

The Impact of Korean and Chinese Cultural Presentations on Cultural Preferences of Thai Audiences in Generational Differences

ผลกระทบของการนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีและจีนต่อความชื่นชอบทางวัฒนธรรมของผู้ชมชาวไทยในแต่ละช่วงอายุ

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Abstract

This study examined the cultural preferences of Thai audience in seven areas: idols, music, series/films, food, language, travel, and products in three age groups of audiences, which were influenced by the presentation of Korean and Chinese culture in entertainment media. This research used an online survey with 404 Thai respondents aged 12-59 years, who had viewed both cultures in entertainment media for their exposure to Korean cultural media. Generation X respondents had the highest media exposure level ($\bar{X} = 3.51$), followed by Generation Y ($\bar{X} = 3.42$), and Generation Z ($\bar{X} = 2.98$). Similarly, Generation X had the highest exposure to Chinese cultural media ($\bar{X} = 3.45$), followed by Generation Y ($\bar{X} = 3.26$), and Generation Z ($\bar{X} = 2.80$). The results of the study found that hypotheses 1 and 2 that exposure to the presentation of both cultures significantly influenced the cultural preferences of Thai audiences. However, the comparative results showed that hypotheses 3 and 4 were partially supported, as viewers preferred Korean culture in terms of series, travel, and products. However, Chinese culture was more popular in terms of idols, music, food, travel, and products. Generation Z and Generation X had a higher preference for Korean culture and were influenced by emotional connections through the media. However, Generation Y tended to pay balanced attention to both cultures. The result of the study indicated a highlight of the economic implications towards audiences' cultural preferences, particularly in the entertainment and tourism industries. In addition, insights from the study findings provide strategic guidance to businesses and government agencies to promote Thai culture in entertainment media to cater to international target audiences of different age groups.

Keywords: Korean and Chinese Culture, Cultural Preferences, Thai Audiences in Generational Differences.

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาความชื่นชอบทางวัฒนธรรมของผู้ชมชาวไทย 7 ด้าน ได้แก่ ไอดอล ดนตรี ซีรีส์/ภาพยนตร์ อาหาร ภาษา การท่องเที่ยว และสินค้า ในผู้ชมสามช่วงอายุ ที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากการนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีและวัฒนธรรมจีนในสื่อบันเทิง งานวิจัยนี้ใช้แบบสำรวจออนไลน์กับผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามชาวไทย 404 คน อายุระหว่าง 12 - 59 ปี ที่เคยรับชมทั้งสองวัฒนธรรมในสื่อบันเทิง สำหรับการเปิดรับสื่อวัฒนธรรมเกาหลี ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามเจเนอเรชัน X มีระดับการรับสื่อสูงสุด ($\bar{X} = 3.51$) รองลงมาคือเจเนอเรชัน Y ($\bar{X} = 3.42$) และเจเนอเรชัน Z ($\bar{X} = 2.98$) ในทำนองเดียวกัน เจเนอเรชัน X มีระดับการเปิดรับสื่อวัฒนธรรมจีนสูงสุด ($\bar{X} = 3.45$) รองลงมาคือเจเนอเรชัน Y ($\bar{X} = 3.26$) และเจเนอเรชัน Z ($\bar{X} = 2.80$) ผลการศึกษาพบว่าสมมติฐานการวิจัยข้อ 1 และ 2 ว่าการเปิดรับการนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมทั้งสองมีอิทธิพลต่อความชื่นชอบทางวัฒนธรรมของผู้ชมชาวไทยอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการเปรียบเทียบพบว่าสมมติฐานการวิจัยข้อ 3 และ 4 ได้รับการสนับสนุนบางส่วน โดยพบว่าผู้ชมมีความชื่นชอบวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีในด้านซีรีส์ การท่องเที่ยว และสินค้า ขณะที่วัฒนธรรมจีนได้รับความนิยมในด้านไอดอล ดนตรี อาหาร การท่องเที่ยว และสินค้า เจเนอเรชัน Z และเจเนอเรชัน X มีความชื่นชอบวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีมากกว่าและได้รับอิทธิพลจากความเชื่อมโยงทางอารมณ์ผ่านสื่อ ในขณะที่เจเนอเรชัน Y มีแนวโน้มให้ความสนใจทั้งสองวัฒนธรรมอย่างสมดุล ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นถึงนัยทางเศรษฐกิจของความชื่นชอบทางวัฒนธรรมของผู้ชม โดยเฉพาะในอุตสาหกรรมสื่อบันเทิงและการท่องเที่ยว นอกจากนี้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกจากผลการศึกษาให้แนวทางเชิงกลยุทธ์แก่ภาคธุรกิจและหน่วยงานภาครัฐในการส่งเสริมวัฒนธรรมไทยในสื่อบันเทิงเพื่อตอบสนองกลุ่มเป้าหมายชาวต่างชาติในช่วงวัยที่แตกต่างกัน

คำสำคัญ: วัฒนธรรมเกาหลีและจีน ความชื่นชอบทางวัฒนธรรม ผู้ชมชาวไทยในแต่ละช่วงอายุ

Introduction

Background

Asia has witnessed significant growth of Korean wave culture which the Korean Culture and Content Agency described as unintended success (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). “Autumn in My Heart” (1997), a drama targeting younger audiences played an important role in the Korean wave's appeal by presenting high-quality content at a lower licensing cost than domestic productions (Prasopsorn & Panmanee, 2019). Love and Romance are the main focuses of stories in both Korean and Thai dramas and the Korean counterpart seems to be more popular among Thai audiences (Jirattikorn, 2018). While K-pop is a significant aspect of this cultural wave, current trends indicate a reduction in the airing of Korean dramas in Thailand due to shifting cultural preferences, increased local content production with higher quality, changing viewing habits towards online platforms, economic factors, and viewer saturation (Ryu, 2020). In terms of tourism, Thailand has recently become one of the top tourist destinations among Chinese tourists which was affected by the success of the low-budget film “Lost in Thailand”, which sparked interest in locations like Bangkok and Chiang Mai (Tungkeunkunt, 2016; Bloomberg, 2013). This inflow of Chinese tourists has encouraged Chinese media companies such as WeTV, and IQIYI to expand operations in Thailand (Lin et al., 2022). A Chinese drama called “The Untamed” is a good example of Chinese cultural influence because it loomed Twitter trends in Thailand for three consecutive years during its airing period, marking a substantial success for Chinese dramas in the region (PR Newswire, 2019).

Problem Statement

Although there is extensive research on the global success of Korean dramas and the entertainment industry (Lin et al., 2022), the Chinese counterpart remains somewhat limited in terms of research, study, and knowledge (Zhu, 2008a). In terms of cultural products and cultural preferences, scholars noted that the cultural products resonating with audiences can improve mutual understanding and facilitate a shared sense of belonging (Yoon, 2018). However, there remains a lack of comprehensive research comparing generational preferences for Korean and Chinese cultures among Thai audiences.

This study aims to explore and compare Korean and Chinese wave cultures and their impacts on Thai audiences across different generations, which this study focused on Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X. This study categorized cultural preferences into seven aspects, including idols, music, series, food, language, travel intention, and products to address gaps in knowledge regarding generational preferences for Korean culture and Chinese culture among Thai audiences in three different generations.

Literature Review

Cultural Preferences

Previous studies have highlighted various aspects of cultural preferences influenced by Korean and Chinese cultures, including idols, music, series, food, language, travel intention, and products.

In terms of idols, the idol business model originated in Japan and was introduced into Thailand around 2017. It plays a crucial role in the entertainment industry and has become increasingly popular in Thailand in recent years (Maneechaeye, 2021). Idols have been commodified as a product that attract the fans to become consumers through activities that require financial expenditure, leading to repetitive buying (Maneechaeye, 2021). Furthermore, a previous study by Suebsaeng (2020) discovered that the admiration of Thai teenagers towards K-Pop artists is influenced by the media exposure.



In terms of music, this factor is related to the idol preferences as the previous study by Suebsaeng (2020) examined that the admiration for K-Pop artists also contains aspects such as admiration for the artist's work which includes the work of Blackpink, and GOT7, admiration for the melody and song lyrics, and admiration for singing style. The results showed that among younger generations, the influence of media exposure plays a significant role in their admiration for K-Pop music.

In terms of series, Prasopsorn and Panmanee (2019) found that young Thai audiences prefer Korean series over Thai series due to the sense of completeness derived from watching Korean series which is lacking from the Thai counterpart. This feeling of completeness refers to the overall presentation of series, casting, cinematography, soundtracks, and other considerations.

In terms of food, Chuppunnarat et al., (2020) stated that due to the globalization, food consumption habits of Thais have changed, and Thai people consume more imported food over the past ten years. As Thailand embraces foreign cultures, the transformed food consumption habits also affect other areas of culture as well. Furthermore, Prasopsorn and Panmanee (2019) discovered that the effects of Korean wave influenced young Thai consumers to purchase Korean food.

In terms of language, Chan & Chi (2011) suggested that there is a positive connection between Korean wave culture and the Korean language learning among Singaporean language learners. Some scholars mentioned that the interest in Korean pop culture through media motivated and encouraged the Singaporean audience to learn Korean language (Shim, 2006; Fu & Liew, 2008 as cited in Chan & Chi 2011).

In terms of travel intention, Punnahitanond (2018) discovered that the portrayal of Thailand by international media have influences on audience perceptions of Thailand through the construction of reality, and that the exposure has a significant impact on international audiences' travel intention to Thailand.

In terms of product, Prasopsorn and Panmanee (2019) found that Korean wave affects young Thai consumers and encourages them to buy Korean clothes, and makeup products.

Punnahitanond (2018) stated that media portrayal aims to communicate a variety of aspects of the issues and caters to different audiences which include but are not limited to news, entertainment, and arts represented by media portrayals. It also refers to how the mass media presents topics, ideas, or experiences through a specific ideological perspective. In this study, media portrayal refers to how Korean wave culture and Chinese wave culture, as presented to Thai audiences influence the cultural preferences towards various aspects such as idols, music, series, food, language, travel intentions and products.

The government's proactive promotion of Korean culture boosts national image, global influence, and positive perceptions of Korean identity through initiatives such as promoting K-pop, traditional art, and Korean language education abroad (The Diplomat, 2022). The global trend of Korean wave culture has been rising, driven by popular cultural elements such as K-music, and K-dramas. In Thailand, the webtoon from the Korean Cultural Center indicated how Korean wave cultures showcase their strong image and charm to potentially strengthen relationships between Korea and other nations (KOCIS, 2003).

South Korea has increased to become the twelfth largest economy globally (Ryoo, 2009). Korean entertainment companies invest in high-quality productions for dramas with financial power, the K-dramas featuring costumes and scenery could be appealing to Thai audiences accustomed to lower-budget locals (Ryoo, 2009). Due to the development of Korean entertainment, Korean beauty products, Korean electronic products, K-dramas, and Korean cuisine have become increasingly popular amongst audiences in Thailand (Bangkok Post, 2022).

Due to historical and geographical factors stemming from the migration of many Chinese to Thailand in the past, and the fact that the Chinese brought their culture and social stereotypes with them (Tantasurarak, 1999 cited in Wongpinunwatana & Varaphongsatit, 2022), may play a part in creating a perception that Chinese and Thai cultures are similar to each other (Shang, 2015). Today, media such as television, radio, and the internet show a strong presence of Chinese culture in Thailand, with content including both Thai and Chinese languages (Skaggs et al., 2024). The Chinese film industry's growing engagement with Thai cinema plays a significant role in shaping identity and maintaining the relationship between China and Thailand (Shang, 2015). Thai expatriates in other countries were mesmerized by Hong Kong Kung Fu or Wuxia films or dramas during the 1970s and 1980s (Lin et al., 2022).

On the other hand, Confucius Institutes, as a key tool in China's cultural diplomacy, have expanded rapidly over the past decade (Wang, 2019). By 2017, 525 Confucius Institutes and 1,113 Confucius classrooms were established in 146 countries and regions (Confucius Institutes). In Thailand, 35 Confucius Institutes and classrooms, supported by numerous Chinese educators, have created a widespread network that spans from urban Bangkok to the rural areas of Northeast and Southern Thailand (Wang, 2019). While Confucius Institutes are not the primary focus of this study, they play a role in the dissemination of Chinese soft power, particularly through the promotion of the Chinese language. By offering language learning opportunities, these institutions enhance exposure to Chinese culture, which can influence Thai audiences' cultural preferences across multiple aspects, such as media, entertainment, and travel. This linguistic and cultural exchange fosters a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, which may shape how Thai audiences perceive and engage with Chinese idols, music, films, and other cultural products. South Korea and China employ different strategies to promote their cultures internationally, with South Korea actively leveraging its entertainment industry including K-pop, and K-dramas as tools of soft power to enhance its global image and influence. On the other hand, China's approach focuses on mixed media expansion, such as WeTV, and IQIYI, as well as cultural diplomacy through Confucius Institutes. Comparing these different approaches can reveal how different soft power strategies resonate with Thai audiences in different generations and contribute to cultural influence.

Generational Differences

In terms of the generational differences, previous studies have discovered that in Thailand Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X differ in many aspects. Phanthong and Settanaranon (2011) stated that the differences between generations encompass aspects such as media preferences, perceptions of advertising, engagement with media, and the impact of technology, with each generation having distinct perceptions and being differently influenced by technology. For instance, Gen Z is fully immersed in technology which shapes their preferences for fast-paced, visually engaging content, while Gen Y maintains a more balanced stance between traditional and digital media, adapting to new technologies while retaining connections to the older form, while Gen X still values the traditional forms. In Vietnam, Pham (2022) discovered that the travel decisions of young Vietnamese are influenced by Korean dramas and movies. Similarly, young Thai university students' perceptions of Korean wave culture portrayed in movies, dramas, and K-Pop music impacted the interest they have for Korean culture (Park et al., 2021). Recognizing that differences among generations exist and that younger generations are influenced by Korean culture in specific ways, there remains a knowledge gap regarding whether different generations (Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X) of Thai audiences are differently impacted by Korean wave culture and whether the rising presence of Chinese wave culture in Thailand also affects these three distinct generations of the Thai audiences. Moreover, there is limited research on other aspects of cultural preference beyond TV series, film, and tourism influenced by the Korean and Chinese wave culture among different generations of the Thai audiences.



Related Theories

The Cultural Theory of Preference Formation emphasizes in shaping individuals' preferences within a cultural context where the theory proposes that preferences are not fixed but are constructed through interactions with institutions that reflect cultural norms and values (Wildavsky, 1987). Past research showed that Korean wave culture has a significant impact on the preferences of the audience towards consuming Korean food due to the emotional value and familiarity of Korean food perceived through media (Thanabordeekij et al., 2022). In this study, cultural preferences are examined in the Thai audience in three distinct generations (Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X) to discover and compare the impact on cultural preferences between Korean culture and Chinese culture which are constructed through interactions with these cultures through media in various cultural dimensions such as idols, music, series, food, language, travel intentions, and products.

The Social learning theory is predicated on the notion that learning occurs through social observation and subsequent imitation of modeled behavior. The key principles are: 1) Attention - People must pay attention to observe and learn from a model, 2) Retention - Observers must be able to remember what they have observed, 3) Reproduction - Observers must be able to reproduce the behavior they have observed, and 4) Motivation - Observers must be motivated to imitate the behavior they have observed (Bandura & Walters, 1977). In the context of how Korean wave culture and Chinese wave culture impact Thai audiences' cultural preferences, a previous study by Asem (2014) discovered that in Northeast India, the diffusion of the Korean Wave has led to significant changes in the behaviors and cultural practices of people in Northeast India. They have been observed adopting Korean fashion, language, and entertainment preferences, as well as integrating Korean cultural traits into their daily lives. In this study, it is interesting to examine how the Thai audiences in three distinct generations and their cultural preferences are differently impacted by the Korean culture and Chinese culture portrayed through media based on the social learning theory, especially in motivation. The motivated audiences could be imitating the behaviors observed through exposure to Korean and Chinese cultures in media which influence their cultural preference towards seven cultural aspects of this study (idols, music, series, food, language, travel intentions, and products).

Research Gaps

Despite growing interest in the Chinese wave culture's influence on Thai audiences, there is limited research comparing its impact with that of Korean wave. Moreover, existing studies focus predominantly on TV series and tourism but overlook other cultural dimensions. Generational differences in how cultural preferences are influenced by these cultural waves remain unexplored.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because understanding how Korean and Chinese wave culture influences Thai audiences in different generations can provide valuable insights into the role of media in shaping the audiences' perceptions of cultural preferences which media companies, producers, marketers, and cultural offices of governments can utilize and develop effective and efficient strategies for cultural and soft power expansion through wave culture. Furthermore, understanding how exposure to media influences the preference towards travel intention to Korea and China, related to cultural preferences, could help businesses and governments to link the media, government offices, and tourism industry together to utilize the wave culture for economic benefit. Nonetheless, this research could fill the knowledge gap on the expansion of Chinese wave culture compared to its Korean counterpart and how the exposure of these cultures affects Thai audiences in different generations, contributing to a more balanced understanding when comparing these two cultures.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This study's objective is to identify generational differences in cultural preferences, and to explore how these preferences are impacted by exposure to Korean and Chinese cultural content through media, and investigate how cultural preferences in areas such as idols, music, series, food, language, travel intentions, and products are impacted by exposure to Korean and Chinese wave cultures among Thai audiences across three distinct generations (Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X). Discoveries regarding how exposure to Korean and Chinese cultural content through media differently impacts the cultural preferences of Thai audiences in three distinct generations could provide valuable insights into how the impact of exposure to media portrayals of foreign culture that shape cultural preferences across generations in Thailand. Based on the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1, the following four research hypotheses were developed.

HP1: Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture significantly influences their preference for seven aspects of Korean culture.

HP2: Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Chinese culture significantly influences their preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture.

HP3: Thai audiences' preference for seven aspects of Korean culture are significantly different among three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z).

HP4: Thai audiences' preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture are significantly different among three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z).

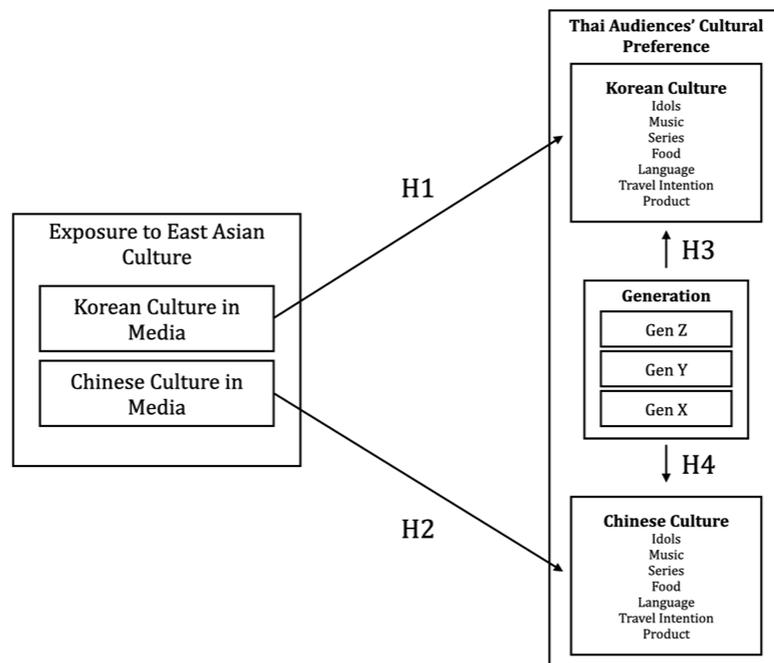


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Methodology

Population and Sampling

Applying the quantitative approach, the survey research was conducted via online platforms, where the self-administered questionnaire was distributed in social media channels including Facebook groups, and Line groups with Thai audiences in three distinct generations who have been exposed to Korean wave culture and Chinese wave culture through media. The sample size is calculated using the sample size formula of Cochran (1977) which provided an adequate sample size of at least 385 samples. In this survey, the convenient sampling method was employed to collect the samples which consists of three generation groups based on Dimock (2019), the president of the Pew Research Center which has been measuring and documenting attitudes across demographic groups for decades, Gen Z (aged between 12-27 years old), Gen Y (aged between 28-43 years old), and Gen X (aged between 44-59 years old). The sample size across generations is almost equally distributed with Gen Y accounted for 34.65%, Gen X accounted for 33.91%, and Gen Z accounted for 31.44% respectively, ensuring there is no one group with excessively strong domination.

Research Procedure and Data Collection

The IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence) was conducted with three scholars in communication and cultural fields prior to the data collection. After the content adjustment based on their comments, the questionnaire was pretested with 30 persons before the final version was sent out to collect data with 404 respondents in all three generations. Then, the data was analyzed using SPSS with both descriptive statistics to describe data, and inferential statistics to test the proposed four research hypotheses.

Measurement

An online self-administered questionnaire contained filtering questions, asking whether the participants have been exposed to Korean and Chinese cultures through media, and is divided into five sections as follows:

1) Demographic characteristics: Respondents were asked to indicate their age, gender, education, occupation, marital status.

2) Exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture: Respondents were asked with 4 items involving their level of exposure to media portraying Korean wave Culture. A five-point scale developed from Rahmiati (2012) was employed for the media exposure, ranging from 1= Never, 2 = Less than 1 day/week, 3 = 1-3 days/week, 4 = 4-6 days/week, and 5 = Everyday/week.

3) Exposure to media portrayal of Chinese culture: Respondents were asked with 4 items involving their level of exposure to media portraying Chinese culture. A five-point scale developed from Rahmiati (2012) was employed for the media exposure, ranging from 1= Never, 2 = Less than 1 day/week, 3 = 1-3 days/week, 4 = 4-6 days/week, and 5 = Everyday/week.

4) Preference for seven aspects of Korean culture: Respondents were asked with 41 items about their preference for Korean culture categorized into seven aspects – 1) Actors/Idols (5 items), 2) Music (6 items), 3) Movies/Series (6 items), 4) Food (7 items), 5) Language (6 items), 6) Travel Intention (6 items), and 7) Brands/Products (5 items), using five-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) Neither agree nor disagree, 4) Agree, to 5) Strongly agree.

5) Preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture: Respondents were asked with 41 items about their preference for Chinese culture categorized into seven aspects – 1) Actors/Idols (5 items), 2) Music (6 items), 3) Movies/Series (6 items), 4) Food (7 items), 5) Language (6 items), 6) Travel Intention (6 items), and 7) Brands/Products (5 items), using five-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) Neither agree nor disagree, 4) Agree, to 5) Strongly agree.

Mean scores of media exposure to portrayal of Korean and Chinese culture are interpreted as follows; very low exposure level (\bar{X} = 1.00 – 1.80), low exposure level (\bar{X} = 1.81 – 2.60), moderate exposure level (\bar{X} = 2.61 – 3.40), high exposure level (\bar{X} = 3.41 – 4.20), and very high exposure level (\bar{X} = 4.21 – 5.00). Mean scores of cultural preferences are interpreted as follows; very low cultural preference (\bar{X} = 1.00 – 1.80), low cultural preference (\bar{X} = 1.81 – 2.60), moderate cultural preference (\bar{X} = 2.61 – 3.40), high cultural preference (\bar{X} = 3.41 – 4.20), and very high cultural preference (\bar{X} = 4.21 – 5.00).

Validity and Reliability

IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence) was conducted with three scholars in communication and cultural fields to ensure content validity of the measurement. For the questionnaire items measuring the same concept or dimension, reliability tests were conducted with each measurement to determine the reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's Alpha values are found to be greater than .700 in all measurements, except exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture (α = .685), as shown in Table 1 and Table 2. Even though the Cronbach's Alpha value of exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture is slightly lower than 0.7, it is still in the acceptable range between 0.6 – 0.8 (Janssens et al., 2008).

Results

Descriptive Statistics of the Examined Variables

The majority of the samples are Gen Y (aged between 28-43 years old) accounted for 34.65%, followed by Gen X (aged between 44-59 years old) accounted for 33.91%, and Gen Z (aged between 12-27 years old) accounted for 31.44% respectively. In terms of gender, the majority of participants are male (48.02%), followed by female (44.06%), and participants identified as LGBTQ+ (7.92%) respectively. As for education, most of the participants have a Bachelor degree (75.50%), followed by Master's degree (12.87%), High school (10.89%), and Doctoral degree (0.74%) respectively. In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents are employed by private sector (36.14%), followed by student (27.48%), government employee (17.82%), business owner (10.89%), freelancer (6.93%), and unemployed (0.74%) respectively.

In terms of media exposure, it was found that Gen Z respondents have a moderate level of exposure to media portrayal of both Korean culture (\bar{X} = 2.98, SD = .96), and Chinese culture (\bar{X} = 2.80, SD = 1.10). Gen Y respondents have a high level of exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture (\bar{X} = 3.42, SD = .84), and a moderate level of exposure to media portrayal of Chinese culture (\bar{X} = 3.26, SD = .99). Gen X respondents have a high level of exposure to media portrayal of both Korean culture (\bar{X} = 3.51, SD = .59), and Chinese culture (\bar{X} = 3.45, SD = .65). Regardless of generation, Thai audiences have a moderate level of exposure to media portrayal of both Korean (\bar{X} = 3.31, SD = .83) and Chinese culture (\bar{X} = 3.18, SD = .96).



In terms of preference for seven aspects of culture, it was found that Gen Z have high preference for Korean culture ($\bar{X} = 3.54$, $SD = .84$), but moderate preference for Chinese culture ($\bar{X} = 3.29$, $SD = .92$). Gen Y have high preference for both Korean culture ($\bar{X} = 3.62$, $SD = .58$), and Chinese culture ($\bar{X} = 3.47$, $SD = .70$). Gen X have high preference for Korean culture ($\bar{X} = 3.43$, $SD = .34$), but moderate preference for Chinese culture ($\bar{X} = 3.40$, $SD = .44$). Regardless of generation, Thai audiences have high preference for Korean culture ($\bar{X} = 3.53$, $SD = .62$), but moderate preference for Chinese culture ($\bar{X} = 3.39$, $SD = .71$). Table 1 and Table 2 presents details of descriptive statistics for all the examined variables.

When comparing each aspect of Korean culture, Gen Z and Gen Y respondents have high preference for almost all aspects, but moderate preference for language ($\bar{X} = 3.27$, $SD = 1.23$ vs. $\bar{X} = 3.40$, $SD = .95$). Gen X respondents have high preference for idol ($\bar{X} = 3.44$, $SD = .57$), music ($\bar{X} = 3.44$, $SD = .53$), series ($\bar{X} = 3.47$, $SD = .43$), food ($\bar{X} = 3.49$, $SD = .39$), and travel ($\bar{X} = 3.42$, $SD = .53$), but moderate preference for language ($\bar{X} = 3.39$, $SD = .59$) and product ($\bar{X} = 3.37$, $SD = .44$).

When comparing each aspect of Chinese culture, Gen Z respondents have moderate preference for almost all aspects, but high preference for language ($\bar{X} = 3.49$, $SD = 1.15$) and travel ($\bar{X} = 3.81$, $SD = 1.04$). Gen Y respondents have moderate preference for idol ($\bar{X} = 3.26$, $SD = 1.01$), music ($\bar{X} = 3.32$, $SD = .95$), and product ($\bar{X} = 3.22$, $SD = .98$), but high preference for series ($\bar{X} = 3.48$, $SD = .89$), food ($\bar{X} = 3.60$, $SD = .75$), travel ($\bar{X} = 3.73$, $SD = .70$), and language ($\bar{X} = 3.56$, $SD = .81$). Gen X respondents have moderate preference for idol ($\bar{X} = 3.37$, $SD = .67$), music ($\bar{X} = 3.37$, $SD = .63$), language ($\bar{X} = 3.40$, $SD = .57$), and product ($\bar{X} = 3.30$, $SD = .58$), but high preference for series ($\bar{X} = 3.42$, $SD = .60$), food ($\bar{X} = 3.46$, $SD = .45$), and travel ($\bar{X} = 3.45$, $SD = .54$).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Examined Variables Regarding Both Cultures

Examined Variable	Gen	Korean Culture			Chinese Culture		
		n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.
Exposure to media portrayal (4 items, $\alpha = .69$)* ¹ (4 items, $\alpha = .79$)* ²	Gen Z	127	2.98	.96	127	2.80	1.10
	Gen Y	140	3.42	.84	140	3.26	.99
	Gen X	137	3.51	.59	137	3.45	.65
	Total	404	3.31	.83	404	3.18	.96
Preference for idol (5 items, $\alpha = .84$)* ¹ (5 items, $\alpha = .87$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.44	1.16	127	3.00	1.25
	Gen Y	140	3.52	.80	140	3.26	1.01
	Gen X	137	3.44	.57	137	3.37	.67
	Total	404	3.47	.87	404	3.22	1.01
Preference for Music (6 items, $\alpha = .85$)* ¹ (6 items, $\alpha = .89$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.41	1.11	127	3.05	1.19
	Gen Y	140	3.56	.77	140	3.32	.95
	Gen X	137	3.44	.53	137	3.37	.63
	Total	404	3.47	.83	404	3.26	.95

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Examined Variables Regarding Both Cultures (Cont.)

Examined Variable	Gen	Korean Culture			Chinese Culture		
		n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.
Preference for Series (6 items, $\alpha = .83$)* ¹ (6 items, $\alpha = .90$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.68	.97	127	3.28	1.19
	Gen Y	140	3.81	.66	140	3.48	.89
	Gen X	137	3.47	.43	137	3.42	.60
	Total	404	3.65	.73	404	3.40	.92
Preference for Food (7 items, $\alpha = .83$)* ¹ (7 items, $\alpha = .87$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.58	.95	127	3.33	1.06
	Gen Y	140	3.68	.70	140	3.60	.75
	Gen X	137	3.49	.39	137	3.46	.45
	Total	404	3.59	.71	404	3.47	.79
Preference for Language (6 items, $\alpha = .89$)* ¹ (6 items, $\alpha = .83$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.27	1.23	127	3.49	1.15
	Gen Y	140	3.40	.95	140	3.56	.81
	Gen X	137	3.39	.59	137	3.40	.57
	Total	404	3.36	.95	404	3.48	.87
Preference for Travel (6 items, $\alpha = .86$)* ¹ (6 items, $\alpha = .85$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.69	1.09	127	3.81	1.04
	Gen Y	140	3.72	.75	140	3.73	.70
	Gen X	137	3.42	.53	137	3.45	.54
	Total	404	3.61	.83	404	3.66	.80
Preference for Product (5 items, $\alpha = .81$)* ¹ (5 items, $\alpha = .88$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.69	.98	127	2.99	1.03
	Gen Y	140	3.60	.69	140	3.22	.98
	Gen X	137	3.37	.44	137	3.30	.58
	Total	404	3.55	.74	404	3.17	.89
Preference for seven aspects of culture (41 items, $\alpha = .95$)* ¹ (41 items, $\alpha = .96$)* ²	Gen Z	127	3.54	.84	127	3.29	.92
	Gen Y	140	3.62	.58	140	3.47	.70
	Gen X	137	3.43	.34	137	3.40	.44
	Total	404	3.53	.62	404	3.39	.71

Note: *1 = Korean Culture, *2 = Chinese Culture



Hypothesis Testing

The normal distribution of the data was checked with the Skewness and the Kurtosis values are within the acceptable range (-1 to 1). To test the first and second hypothesis, Linear Regression were employed to examine the impact of Thai audiences' exposure to Korean and Chinese culture portrayed in media on their seven aspects of cultural preference.

Table 2 Linear Regression Analysis of Predictor of Thai Audiences' Preference for Korean Culture

Predictor	n	Mean	Mean Score Interpretation	S.D.	B	S.E.	beta	t	R ²
Exposure to media portrayal of Korean wave culture	404	3.31	Moderate	0.83	.480	.028	.646***	16.986	.418***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 1 suggested that Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture significantly influences their preference for seven aspects of Korean culture. Linear regression result, as shown in Table 2, demonstrated that Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Korean culture positively influenced their preference for seven aspects of Korean culture ($R^2 = .418$, Adjusted $R^2 = .416$, $p < .001$, $B = .646$, $p < .001$). With the adjusted R^2 value of .416, this means that 41.6% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 3 Linear Regression Analysis of Predictor of Thai Audiences' Preference for Chinese Culture

Predictor	n	Mean	Mean Score Interpretation	S.D.	B	S.E.	beta	t	R ²
Exposure to media portrayal of Chinese wave culture	404	3.18	Moderate	0.96	.556	.024	.759***	23.376	.576***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2 suggested that Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Chinese culture significantly influences their preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture. Linear regression result, as shown in Table 3, demonstrated that Thai audiences' exposure to media portrayal of Chinese culture positively influenced their preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture ($R^2 = .576$, Adjusted $R^2 = .575$, $p < .001$, $B = .759$, $p < .001$). With the adjusted R^2 value of .575, this means that 57.5% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA Results of Preference for Seven Aspects of Korean Culture among Three Different Generations

Preference for Seven Aspects of Korean Culture	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P Value
Preference for Korean idol	Between Groups	.605	2	.302	.401	.670
	Within Groups	301.990	401	.753		
	Total	302.594	403			
Preference for Korean music	Between Groups	1.673	2	.836	1.224	.295
	Within Groups	274.026	401	.683		
	Total	275.699	403			
Preference for Korean series	Between Groups	8.104	2	4.052	7.955	.001***
	Within Groups	203.255	401	.509		
	Total	212.359	403			
Preference for Korean food	Between Groups	2.464	2	1.232	2.452	.087
	Within Groups	201.431	401	.502		
	Total	203.895	403			
Preference for Korean language	Between Groups	1.477	2	.739	.810	.446
	Within Groups	365.655	401	.912		
	Total	367.133	403			
Preference for Korean travel	Between Groups	7.519	2	3.759	5.649	.004**
	Within Groups	266.876	401	.666		
	Total	274.395	403			
Preference for Korean product	Between Groups	7.331	2	3.666	6.890	.001***
	Within Groups	213.335	401	.532		
	Total	220.666	403			

Note: Significance level * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 3 suggested that Thai audiences' preference for seven aspects of Korean culture are significantly different among three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z). However, as shown in Table 4, significant difference were found only in three aspects of Korean culture -- series ($F = 7.955, p < .001$), travel ($F = 5.649, p < .01$), and product ($F = 6.890, p < .001$) whereas the other four aspects – idol ($F = .401, p > .05$), music ($F = 1.224, p > .05$), food ($F = 2.452, p > .05$), language ($F = .810, p > .05$) are not significantly different. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially supported.

Table 5 One-Way ANOVA Results of Preference for Seven Aspects of Chinese Culture among Three Different Generations

Preference for Seven Aspects of Korean Culture	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P Value
Preference for Chinese idol	Between Groups	9.111	2	4.556	4.589	.011
	Within Groups	398.034	401	.993		
	Total	407.145	403			
Preference for Chinese music	Between Groups	7.743	2	3.871	4.324	.014
	Within Groups	359.045	401	.895		
	Total	366.788	403			
Preference for Chinese series	Between Groups	2.902	2	1.451	1.735	.178
	Within Groups	335.447	401	.837		
	Total	338.349	403			
Preference for Chinese food	Between Groups	4.919	2	2.460	3.981	.019
	Within Groups	247.776	401	.618		
	Total	252.695	403			
Preference for Chinese language	Between Groups	1.841	2	.921	1.229	.294
	Within Groups	300.504	401	.749		
	Total	302.345	403			
Preference for Chinese travel	Between Groups	9.643	2	4.822	7.872	.001
	Within Groups	245.625	401	.613		
	Total	255.268	403			
Preference for Chinese product	Between Groups	7.043	2	3.522	4.503	.012
	Within Groups	313.628	401	.782		
	Total	320.671	403			

Note: Significance level * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 4 suggested that Thai audiences' preference for seven aspects of Chinese culture are significantly different among three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z). However, as shown in Table 5, significant differences were found in five aspects of Chinese culture -- idol ($F = 4.589$, $p < .05$), music ($F = 4.324$, $p < .05$), food ($F = 3.981$, $p < .05$), travel ($F = 7.872$, $p < .05$), and product ($F = 4.503$, $p < .05$) whereas the other two aspects – series ($F = 1.735$, $p > .05$), and language ($F = 1.229$, $p > .05$) are not significantly different. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially supported.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the complex dynamics between media exposure of cultural portrayal and cultural preferences among Thai audiences across different generations. The results indicate that exposure to Korean and Chinese cultures significantly influences preferences in seven cultural aspects, including idol, music, series/film, food, language, travel, and product. This aligns with the Cultural Theory of Preference Formation, which states that cultural preferences are not static but are shaped through interactions with cultural institutions and media representations. The findings suggest that younger generations (Gen Z) exhibit a stronger preference towards Korean culture, reflecting its pervasive presence in Thai media and its alignment with contemporary trends in youth culture. This observation supports Wildavsky's view (1987) that preferences evolve through cultural engagement, highlighting that Gen Z's exposure to Korean media facilitates a sense of familiarity and emotional connection to Korean cultural products.

The findings also align with the Social Learning Theory, which highlights learning through observation and imitation. Media portrayals have a significant impact on Thai audiences' behaviors and preferences toward Korean and Chinese cultural aspects, which can be explained through Bandura and Walters (1977) principles of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. For example, respondents in all three+ generations were found to have higher engagement with Korean music and series, indicating that they are not only consuming these cultural products, but are also motivated to simulate behaviors associated with them. This is evident in their increased interest in learning the Korean language as found in previous studies (Asem, 2014). The analysis results between these three generations, as shown in Table 5 and Table 6 reveal that while all age groups are influenced by both cultures, Gen Y shows a more balanced preference between Korean and Chinese culture. This could be attributed to their more balanced stance between traditional and digital media, adapting to new technologies while retaining connections to the older form. Findings on higher preference for Korean than Chinese culture among Gen Z and Gen X suggest that as media consumption habits shift towards digital platforms, older generations may also adopt preferences similar to those seen in younger generations.

Furthermore, this study contributes to understanding on the economic implications of cultural exchanges between Thailand and East Asia. The observed travel intentions linked to cultural preferences reveal potential tourism growth driven by interest in both Korean and Chinese culture. As Thai audiences increasingly engage with these cultures through media, there is an opportunity for stakeholders in the tourism and cultural industries to tailor offerings that align with these growing preferences.

The findings on the cultural preferences of Thai audiences concerning Korean and Chinese culture provide a foundation for several practical applications. Based on the insights gained about generational preferences, cultural exchange programs can be developed that specifically target the interests of different age groups. For example, programs that incorporate popular elements from Korean and Chinese culture could be designed to engage younger audiences through workshops, language classes, and cultural festivals.

Conclusion

This research not only fills a gap in the literature regarding influences of Chinese cultural exports compared to their Korean counterparts, but also provides empirical evidence on how generational differences affect cultural preferences among Thai audiences. By linking these findings back to established theories, it becomes clear that media plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identities and preferences across generations in Thailand. By pursuing these applications and research directions, scholars and practitioners can further enhance their understanding of media impact on cultural dynamics in Thailand and contribute to the wider discourse on global cultural exchanges.

Gen Z and Gen X are similar in terms of having high preference for Korean culture, but moderate preference for Chinese culture, while Gen Y have high preference for both Korean and Chinese culture. Media producers and marketers can utilize these findings to tailor content that resonates with specific generational preferences. Understanding which cultural elements such as idols, music, or food appeal to different age groups of Thai audiences can inform the development of television series, films, and music that are more likely to attract viewership.

Findings on high preference for several aspects of Korean and Chinese culture, especially food, and travel among all generations of Thai audiences resulted from their media exposure to portrayal of these two cultures highlight the potential for proactive marketing and marketing communication strategies not only for media industry, but also for tourism industry. Content creators should positively portray their national culture such as cuisine and tourist attractions in their content, while tourism operators should promote culinary experiences or visits to attractions or locations featured in entertainment and media. The relevant government offices need to enhance synergy between media, entertainment, and tourism industry as the strategic collaborations between these sectors will enable the country to achieve desirable economic and social goals.

Recommendation

Future research could try to track the changes in cultural preferences over time. This would provide deeper insights into how exposure to media portrayal of foreign culture influences preferences as generational cohorts grow older, and as new media trends arise. Given the increasing shift towards digital platforms for content consumption, further studies could examine whether and how streaming services moderate the impacts of media portrayal on cultural preferences among different generations. Investigating user engagement metrics and viewing habits could provide a clearer picture of media impact. Direct or interaction effects of audiences' admiration for relevant celebrities in media content such as idols, actors, singers, musicians on their cultural preferences should also be examined.

Future research in qualitative approach could consolidate these findings by examining personal narratives around cultural consumption. Depth-Interview or focus group could reveal deeper motivations behind cultural preferences and media consumption behaviors. In addition, future research could expand beyond the seven cultural aspects examined in this study (idol, music, series/film, food, language, travel, product) to include other aspects featured in media such as tradition, and religion.

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