

COMPLETION REPORT

An Effect of the 'Cool Japan' policy to Creative Industry: The Case Studies of Generation X

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This research shows that the “Thai generation X” residing in the Bangkok metropolitan area has a positive perception toward Japanese culture and products. Japanese culture has practically been blended with Thai culture since Japanese cultural influence is fairly visible in their everyday lives. Thai consumers have been familiar with Japanese products, particularly in the sector of heavy manufacturing industries, such as automobiles and house-hold electronics. Japanese multinational corporations such as, Toyota, Sony and Uniqlo, are the top-ranked Japanese “brands” which symbolically remind Thai consumers of Japanese products. As well as those consumers, the “influencers” in Thai creative industry also regard Japanese creativity and culture as a role model for their creative works. The in-depth interviews of this research reveal that most of the influencers in Thai creative industry regard the quality of Japanese products as essential part of Japanese cultural values.

The promotion of Japanese cultural values requires careful consideration. The Japanese government has eagerly invested in the area of cultural diplomacy. The “Cool Japan” campaign is a clear example of this investment over the last four decades. The successful promotion of the Cool Japan brand originated from the government’s intervention in the 1970s. The Japanese government has widely subsidized cultural and creative industry. This research identifies the three important periods of the Japanese government’s intervention of the Thai cultural market, which are: 1) the establishment of Japanese soft-power via Japan Foundation from the 1970s to the 1990s; 2) the expansion of Japanese pop culture from the 1990s to the 2000s; and 3) the embedding of Japanese cultural product via Cool Japan in 2000s onward.

Yet, the government intervention alone cannot sustain the long-lasting promotion of its brand. Japanese values of diligence and meticulousity greatly support and guarantee the quality of ‘made-in-Japan’ products. It is such Japanese values that bolster the Japanese government’s successful promotion of creative industries. The SWAT analysis in this research reveals that Thai influencers and consumers characterize the primary values of Japanese culture and products as quality, uniqueness, creativity, innovation and diversity, which essentially galvanize the demand of Japanese products in the Thai cultural market. Such values are tangibly found in cultural products, such as food, manga/cartoon and tourist sites/sights, which many people of the Thai generation X popularly consume.

However, the pervasion of Japanese cultural values into the Thai cultural market is not always straightforward. A language barrier has been an obstacle for Thais to understand Japanese cultural contents. Moreover, the Japanese cultural contents *per se* need to be modified to attract wider consumer demands in a massive cultural market though Thai middle class people are generally satisfied with Japanese pop cultural productions.

Against the backdrop of Thai cultural market, consumers and influencer described above, this research intends to propose three business models in the Thai cultural market, which are 1) Model 1: DIY by Japanese ; 2) Model 2: Thai gate-keeper ; and 3) Model 3: Made-in-Thailand. The three models can be applied to domestic consumers in the Thai market in general while, in some occasions, they require difference strategic communication plans for different consumer groups. Japanese cultural agencies can make practical use of these models to meet the demands of Thai consumers. This research also proposes that, apart from the existing cultural products which have already been popular among Thais, the Japanese government and cultural agencies should consider some other potential cultural products such as those of fashion, beauty, sport and television entertainment.

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