

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

BEAUTY ECONOMY IN THAILAND: PHENOMENON, INFLUENCE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Linfan

College of Management, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung City 804, Taiwan

Email: - linfan@cm.nsysu.edu.tw

Lavanchawee Sujarittanonta

Faculty of Science and Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon (RMUTP), Bangkok 10800, Thailand

Abstract

This article aims to study the economic phenomenon of beautiful women in Thailand, including its definition, characteristics, impact, and future development. Thailand, often hailed for its stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage, is also renowned for its exquisite beauty. The allure of Thai beauties has transcended personal emotions to become a significant economic force in the country. Through an in-depth analysis of Thailand's beauty economy, this paper explores its impact on Thai society, economy, and culture, shedding light on the profound influence of beauty in this Southeast Asian nation. Thai beauties have long been the dream objects of men all over the world, attracting tourists and enthusiasts alike. However, their influence extends beyond admiration, as it has played a pivotal role in Thailand's tourism, entertainment, and labor markets. This influence has not only fuelled economic growth but has also had far-reaching effects on Thai society and culture (Norton 2001). As we delve into the intricate dynamics of the beauty economy, we aim to understand how it has shaped Thailand's identity and economy. Furthermore, we will offer insights and suggestions for promoting the healthy and sustainable development of this remarkable economic phenomenon.

Keywords Beautiful women in Thailand, characteristics, impact, and future development.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of the "beauty economy"

The beauty economy in Thailand finds expression in various domains, each with its distinct set of implications (Kim 2016):

(1) Entertainment Industry: The beauty of entertainers, actors, models, and more often garners heightened popularity, as their appearances attract larger audiences and devoted fans.

(2) Media and Advertisements: Showing beautiful

individuals in advertisements and media serves to captivate viewers, enhance brand visibility, and elevate product exposure.

(3) Social Media: Personal beauty often translates into a significant following on social media platforms, unlocking lucrative business opportunities and advertising collaborations.

(4) Personal Image and Career: Beauty exerts a positive influence on the development of specific careers and industries, such as sales, public

relations, hosting, and more.

Through this article, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the beauty economy in Thailand, exploring its multifaceted roles in various sectors and its broader implications for society, culture, and economic development. Additionally, we will offer insights and suggestions for promoting the healthy and sustainable development of this remarkable economic phenomenon.

The rise of beauty economy in Thailand

Thailand, with its abundance of cultural treasures and thriving tourism industry, stands as a prime example of the growing significance of the beauty economy in the region. This phenomenon has manifested itself across various sectors, each contributing to the burgeoning influence of beauty in Thailand's economic landscape (Laohasiriwong 2010).

(1) Entertainment Industry: Thailand's entertainment sector has experienced remarkable growth, encompassing movies, TV dramas, music, and fashion. In this dynamic industry, the allure of beautiful entertainers, models, and stars often paves the way to heightened attention and success.

(2) Tourism: As a highly sought-after tourist destination, Thailand welcomes a substantial influx of visitors annually. Within the tourism industry, beautiful Thai women hold pivotal roles as tour guides, hotel receptionists, and entertainment performers, captivating tourists and enhancing their experiences.

(3) Social Media and Network Influence: The advent of social media has revolutionised the way beauty influences are perceived. Personal beauty now commands a significant online presence, amassing devoted followers and fan bases. This digital prominence translates into opportunities for business cooperation and sponsorship, forging a bridge between beauty and commerce.

(4) Beauty Industry: Thailand boasts a well-developed beauty care industry, offering a plethora of services, including plastic surgery and beauty enhancements. This industry not only caters to local demands but also attracts clients from around

the world, reinforcing the symbiotic relationship between the beauty economy and the beauty industry.

As we delve deeper into the intricacies of the Thai beauty economy, we will unravel the profound impact of beauty in each of these domains, showcasing its role in fostering economic growth, cultural influence, and societal transformations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Buddhism and Thai Culture

Thailand, a nation steeped in history, boasts a unique and profoundly rich cultural heritage. Central to this heritage is the profound influence of Buddhism and the enduring presence of royalty. Buddhism has left an indelible mark on Thai society, shaping the way of life for its people. Temples and revered monks are ubiquitous in Thailand, serving as spiritual anchors in the lives of its citizens (Zheng Yali, 2020).

This cultural influence extends beyond religious practices, permeating various aspects of Thai life. Traditional art forms, including dance, music, painting, and sculpture, provide a canvas for the expression of Thai culture. Similarly, the culinary arts reflect the intricate flavours and culinary traditions unique to Thailand. Traditional clothing, such as the iconic chut thai, mirrors the nation's cultural identity, with its vibrant colours and intricate designs.

2.2 Colour Metaphors in Thai Culture

Within the rich tapestry of Thai culture, colour metaphors hold a significant role in shaping moral concepts and societal values. Colors often carry symbolic meanings, and Thai society interprets and symbolises colours in ways distinct from other cultures (Punjaisri and Evans 2009).

(a) Yellow:

In Thai culture, the colour yellow holds immense significance. It is intricately associated with the royal family and monarchs, rendering it a sacred and noble hue. The Thai royal family commands profound respect and reverence, and yellow is employed extensively during occasions linked to

the royal family and state affairs. From a moral perspective, yellow also symbolises virtue, righteousness, and integrity. It is emblematic of high moral standards and ethical behaviour.

(b) White:

White, in Thai culture, represents purity, innocence, and decorum. It is often worn to signify incorruptibility and selflessness, particularly during religious ceremonies and rituals. In the context of virtuous monks, white attire epitomises moral conduct and spiritual devotion. White serves as a visual embodiment of moral purity and virtuous living.

(c) Red:

The colour red in Thailand is closely associated with love, passion, and courage. In various Thai cultural traditions, red is believed to ward off malevolent spirits and avert disasters. This vibrant hue carries connotations of enthusiasm and a positive outlook on life, aligning it with themes of love and courage in moral contexts.

Colour metaphors within Thai culture play a pivotal role in conveying moral concepts, symbolising virtues, and reflecting the nation's unique cultural values.

2.3. Tourism in Thailand

The impact of tourism in Thailand on local society and culture is very significant and complex. In terms of economic development, Thailand is a country that is an important source of income from tourism, and the development of tourism has an important impact on the local economy. The prosperity of the tourism industry can create employment opportunities, promote the development of the local economy and improve the quality of life of local residents; in terms of social and cultural impact, Thailand is a multicultural country, and the development of tourism activities is conducive to the interaction between different cultures (Tangtrongbenchasil and Malarvizhi 2015).

However, tourists may also have an impact and damage to local culture, such as changes to local

traditional buildings and interference with the lifestyle of local residents. Thailand attaches great importance to the inheritance of traditional festivals and traditional customs. Through the annual celebrations of the Songkran Festival and the Loy Krathong Festival, we will vigorously promote the traditional Thai culture and attract more Chinese tourists to participate in the activities. At the same time, it will combine Thailand's diversified tourism culture for repackaging, adding more interesting interactive entertainment elements, and packaging traditional festivals into carnival parties that attract international tourists. The success of tourism activities is mainly due to two advantages.

First, Thai culture can be well integrated with the development of tourism, and the brand effect of Thailand tourism is obvious. The second is the diversification of brand communication channels. Thailand's folk festival tourism activities focus on publicity and planning, using advertising, public relations and other publicity methods to disseminate detailed tourism product information to stimulate tourists' consumption desires and behaviors (Fei Xinyi, 2022). Lin Jiaze, National Tourism Administration of Thailand: Create a world-class tourist destination with the integrated development of "tourism +" industry.

The impact of tourism on Thailand's local society and culture is a complex and significant phenomenon, encompassing both economic development and social-cultural interactions. In terms of economic growth, Thailand stands as a pivotal global destination for tourism, and the industry plays a vital role in the country's economic landscape. The thriving tourism sector generates income, employment opportunities, and an improved quality of life for local residents. The prosperity of this industry, with its diverse attractions, contributes substantially to the local economy.

Yet, the cultural and social dimensions of tourism are equally significant. Thailand's multicultural identity fosters a rich tapestry of traditions, making the country an inviting host for visitors from across

the globe. Tourism provides a platform for cross-cultural interaction, fostering understanding and integration among diverse communities. Celebrations of traditional Thai festivals, such as the Songkran Festival and Loy Krathong Festival, serve as vital mechanisms for preserving and promoting Thai cultural heritage. These annual events not only reinforce traditional customs but also attract international tourists, facilitating cultural exchange.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the potential challenges posed by tourism. While the influx of visitors can bolster the local economy, it may also lead to unintended consequences. The changes in the architectural landscape and alterations in the lifestyles of local residents can disrupt the fabric of communities and impact traditional ways of life. Recognizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage, Thailand has taken proactive steps to safeguard its traditions and customs while leveraging tourism for cultural enrichment.

One noteworthy approach involves reimagining traditional festivals as vibrant, international celebrations. By repackaging these festivals with interactive entertainment elements, Thailand transforms them into festive gatherings that appeal to global tourists. The success of these tourism initiatives can be attributed to two key factors: the seamless integration of Thai culture into the tourism industry and the diversified communication channels employed in promotion. Utilizing advertising, public relations, and other marketing strategies, Thailand disseminates detailed information about tourism products, igniting the desire and behavior for consumption among tourists (Fei Xinyi, 2022).

So Thailand's tourism industry embodies a delicate balance between economic advancement and cultural preservation. It serves as a powerful tool for enriching local economies and fostering cultural exchange, all while addressing the challenges to local traditions with innovative solutions. By skillfully integrating Thai culture into tourism and adopting varied communication

methods, Thailand continues to cultivate its reputation as a world-class tourist destination, embracing the integrated development of the "tourism +" industry (Lin Jiase, National Tourism Administration of Thailand).

2.4. The Role of Thai Women in Society

Women in Thailand occupy a significant and influential position in society. Remarkably, they enjoy equal legal status with men—a distinction that sets Thailand apart from many other Asian countries. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that gender inequalities persist, particularly in employment and political representation (Jie Yachao, 2021). Despite these challenges, Thai women continue to play pivotal roles in various social and economic activities, notably within the realms of agriculture and household management.

In the realm of film arts, the portrayal of female characters holds immense importance in shaping narratives and reflecting societal values. Thai cinema, with its distinctive cultural characteristics, has carved out a noteworthy place within the realm of Asian films. The evolution of Thai films can be traced through two significant developments (Rommanee and Chalermchat 2014).

First, the post-World War II era marked a period of relative societal stability, bolstered by support from the United States. This era, spanning over 40 years, is often referred to as the "golden age" of Thai cinema. It witnessed the growth and prosperity of Thai films, contributing to the nation's cinematic legacy.

Second, the rapid economic development driven by China's "One Belt, One Road" policy has catalyzed Thailand's film industry, ushering it into a multicultural era. In the 21st century, Thai love movies have undergone a transformative evolution in their portrayal of female characters. What began as imitation has evolved into self-breakthrough, ultimately culminating in unconventional depictions. No longer relegated to marginal roles, female characters in Thai cinema have emerged as powerful and multidimensional figures, endowed with thoughts, ideas, and the capacity for independence (Jieya Super, 2021).

In conclusion, Thai women's influence extends far beyond societal roles. They are instrumental in shaping the cultural landscape, whether through their pivotal roles in the household economy or the changing narratives in Thai cinema. While gender inequalities persist, Thai women's evolving status and representation in society and the arts continue to challenge traditional norms, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse future (Srisurat 2017).

Kathoey is a unique cultural phenomenon in Thailand, also known as the third gender in Thailand. A shemale is a person who is biologically male but self-identifies as female. Ladyboys are widely accepted in Thailand and play a variety of roles in society and the entertainment industry, including performing artists, entertainment show participants and models. According to the 2015 research report of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, watching the ladyboy show in Thailand is one of the most popular tourist activities for Chinese tourists, especially in Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket. At the same time, according to the Thailand Tiffany Show Theater The survey report also shows that the tour groups of Chinese tourists go to Thailand to watch the most ladyboy shows, an increase of 16% over 2015. In this case, Thailand, which is located in the southwest of China, has an increasing influence on China, and more and more tourist destinations choose Thailand. (Zhou Yaling (Sribusdi, 2016)

In general, Thailand's culture, economy, tourism, women and ladyboys are all important areas of research to help people better understand this diverse and unique country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our theoretical framework presents a comprehensive examination of mediator variables and their potential role in understanding the relationship between beauty (independent variable) and various dependent variables.

Confidence as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Attractiveness, Mental

Health

Mediator Variable: Confidence

Hypothesis: Beauty influences attractiveness and mental health through its impact on an individual's confidence. Higher beauty scores lead to increased confidence, thereby enhancing attractiveness and mental health.

Self-esteem as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Career Success, Mental Health

Mediator Variable: Self-esteem

Hypothesis: Beauty contributes to career success and mental health by influencing an individual's self-esteem. Higher beauty scores are associated with higher self-esteem, which positively affects career success and mental well-being.

Social Skills as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Social Network, Relationship Quality

Mediator Variable: Social Skills

Hypothesis: Beauty impacts social network size and relationship quality through its influence on an individual's social skills. Higher beauty scores correlate with improved social skills, leading to stronger social networks and better relationships.

Health Awareness as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variable: Mental Health

Mediator Variable: Health Awareness

Hypothesis: Beauty's effect on mental health may be mediated by an individual's health awareness. Higher beauty scores may contribute to greater health awareness, which, in turn, enhances mental well-being.

Self-efficacy as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variable: Career Success

Mediator Variable: Self-efficacy

Hypothesis: Beauty's impact on career success may be mediated by self-efficacy. Individuals with higher beauty scores may exhibit greater self-efficacy, leading to increased professional success.

Consumption Concept as a Mediator:

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variable: Consumption Behaviour

Mediator Variable: Consumption Concept

Hypothesis: Beauty may influence consumption behaviour through its impact on an individual's consumption concept. Individuals with higher beauty scores may exhibit different consumption concepts, resulting in distinct consumption behaviours.

Moderators

By incorporating moderator variables into our theoretical framework, we acknowledge the nuanced nature of the relationships between beauty and dependent variables.

1. Age as a Moderator:

Moderator Variable: Age

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Attractiveness, Mental Health

Hypothesis: Age may serve as a moderator, influencing the relationship between beauty and attractiveness as well as beauty and mental health. The impact of beauty on these variables may vary across different age groups.

2. Cultural Background as a Moderator:

Moderator Variable: Cultural Background

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Career Success, Social Network

Hypothesis: Cultural background can act as a moderator, altering the association between beauty and career success, as well as beauty and social network. Diverse cultural backgrounds may

lead to distinct definitions and values assigned to beauty, impacting these relationships.

3. Socioeconomic Status as a Moderator:

Moderator Variable: Socioeconomic Status

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Consumer Behavior, Mental Health

Hypothesis: Socioeconomic status may function as a moderator, affecting the relationship between beauty and consumer behavior, as well as beauty and mental health. Variations in socioeconomic status may lead to differential attention to personal beauty, influencing these associations.

4. Gender as a Moderator:

Moderator Variable: Gender

Independent Variable: Beauty

Dependent Variables: Attractiveness, Career Success

Hypothesis: Gender can act as a moderator, impacting the relationship between beauty and attractiveness, as well as beauty and career success. Different genders may apply distinct criteria and evaluations to beauty, shaping these connections.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Plan Design:

Clarify the research purpose, questions, and assumptions.

Design a suitable research plan that outlines the methodology and data collection methods.

Consider using questionnaires, experiments, interviews, and other approaches to gather multifaceted data related to the beauty phenomenon.

2. Data Collection:

Implement the data collection methods as per the research plan.

Utilize the following data collection methods:

a. Questionnaires: Distribute surveys online or in

paper format to gather information on respondents' perceptions of beauty, attractiveness, career success, and more.

b. Experiments: Design controlled experiments to observe the impact of various independent variables (e.g., beauty, use of beauty products) on dependent variables (e.g., attractiveness, mental health).

c. Interviews: Conduct in-depth interviews with beauty experts, practitioners, consumers, and other relevant stakeholders to gain insights into their perspectives and experiences with the beauty phenomenon.

3. Data Collation:

Collate the collected data, which involves data cleaning, coding, entry, and quality assurance.

Ensure that the data is accurate, complete, and readily available for analysis.

4. Data Analysis:

Select appropriate data analysis methods based on the research objectives and data characteristics. Employ various statistical techniques, including:

a. Descriptive Statistics: Summarize the data by calculating measures such as the mean, standard deviation, frequency, and other relevant indicators.

b. Correlation Statistics: Assess the degree of correlation between different variables by calculating metrics like the Pearson correlation coefficient and Spearman correlation coefficient.

c. Regression Analysis: Utilize methods such as linear regression, logistic regression, and multiple regression to explore relationships between independent variables and dependent variables. Additionally, test the influence of moderator and mediator variables on these relationships.

5. Data Analysis Software (e.g., SPSS):

Use specialized software like SPSS for statistical data processing and analysis.

Collaborate with experts proficient in SPSS to ensure proper data handling and analysis.

6. Presentation and Discussion of Results:

Present the analysis results effectively using tables, graphs, and other visual aids.

Engage in discussions that connect the findings with the theoretical background and practical significance. Offer recommendations and insights derived from the research results, which can serve as valuable references for policy-making and practical applications.

RESULTS

Theoretical Contribution

This study delves into the mechanisms underlying the beauty phenomenon, offering fresh perspectives and insights for theoretical research within the realms of economics, sociology, and psychology. The research findings enrich and expand the existing theoretical framework, providing a foundational basis for future investigations in related fields.

Practical Contribution

The results of this research offer valuable guidance for industries related to beauty and cosmetics, aiding companies in understanding market dynamics, consumer behaviors, and other critical aspects. These insights enable businesses to formulate more effective marketing strategies and product designs, enhancing their competitiveness in the market. Policy makers can also benefit from these findings, as they provide a reference for crafting targeted policies that foster the healthy development of related industries.

Social Contribution

The exploration of the beauty phenomenon prompts increased social awareness and discourse on matters related to beauty and attractiveness. This research serves as a guide for fostering a balanced understanding of aesthetics and values within the broader public. The findings empower individuals with recommendations for self-improvement and personal development, facilitating their achievements across various domains.

Methodological Contribution

Employing a diverse array of data collection and

analysis methods, this study introduces novel ideas and approaches to research within related fields. These methods enhance researchers' comprehension of the beauty phenomenon and offer valuable references for subsequent investigations.

Interdisciplinary Contribution

Beauty economics encompasses economics, sociology, psychology, and various other disciplines, reflecting its strong interdisciplinary nature. The advancement of this research promotes collaboration and exchanges between diverse academic fields, fostering innovation and development in academic research.

REFERENCES

1. Kim, R. H. H. (2016) "Exploring the Beauty Industry in Thailand: Beauty Cafés and Cosmetic Consumption", *Asian Journal of Communication*.
2. Laohasiriwong, T. (2010) "Cosmetic Usage Behavior in Thailand", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawaii.
3. Norton, P. (2001) *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*.
4. Punjaisri, T. and D. Evans (2009) "The Influence of Self-Esteem and Materialism on Female Consumers' Luxury Cosmetics Purchase Intentions in Thailand", *Journal of Marketing Management*.
5. Rommanee, P. and T. Chalermchat (2014) "Cosmetics Consumption among Young Female Adults in Thailand", *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies*.
6. Srisurat, N. (2017) "The Impact of Consumer Confidence on Cosmetic Purchasing Decision: A Study of Thai Female Consumers", *International Journal of Business and Management*.
7. Tangtrongbenchasil, T. and P. Malarvizhi (2015) "Economic Valuation of Thai Cosmetic Market", *Asian Journal of Business and Management Sciences*.