:

*Taiwan is a country that opens opportunities for foreigners to come for studying since there are a lot of scholarships. It is also a country that welcomes foreigners. However, it is a country that 'attempts to be internationalized', not 'the internationalized one.' So, if you study in the bilingual (Chinese-English) program, you can get more things than in the English program.*

Despite sustaining the positive perception, their perception of Taiwan had slightly worsened. For the remained positive perception, it had been sustained by the presence of several fostering factors, such as the feeling of safety and freedom of expression, the attractiveness of Taiwanese culture and political and societal values, and the better quality of the program compared to the home country, et cetera. Despite their lack of explicit knowledge of the New Southbound Policy after arrival, the policy somewhat implicitly influenced in fostering his positive perception of Taiwan, especially in aspects of **the attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asians**. They explained when they told other Taiwanese that they came from Thailand, Taiwanese people kindly responded “Sawasdeeka,<sup>46</sup> I love your green curry.” This showed that the Taiwanese know the elements of Thailand and reinforced their first impression of the Taiwanese people. Apart from this, the NSP also upheld their positive perception in terms of **career development** in Taiwan.

However, the emergence of deteriorating factors seemed to slightly outweigh the presence of fostering factors, including the unattractiveness of Taiwanese lifestyle and entertainment media, the unpleasing climate, the insufficient provision of English courses, the insufficient provision of suitable facilities and environment for studying, the quality of the program that did not meet the expectation, and the negative experiences with university staff. For example, they reported the negative experiences of the insufficient provision of English courses “(The university) are open for international students, but there are not enough (English) courses. Most courses are available in Chinese, such as

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<sup>46</sup> Greeting word for women in Thai language.

Research Ethics, which is a mandatory course. So, we have no choices.” In addition, they also mentioned a case of his friend that withdrew from the scholarship because they cannot study in Chinese even though the university at first offered the English program.

As a result, respondent no.23 gave only **7 points** out of 10 for Taiwan’s impression after arrival. The favorable aspects of Taiwan changed to **Economic, Technology, and Transportation**, and also added other aspects, **the NHI<sup>47</sup> and public space**. The unfavorable aspect was still retained, and also added the **Earthquake**. Regarding Taiwan’s international affairs, despite the same score on the closeness of Thailand and Taiwan relations, they changed that **Taiwan does not consider Thailand as a priority country**. They pointed out that Taiwan is heading toward other Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines more than Thailand due to their cheaper wages. Rice or other ingredient products are also imported from Vietnam more than Thailand. Still, their overall perception of Taiwan’s international image has relatively improved. They **strongly agreed** (5 points out of 5) that Taiwan is a successful economic development country. Most statements were perceived as **agreeing** (4 points out of 5), except the image of an LGBTQ-friendly country and high quality of education country were perceived as **neutral** (3 points out of 5). They also added another image of Taiwan as a country with a lot of scholarships. In the end, they explained that Taiwan has its own government and regime, distinctively separated from China. People from both sides have required a visa for entry to each country’s border. It is thus evident **that Taiwan is a country and deserves participation in the United Nations**.

In conclusion, the positive perception of respondent no.20 toward Taiwan had **slightly worsened** after studying in Taiwan. Such perception had been driven by the emergence of several deteriorating factors that outweighed the presence of positive pull factors and fostering factors under the modest impact of the New Southbound Policy.

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<sup>47</sup> National Health Insurance.

## 4.5 Discussion

Reviewing the 30 Thai higher education students' interview data, this chapter presents the qualitative analysis of evaluating the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving the positive perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status.

The findings of this chapter show that, in general, **studying in Taiwan has remarkably enhanced Thai higher education students' positive perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status** from the combination of pulling factors, fostering factors, and deteriorating factors in several aspects, including knowledge and awareness, cost issues, physical and educational environment, geographic proximity, as well as career development. These findings are in accordance with Lin and Sung (2020), Nguyen et al. (2020), and Torres (2021)'s analysis that studying in Taiwan helps improve the positive feelings of the New Southbound Policy's students, Vietnamese students, and the Central American allies' students toward Taiwan, respectively.

Focusing on evaluating the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy, this thesis' results show **the significant impact of the NSP in influencing Thai students' decisions and positive perceptions of studying in Taiwan before arrival**. Such outcomes also resonate with Lin and Sung (2020)'s and Nguyen et al. (2020)'s research that the NSP is effective in motivating the NSP students in general and Vietnamese students, in particular, to study in Taiwan through the promotion of Taiwan's higher education and the availability of scholarship. In addition, this research also indicates further that apart from the mentioned pulling factors, the NSP also attracts Thai students to pursue a degree in Taiwan through the promotion of tourism by reinforcing positive perceptions of past experiences in Taiwan.

Different from the mentioned two researches of the impact of the New Southbound Policy on the NSP students and Vietnamese students' decision to study in Taiwan, this research observes further on the effectiveness of the NSP in improving Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan after arrival. The results

show that despite the influence of the NSP in reinforcing some specific fostering factors (e.g., the attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asians, the living convenience of Southeast Asians in Taiwan, and career development in Taiwan), most of the positive fostering factors (e.g., safety, sense of freedom, and affordable cost of living in Taiwan) and negative factors (e.g., unpleasing climate, unattractiveness of entertainment media, and difficulty of eating habit adaptation) that affects the changing perceptions of Thai students in Taiwan are, in its nature, not easily changed by the policy. Therefore, **the NSP may not be effective as it should be in improving Thai students' positive perceptions of Taiwan after arrival.**

In summary, studying in Taiwan has significantly improved the perceptions of Thai higher education students toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status. The New Southbound Policy under the Tsai administration since 2017 also significantly attracted Thai higher education students to study in Taiwan by reinforcing positive specific pulling factors. Still, its effectiveness in improving positive perceptions of Thai students toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status after arrival is not as influential as expected since several fostering and deteriorating factors are difficult to be altered by the implementation of the policy. The NSP thus is effective to some degree as Taiwan's soft power maneuver to project Taiwan's favorable image in Thai students' perceptions, which would enhance the plausibility of these Thai students to become Taiwan's international representatives in their home country in the future.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Main Findings

Evaluating the effectiveness of the New Southbound Policy in improving the perception of Thai higher education students in Taiwan, this research aims to answer a set of the following questions: *Is the New Southbound Policy effective in improving Taiwan's positive image and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher educational students in Taiwan?* If yes, which factors improve Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan? And if not, which factors deteriorate Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the perceptions of Thai higher education students in Taiwan?

By interviewing the 30 Thai higher education students and alumni in Taiwan, the quantitative and qualitative analysis results could be concluded that **the New Southbound Policy is effective to a certain degree as a Taiwan's public diplomacy in improving Taiwan's positive image and its status in the perceptions of Thai higher educational students in Taiwan.** To clarify, **the NSP is an important mechanism** in influencing Thai students' decisions and positive perceptions of studying in Taiwan **before their arrival.** Apart from general pulling factors (a desire to develop Chinese language skills, a positive perception of safety in Taiwan, a positive perception of a better quality of life in Taiwan, and the close proximity to the home country), **the implementation of NSP as a public diplomacy, especially from the promotion of Taiwan's tourism and education toward Thailand, had significantly influenced Thai students' decisions and positive perceptions of studying in Taiwan by reinforcing specific pulling factors,** including

- Explicit and implicit recognition of the policy itself and related contents
- Easiness of obtaining Taiwan's higher education information
- Availability of scholarship and scholarship financial benefits

- Positive past experience of visiting Taiwan between 2016 and 2019
- Positive past experience of Thailand and Taiwan-related activities

As a result, Thai students generally had positive feelings toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status before their arrival.

Nevertheless, the New Southbound Policy **may not be influential as expected** in improving Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status **after their arrival**. It is apparent that studying in Taiwan has significantly improved Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan's attractiveness and international status from the presence of general fostering factors (the feeling of safety, the easiness of communicating back to the home country, the affordable cost of living, the sense of freedom, the attractiveness of political and societal value, the positive perception of professors, university staff, and Taiwanese classmate, the quality of the study program that meets the expectation, the inexperience of being racist, the sufficient provision of suitable facilities and environment for study, the better quality and the distinctive study program compared to the home country, and the attractiveness of Taiwanese culture) **combined with the specific fostering factors which were reinforced by the implementation of the NSP, particularly the promotion of better accommodation of Southeast Asian community and career development in Taiwan**, including

- Positive perception of the NSP in deepening Thailand and Taiwan relations
- Living convenience for Southeast Asians in Taiwan
- Positive tendency of Taiwanese employers to hire Southeast Asian and Thai students
- Kindness and attentiveness of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asians
- Positive perception of the NSP in improving positive attitude toward Taiwan

- Positive perception of Taiwan as a place for career development
- Positive intention to find a job or the current profession in Taiwan
- Allowance to do an internship or part-time work while studying in Taiwan

Such positive factors **outweighed the emergence of deteriorating factors** (the insufficient provision of English courses for international students, the unattractiveness of Taiwan’s entertainment media, the unpleasing climate, the negative experience with university staff, professor, and Taiwanese classmates, the unattractiveness of Taiwanese lifestyle, and the difficulty to adapt with Taiwanese eating habit). Still, **the impact of the NSP has not strongly determined the post-departure perceptions** of Thai students toward Taiwan since most of the positive feelings (such as the positive perception of Taiwan’s transportation, technology, and politics) and negative feelings (such as the unpleasing climate, food, and Taiwanese perception of LGBTQ+) **cannot be easily reinforced and solved by the implementation of the NSP.**

Even though the New Southbound Policy may not be influential as expected, the NSP is still effective in **fortifying the existing Taiwanese soft power.** This is because the implementation of the policy that attracts Thai students to study in Taiwan helps enhance Thai students’ positive perceptions of **Taiwanese soft power resources** (indicated by the existing Taiwanese soft power literature e.g., Chu, 2011; deLisle, 2010; Institute for National Policy Research, n.d.; Lee, 2005; Otmazgin, 2021; Rawnley, 2012; Wang & Lu, 2008)<sup>48</sup> as follows:<sup>49</sup>

- **Democracy:** The image of a leading democratic country
- **Culture:** Taiwanese culture, The image of a multicultural society
- **Diplomacy:** The image of the trustworthy partnership country for Southeast Asians country and Thailand

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 2 The Concept of Soft Power and Taiwan’s Public Diplomacy (pp. 47-49).

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 3, Table 3.4, 3.5, 3.11, 3.12, Figure 3.1, and 3.2 (pp. 69-70 and 74-77).



- **Economic accomplishment:** The image of successful economic development country
- **IT advancement:** Technology, The image of an advanced technology country
- **High quality of human resource:** Taiwanese people, The image of high quality of education

This research thus suggests that Taiwan's New Southbound Policy is not only a mere foreign policy strategy to promote concrete cooperation with the target countries but also **a relatively effective public diplomacy** that mobilizes Taiwan's soft power to uphold Taiwan's attractiveness and its international status in the NSP countries' public opinion. Focusing on the promotion of talent development under the NSP toward Thailand, the cooperation and engagement under the NSP in Thailand have explicitly and implicitly reinforced Thai people's positive attitudes toward Taiwan's attractiveness and international status as well as attracted them to pursue a degree in Taiwan. After experiencing Taiwan, the presence of positive fostering factors, with the impact of the NSP to reconstruct Taiwan's society to some extent, also helps to improve the positive feelings of Thai students toward Taiwan's attractiveness and uphold its international status in the region, since these talents can potentially become Taiwan's international advocacy and representatives in their home country in promoting Taiwan's positive image and increase Taiwan's soft power in the future. However, the existence of the deteriorating factors potentially worsens Taiwan's soft power maneuver to a certain degree. Despite the negative factors (e.g., climate, food, and lifestyle) that could not be solved by policy-making, it is still necessary for Taiwan's government to carefully tackle some substantial issues (e.g., the insufficient English courses and the negative experiences with Taiwanese people) in order to efficiently improve its soft power's maneuver and sustain the healthy relationship between countries.

With the importance of the New Southbound Policy as public diplomacy in upholding Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the target

countries and region, this research makes a contribution not only to the scholarship of soft power and higher education but also to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the NSP on talent development programs toward a particular target country, Thailand. Still, due to the limitations of reaching the interviewees in this research, further research could be carried out by increasing the number of samples to test statistical analysis to prove the correlation and causation of the factors. Moreover, it could also be analyzed by comparing the perceptions of Thai students who studied in Taiwan before and after the implementation of the NSP to better clarify the impact of the NSP on Thai students' perceptions of Taiwan.

In addition, due to insufficient research on the effectiveness of the NSP as a soft power maneuver, there is room for future research to conduct a similar analysis to comprehensively understand the policy. Further research could also be carried out by analyzing the effectiveness of the NSP in improving the perception of higher education students from other target countries, such as other countries in ASEAN,<sup>50</sup> South Asia,<sup>51</sup> and Australasia.<sup>52</sup> Besides, the research could also be extended to other NSP's soft power projects within Taiwan or toward the target countries such as tourism, medical cooperation, or agricultural exchange to explore the involved people's attitudes toward Taiwan. Such research will potentially produce a practical evaluation of Taiwan's foreign policy outcomes and a better understanding of its target countries' preferences to efficiently formulate an effective foreign policy in the future.

## **5.2 Policy Suggestions**

Based on the main findings of the research, this section presents the policy suggestions to resolve some particular issues that potentially decrease Taiwan's soft power as well as to enhance the effectiveness of Taiwan's soft power

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<sup>50</sup> Apart from Thailand, there are Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei

<sup>51</sup> India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka

<sup>52</sup> Australia and New Zealand

maneuver under the New Southbound Policy in order to sustain Taiwan's relationship with Thailand and integrate Taiwan's presence in the region.

First, given the high concern on the insufficient English-taught courses, limited accessibility to university facilities and activities that are mainly provided in Chinese, as well as the negative experiences of the university staff that is unable to communicate in English, the Taiwanese government, the Ministry of Education, and higher education institutes should cooperate in providing sufficient English-taught courses as well as the international-friendly environment for international students in Taiwan. The provision could be done by the direct policy and adequate budget allocation from the Taiwanese government and the MOE to higher education institutions for hiring lecturers and opening more English-taught courses. Besides, higher educational institutes should also be funded to hire university staff and part-time students who are proficient in English or international students to assist the university administrative tasks and provide English-version information and activities to international students. Such policy will not only enhance the positive perceptions of international students toward the university and Taiwan's international-friendly environment but also complement the bilingual-teaching environment of Taiwan's achievement to become a bilingual nation in 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Second, even though racism does not present as the main deteriorating factor in this research since there was a relatively low percentage of being racist among Thai students in Taiwan, racism and other negative experiences with Taiwanese people still have an impact on worsening the positive perceptions of Taiwan among Thai students,<sup>53</sup> which could also conceivably worsen Taiwan's international image and be a hindrance to Taiwan's soft power maneuver in the future. To tackle this problem, the Taiwanese government should cooperate with Taiwan's Ministry of Education, local governments, and local NGOs and activists to formulate a constructive and well-funded policy to promote an accurate understanding of Southeast Asians among Taiwanese people. The policy could be

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<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 4 Case 4, p. 103.

accomplished by several activities, such as opening more Southeast Asia-related programs in higher education institutions, organizing an exhibition to present how Southeast Asian people have integrated and become a part of Taiwan's multicultural society, and inviting Southeast Asian people from various professions to present their experiences of Taiwan in public events, schools and universities. Such activities could not only develop a precise understanding of Southeast Asia but also alleviate the negative stereotype of Southeast Asians among Taiwanese people. This would significantly shape the positive perceptions of Taiwanese people toward Southeast Asians and vice versa, which thus help create a suitable environment for further cooperation between countries.

Third, given the lesser degree of social link and personal recommendation factors in attracting Thai students to pursue a degree in Taiwan, the Taiwanese government should cooperate with Taiwan's Ministry of Education, the NSP's representative offices, and the NSP alumni association to formulate a supportive and well-funded policy to build the official student networks of the NSP countries. Student networks could be a platform including related people such as alumni, current students, upcoming students, and officers who are responsible for education in Taiwan to share the information and experiences about studying and life experiences in Taiwan. It could hold activities for alumni and students to meet and do activities in order to create a stronger connection between them. Besides, such an official student network could also play a supplementary role in promoting Taiwan's higher education in the countries, apart from the existing education consultant agencies, Taiwan's representative offices, and the university's oversea offices. Such policy would reinforce another networking factor to encourage the NSP students to study in Taiwan. It would also create concrete Taiwan's transnational advocacy networks, which would help to increase Taiwan's soft power and to support Taiwan's international status in the region.

Last but not least, concerning the relatively low awareness of the New Southbound Policy itself in the research findings, the Taiwanese government should cooperate with Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Taiwan's

representative offices in each country to formulate a proactive and well-funded policy to promote the New Southbound Policy itself and its contents toward the NSP countries' publics. The promotion of the NSP could be accomplished by publicizing the schemes and achievements of the NSP in the NSP's local languages, funding higher education institutes in each country to hold more academic seminars on the NSP, as well as cooperating with the NSP's influencers to introduce Taiwan's NSP and its advantages toward the countries. Such activities would help Taiwan publicly raise its incentives to cooperate with the NSP publics, which would not only improve the positive perceptions of Taiwan in the NSP's publics that Taiwan is attentive to deepening relations with their countries but also explicitly assert Taiwan's presence and status to become a part of the region.

In conclusion, the New Southbound Policy is not only Taiwan's grand foreign policy for economic cooperation but also effective public diplomacy to wield its soft power. To promote Taiwan's higher education, the NSP has importantly attracted and reinforced Thai students' positive pre-departure perceptions of pursuing a degree in Taiwan. However, it is not influential that much in fostering students' post-departure perceptions of Taiwan due to the unchangeable nature of most fostering and deteriorating factors. Still, the policy suggestions above are more or less able to solve some substantial problems and potentially enhance Taiwan's attractiveness and international status in the perceptions of international students in the future, which would help increase Taiwan's soft power and uphold its presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

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## Appendix A

### Sample Interview Questionnaire for Thai Higher Education Students in Taiwan

#### General Background of Interviewee

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. LGBTQ+
2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which city in Taiwan are/were you living in? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you currently pursuing an academic degree in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No (Already graduated)
5. What academic degree are you pursuing/pursued in Taiwan?
  - a. Undergraduate degree
  - b. Master's degree
  - c. Doctoral degree
    - i. Which university are you studying/studied? \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. What is/was your program? \_\_\_\_\_
    - iii. What is/was language offered for studying?
      1. English
      2. Mandarin
      3. Bilingual (English and Mandarin)
    - iv. (For Master and Doctoral degree) What was your academic background in the past? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you profess any religion?
  - a. Buddhism
  - b. Christianity
  - c. Catholicism
  - d. Islam
  - e. None
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How religious would you consider yourself?
  - a. Very religious
  - b. Somewhat religious
  - c. Not religious at all
8. What were your past occupation before pursuing a degree in Taiwan? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your father and mother's professional background? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many months/years have you been living in Taiwan? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Students' Decisions and Perceptions BEFORE Arriving in Taiwan**

#### *General Knowledge and Awareness*

1. Was information about Taiwan's higher education easy to obtain **BEFORE** arrival?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Did you study some Mandarin **BEFORE** coming to Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, how many years have you studied Mandarin **BEFORE** coming to Taiwan? \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. If yes, how fluent were you **BEFORE** arrival?
      1. Very fluent
      2. Basic
      3. Just a little
3. Have you ever participated in or met any Taiwan-related activities in Thailand **BEFORE** arrival? (i.e., the Taiwan Expo, the Taiwan Higher Education Fairs, or other seminars or exhibitions held by Taiwan related organizations)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, what kinds of activities did you participate in or meet?
    - ii. If yes, do you think the activities you participated influence your decision to study in Taiwan?
      1. Yes
      2. No

Please briefly explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you ever been to Taiwan **BEFORE**?

a. Yes

b. No

i. If yes, which the most recent year have you been to Taiwan?

ii. What was your purpose in visiting Taiwan at that time?

1. Business

2. Travel

3. Visit Relatives

4. Conference

5. Study

6. Exhibition

7. Medical Treatment

8. Others: \_\_\_\_\_

iii. If yes, do you think coming to Taiwan at that time influence your decision to study in Taiwan?

1. Yes

2. No

Please briefly explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_

*Social links and Personal recommendations*

1. Do you have friends or family from your home country residing in Taiwan when you arrived?

a. Yes

b. No

2. Who recommended you to pursue an academic degree in Taiwan?

a. Parents or your family members

b. Former students from your country

c. Professors

d. Friends

e. The respondents themselves

f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. According to questions 1 and 2, what was the main reason they (or you) recommended Taiwan? (Multiple selections)

- a. Scholarship
- b. High quality of education
- c. Easiness to obtain a Taiwanese visa
- d. Permission to do part-time work while studying
- e. Chinese language development
- f. Safety
- g. Climate
- h. Food
- i. Entertainment
- j. Better quality of life
- k. Friendliness of Taiwanese People
- l. Close proximity to home country
- m. Opportunity to work in Taiwan after graduation
- n. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Please briefly explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_

*Overall Opinion BEFORE Arrival*

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, how much did you think Taiwan is attractive **BEFORE** arrival? (0 – very unattractive, 10 – very attractive)

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
 10

2. Which aspects of Taiwan did you like **BEFORE** arrival? (Multiple selections)

- a. Politics
- b. Economic
- c. Technology
- d. Education
- e. Transportation
- f. Living environment
- g. Culture
- h. Climate
- i. Food
- j. Entertainment
- k. Taiwanese people
- l. None

- m. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which aspects of Taiwan did you not like BEFORE arrival? (Multiple selections)
- a. Politics
  - b. Economic
  - c. Technology
  - d. Education
  - e. Transportation
  - f. Living environment
  - g. Culture
  - h. Climate
  - i. Food
  - j. Entertainment
  - k. Taiwanese people
  - l. None
  - m. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Please explain your answer in detail.

*Perceptions of Taiwan politics and the New Southbound Policy BEFORE Arrival*

1. Did you know who the current Taiwanese President **BEFORE** arrival is?
- a. Yes answer: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
2. Did you know which party is current Taiwan's incumbent government **BEFORE** arrival?
- a. Yes answer: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
3. Did you know about the 'New Southbound Policy' **BEFORE** arrival?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, please briefly explain your knowledge about the NSP (open-end answer) \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. If yes, do you think the NSP affects your decision to study in Taiwan?
      - a. Yes
      - b. No

Please briefly explain your answer in detail\_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you know about following Taiwan and Thailand-related activities and policies **BEFORE** arrival?

	Yes	No
Organization of Taiwan Expo in Thailand		
Encouragement of Taiwanese companies to invest in Thailand		
Provision of Taiwanese Scholarship for Thai students and researchers		
Promotion of Thai laborers and technical workers to work in Taiwan		
Allowance of visa exemption for Thai nationals to travel to Taiwan		
Cooperation with Thailand’s Medical Institutes (such as Bangkok Christian Hospital and RSU Hospital) to share medical technology and personnel training		
Collaboration with the Thai Royal Project Foundation to exchange agricultural technology		
Collaboration with Thailand’s NSTDA* to promote technological development *Thailand National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA)		
Organization of Thailand-Taiwan International Film Festival		
Were there any Taiwan and Thailand-related activities/policies that you know?		

6. Did you think that Taiwan considers Thailand a priority partnership country **BEFORE** arrival?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. On a scale of 0 to 10, how close did you think the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan is **BEFORE** coming to Taiwan? (0 – not close at all, 10 – very close)

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

8. How much did you agree with the following sentence to describe Taiwan **BEFORE** arrival?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Taiwan is a leading democratic country					
Taiwan is a successful economic development country					
Taiwan is an advanced technology country					
Taiwan is a multicultural country					
Taiwan is an LGBTQ-friendly country					
Taiwan is a high-quality education country					
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries					
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Thailand					
Other idea that you think it was best to describe Taiwan: _____					

9. Given what you knew, what was your overall initial opinion about Taiwan **BEFORE** coming to pursue your degree in Taiwan? (Open-end answer)

### Students' Perceptions AFTER Arriving in Taiwan

#### *Cost issues*

#### *Financial Cost*

1. Do/Did you receive any scholarship to study in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, which type of scholarship do/did you receive?
      1. MOE Taiwan Scholarship
      2. International Higher Education Scholarship Programs of Taiwan ICDF
      3. Academia Sinica Taiwan International Graduate Program (TIGP)
      4. University Scholarship
      5. Others: \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. Would you still have come to Taiwan even if did not receive a scholarship?
      1. Yes
      2. No



Please briefly explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_

2. As an international student, how do/did you think about Taiwan's living expenses?
  - a. Can/could you afford Taiwan's living expenses without much difficulty with your scholarship stipend/ your conditions?
    - i. Yes
    - ii. No
  - b. Do/did you work part-time to cover your living expenses while pursuing your degree in Taiwan?
    - i. Yes
    - ii. No
    1. If yes, how many hours per week do/did you work? \_\_\_\_\_

*Social Costs*

1. Is it essential for you to be close with other people from your home country in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Is it easy to keep in touch with your relatives back home through the internet and/or phone?
  2. Yes
  3. No
    - a. If yes, how often do you talk to them?
      2. Everyday
      3. Once a week
      4. Once a month
      5. Once a year
      6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you feel safe when you are living in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Do you feel that you could freely express who you are without fear?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Do you feel Taiwanese people are kind or attentive toward Southeast Asia people?

- a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Have you ever experienced racism in Taiwan from Taiwanese citizens?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - i. If yes, can you briefly describe that experience? \_\_\_\_\_

*Environment*

*Physical, Societal, and Cultural Environment*

- 1. Do you feel the Taiwanese lifestyle is attractive?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 2. Do you feel Taiwanese culture attractive?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 3. Do Taiwanese political and societal values resonate with you?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 4. Do you find Taiwan's climate pleasing?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5. Do you find Taiwan's entertainment media amusing?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 6. Do you have difficulty with eating habit adaptation in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 7. Do you think living in Taiwan is convenient for Southeast Asian people?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - i. Please explain your answer in detail \_\_\_\_\_

*Educational Environment*

1. As an international student, do/did you think the university provides sufficient English courses for international students?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. As an international student, do/did you think the university provides a good environment and facilities for studying?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Do/Did you think your study program's quality meet your expectation?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. Would you consider it better than a similar program in your home country?
      1. Yes
      2. No
      3. No similar program in home country
4. Are the following people friendly, helpful, and hospitable towards you and other international students?

	Yes	No
University staffs		
Professors		
Taiwanese classmates		

5. Did you have any negative experience with any of the abovementioned (staff members, professors, local classmates)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, can you briefly describe what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

*Career Development*

1. Do you consider Taiwan a place to develop as a professional in your area of interest?
  - a. Yes

- b. No
- 2. In your opinion, are Taiwanese employers prone to hire Southeast Asian students?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 3. In your opinion, are Taiwanese employers prone to hire Thai students?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 4. (For current students) Are you currently searching for a job in Taiwan, or are you planning to find one in the future?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5. (For alumni) Are you currently working in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

*Overall Opinions toward Taiwan AFTER Arrival*

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, how much do you impress Taiwan in general **AFTER** arrival? (0 – very unimpressed, 10 – very impressed)
 

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
2. Which aspects of Taiwan do you like **AFTER** arrival? (Multiple selections)
  - a. Politics
  - b. Economic
  - c. Technology
  - d. Education
  - e. Transportation
  - f. Living environment
  - g. Culture
  - h. Climate
  - i. Food
  - j. Entertainment
  - k. Taiwanese people
  - l. None
  - m. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which aspects of Taiwan do you not like **AFTER** arrival? (Multiple selections)

- a. Politics
- b. Economic
- c. Technology
- d. Education
- e. Transportation
- f. Living environment
- g. Culture
- h. Climate
- i. Food
- j. Entertainment
- k. Taiwanese people
- l. None
- m. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Perceptions of Taiwan politics and the New Southbound Policy AFTER Arrival*

1. Do you know **MORE** about the New Southbound Policy **AFTER** spending more time in Taiwan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If yes, what do you learn more about the NSP **AFTER** studying in Taiwan? (Open-end answer)
2. Do you think the NSP is helpful to improve your positive attitudes toward Taiwan? (For those who know about the NSP before and/or after arrival)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. Please explain your answer in detail\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you think the NSP is helpful to deepen the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan? (For those who know about the NSP before and/or after arrival)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. Please explain your answer in detail\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you think Taiwan considers Thailand a priority partnership country **AFTER** arrival?
  - a. Yes

b. No

5. On a scale of 0 to 10, how close do you think the relationship between Thailand and Taiwan is **AFTER** arrival? (0 – not close at all, 10 – very close)

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

6. How much do you agree with the following sentence to describe Taiwan **AFTER** arrival?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Taiwan is a leading democratic country					
Taiwan is a successful economic development country					
Taiwan is an advanced technology country					
Taiwan is a multicultural country					
Taiwan is an LGBTQ-friendly country					
Taiwan is a high-quality education country					
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Southeast Asian countries					
Taiwan is a trustworthy partner for Thailand					
Other idea that you think it appropriate to describe Taiwan: _____					

7. Do you think Taiwan is a country?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

8. Do you think Taiwan deserves an official chair in the United Nations?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

9. Given what you knew, what was your overall initial opinion about Taiwan **AFTER** arrival? (Open-end answer)

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## Appendix B

### Interview Log

No.	Gender	Degree	Start time	End Time	Extent	Date	Location
1	Female	Master	1:27 PM	2:24 PM	57 min	March 24, 2022	BA building, NCCU
2	Female	Master	1:11 PM	1:51 PM	40 min	March 25, 2022	Under the main library, NCCU
3	Female	Master	2:07 PM	2:41 PM	34 min	March 25, 2022	Under the main library, NCCU
4	Male	Master	4:10 PM	4:31 PM	21 min	March 25, 2022	Under the main library, NCCU
5	Female	Master	9:30 AM	11:10 AM	1 hour 40 min	March 28, 2022	Google Meet
6	Female	Master	9:00 PM	9:59 PM	59 min	March 28, 2022	Google meet
7	Male	Master	2:00 PM	3:34 PM	1 hour 34 min	March 29, 2022	Google meet
8	Male	PhD	4:30 PM	6:20 PM	1 hour 50 min	March 29, 2022	Google meet
9	LGBTQ+	Undergraduate	8:22 PM	9:16 PM	54 min	March 29, 2022	Google meet
10	Female	Master	1:00 PM	1:49 PM	49 min	April 1, 2022	Google meet
11	Female	Master	7:00 PM	7:46 PM	46 min	April 1, 2022	Google meet
12	Male	Undergraduate	3:04 PM	3:55 PM	51 min	April 2, 2022	Google meet
13	Female	Master	9:30 AM	10:07 AM	37 min	April 3, 2022	Google meet
14	Male	PhD	10:30 AM	11:26 AM	56 min	April 3, 2022	Google meet
15	Female	Master	2:00 PM	2:51 PM	51 min	April 3, 2022	Google meet
16	Female	Undergraduate	10:00 AM	10:42 AM	42 min	April 4, 2022	Google meet
17	LGBTQ+	Master	2:05 PM	2:59 PM	54 min	April 4, 2022	Google meet
18	Female	Master	3:15 PM	4:14 PM	59 min	April 4, 2022	Google meet
19	Female	PhD	9:30 AM	10:21 AM	51 min	April 5, 2022	Google meet
20	Female	Master	8:30 PM	9:16 PM	46 min	April 5, 2022	Google meet



21	LGBTQ+	Master	8:45 PM	9:31 PM	46 min	April 8, 2022	Google meet
22	Male	Undergraduate	2:30 PM	3:13 PM	43 min	April 9, 2022	Google meet
23	LGBTQ+	Master	4:00 PM	4:51 PM	51 min	April 9, 2022	Google meet
24	Female	Master	2:00 PM	2:54 PM	54 min	April 10, 2022	Google meet
25	Male	Doctoral	3:30 PM	4:19 PM	49 min	April 10, 2022	Google meet
26	Male	Undergraduate	9:00 AM	9:37 AM	37 min	April 11, 2022	Google meet
27	Male	Undergraduate	1:15 PM	2:00 PM	45 min	April 17, 2022	Anjiu Canteen, NCCU
28	Female	Master	12:53 PM	1:48 PM	55 min	April 19, 2022	Google meet
29	Male	Master	2:15 PM	3:05 PM	50 min	April 21, 2022	Google meet
30	Male	Master	11:00 PM	11:48 PM	48 min	April 24, 2022	Google meet

