Article

Enhancing the Competitiveness of the Show Business Industry for Cultural Export as a Means of Creative Economy Development and Tourism Promotion in the Future New Normal Era: The Case of Thailand

Chayapoj Lee-Anant [1], Therdchai Choibamroong [2,*] and Boonnawat Srikhwan [2]

[1] Hospitality Industry Management Program, Faculty of Management Sciences, Kasetsart University, Bangkok 10900, Thailand; chayapoj.l@ku.th

[2] Graduate School of Tourism Management (GSTM), National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok 10240, Thailand; boonnawat.s@hotmail.com

* Correspondence: ted-choibamroong@hotmail.com

Abstract: The tourism industry is considered the greatest economic generator in Thailand. Nonetheless, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic thoroughly shifted its image of tourism stability and trustworthiness. The show business industry is an element of Thai tourism that attracts more than a million tourists nationwide. The show business industry not only attracts quality multinational tourists as visitors, but also indirectly establishes 'soft power' with audiences. This research aimed to (1) study the alternative future scenario of Thailand's cultural show business industry with respect to cultural export and the creative economy; (2) determine the competitive potential of Thailand's show business industry by comparing it with the global show business industry; (3) examine the market demands and behaviors within Thailand's cultural show business industry for cultural export and the creative economy; and (4) present a strategy for elevating the competitive potential of the show business industry for cultural export, promoting a creative economy and fostering tourism in the post-pandemic 'New Normal' era. The results of this study found that the 'Alternative Future Scenario' of Thailand's cultural performance industry with respect to cultural exports and the creative economy consists of three scenarios: (1) a mass show business tourism industry, (2) an exclusive show business tourism industry, and (3) a new mega show business tourism industry. It also revealed the competitive potential of the Thai show business industry. By comparing it with the international performing arts industry in terms of competitiveness, it was found that the show business industry in Thailand meets world-class standards. Given its clear, outstanding, and unique culture and traditions, Thailand is ready to serve as a major cultural exporter via cultural performance. Furthermore, the data analysis revealed a total of 10 significant strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of the show business industry in Thailand.

Keywords: competitiveness; cultural export; creative economy; tourism promotion; show business industry; performing arts; Thailand

1. Introduction

The tourism industry in Thailand is considered one of its leading industries, generating high economic revenue and value for the country. When compared with other industries in the country, in the year 2019, Thailand had a total of 41.1 million tourists and a tourism revenue of THB 2.21 trillion. This represented a 7.5% increase in tourist numbers and a 10% increase in revenue. Among these tourists, 11.69 million were from China, with an 11% increase; 11.31 million were from ASEAN countries, with a 10% increase; and 6.9 million were from Europe, showing a 2% increase (Ministry of Tourism and Sports 2020). However, the goals set by government agencies and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports

for tourism revenue in 2020 were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began to affect revenue towards the end of 2019 and continued into early 2020. This had a significant impact on operators in the tourism industry and related industries, with some businesses having to close permanently. As a result of the situation and the ongoing impact of the pandemic, tourism industry operators have had to swiftly develop strategies and adapt to ensure the survival of their businesses, particularly in the show business industry, which was heavily affected by the inability to welcome tourists and host events as usual. The entertainment industry has also faced significant fluctuations, being closely tied to the tourism industry.

Furthermore, it was found that in the National 20-Year Strategy, there is emphasis and importance placed on 'cultural tourism and creative tourism' as a means of exporting Thai culture and presenting it to a wider and more contemporary international tourist market. Moreover, entrepreneurs can apply and develop creative ideas within the show business industry, particularly through online and digital media, and they can present shows in new formats and elevate tourism into a creative economy, stimulating various forms of tourism. However, it is currently observed that the Thai show business industry lacks an overarching strategy that reflects a vision for sustainable development in the creative industry, and it is an industry that has not been effectively stimulated within the Thai tourism industry. There is also a lack of effective internal organizational management strategies and collaboration among businesses, hindering the export of shows in digital or 5G formats, which is considered crucial for advancing tourism in the era of Industry 4.0 and global tourism.

The above-mentioned information forms the basis for this study, which is aimed at enhancing the competitive potential of the show business industry for cultural export. The objective is to analyze and synthesize the knowledge and processes involved in conducting activities within the show business industry, both in terms of demand and supply, in a balanced manner. This is intended to create a Thai show business industry that is popular among tourists worldwide, serving as an opportunity and a vital tool for revitalizing Thailand's tourism economy. It is a significant step in developing Thai tourism into a truly creative and sustainable tourism economy, achieving national goals and development plans efficiently and effectively.

2. Research Purposes

1. To study the alternative future scenario of Thailand's cultural show business industry with respect to cultural export and the creative economy.
2. To determine the competitive potential of Thailand's show business industry by comparing it with the global show business industry.
3. To examine market demands and behaviors within Thailand's cultural show business industry for cultural export and the creative economy.
4. To present a strategy for enhancing the competitive potential of the show business industry for cultural export, promoting a creative economy, and fostering tourism in the post-pandemic 'Next Normal' era.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

To achieve the research objectives, the Thai-culture-based show providers in Pattaya with the top six highest numbers of visitors were selected to compare similarities and differences. In Pattaya, Chonburi Province, there is a diverse range of show formats and performances. There were, in total, six cultural show providers selected as samples for this research investigation. The aforementioned information is presented in Table 1.

The above table shows that all six show providers employ Thai cultures with different emphases and target markets. Regarding the performers, the Tiffany Show, Alcazar Cabaret Pattaya, and Colosseum Show Pattaya are LGBTQ+, while the rest are not. In addition, the cultures are presented differently according to the different characteristics of the shows. The Tiffany Show and Colosseum Show Pattaya tend to be more modern shows diversifying

the Thai culture, while Alcazar Cabaret Pattaya is a traditional Thai culture show. The other three show providers, namely, the KAAN Show, Thai Alangkarn Theater, and Tuxedo Magic Theatre, are not LGBTQ-focused, targeting different markets. Taking the KAAN Show and Thai Alangkarn Theater as an example, they target family groups, while the Tuxedo Magic Theatre has a niche target market interested in experiencing magic.

Table 1. Classification of the selected case studies of the research.

Name of the Show Providers	Characteristics
(1) Tiffany's Show	Tiffany's Show is the first modern cabaret show in Thailand and the Southeast Asian region. It is the largest and most beautiful transvestite cabaret show in Asia, accommodating up to 550 people. It boasts state-of-the-art lighting, sound systems, and extravagant performances created by Jim McDonald, an experienced and globally awarded producer. The theater is designed with a primary focus on the safety and comfort of tourists, featuring international-standard security measures.
(2) KAAN Show	The KAAN Show is Thailand's latest live show project that is unlike any other. It combines live performances with a new cinematic and innovative format, blending the best stage performances with world-class technology. It draws inspiration from various classical literary works, adapting and creatively reimagining them.
(3) Alcazar Cabaret Pattaya	The Alcazar Cabaret Show Pattaya is the biggest traditional cabaret show in Asia. Tourists can enjoy a complete show with music, costumes, dances, and a fully equipped stage featuring modern lighting, sound systems, and computer-controlled performances. It uses state-of-the-art DTS sound systems and boasts a modern architectural design.
(4) Colosseum Show Pattaya	The Colosseum Show Pattaya takes its inspiration from the Colosseum, the iconic ancient Roman amphitheater known for its colossal size. This theater in Pattaya is designed to replicate the grandeur of the Colosseum while being a cabaret theater. It offers a clear view of the stage from every seat and is considered the largest cabaret theater in Pattaya. The Colosseum Show Pattaya combines the elements of cabaret and dance theater, creating distinctive and outstanding performances. The theater is equipped with modern stage systems, scenery, lighting, sound, and state-of-the-art technology.
(5) Thai Alangkarn Theater	The Thai Alangkarn Theater is the best destination for tourists looking to experience the beauty and extravagance of Thai cultural arts. It features a show stage that incorporates history, art, and the rich culture of Thailand in a stunning performance. The theater is designed with a Thai touch and is the only theater built to accommodate panoramic performances. The stage is 70 m long, the longest in Thailand, and there is a 50 m water screen for projection.
(6) Tuxedo Magic Theatre	Tuxedo Magic Theatre, also known as Tuxedo Magic Land, is the first magic theater in Thailand with Thai magicians performing on a global stage. The idea for this magic castle emerged from the dreams and determination of the Tuxedo Magic Land team. It is a comprehensive and complete hub for all things related to magic. Master Tuxedo and his team studied magic seriously in countries like China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Korea, and the United States. They started by winning the top position in the professional magic championship in Thailand in 2000 and later received the Master of International Magic Award from the Magic Society of Bangladesh at the International Magic Festival in 2005.

Source: Adapted from (Ticket 2 Attraction 2023).

3.1. Development of Cultural Tourism in Thailand

Thailand is blessed with abundant resources suitable for tourism, including diverse geographical landscapes and unique cultural heritage in each region. If these natural resources and cultural elements are appropriately developed and integrated into tourism, it will benefit both tourism operators and local communities.

Highlighting the interesting, distinctive, and beautiful aspects of Thai culture and incorporating them into communication through various means such as presentations and communication tools, personal media, architecture, homes, clothing, cuisine, lifestyle, traditions, and beliefs can contribute significantly to the development of tourism. By promoting these cultural aspects alongside contemporary tourism development, Thai culture becomes more recognized and contributes to both the economic and social well-being of the country (Richards 2020; Prapasawasdi et al. 2018).

Cultural tourism can be nurtured through innovative approaches that leverage the cultural assets and values of each region or cultural resources. This can involve storytelling from history, community lifestyles, architecture, traditions, craftsmanship, local music, arts, and literature. By managing and aligning these elements with the community's values, tourism can create attractions that resonate with the community's values (Du Cros and McKercher 2020). This opens up opportunities for travelers to experience genuine interactions and learn, through travel, about living with local residents.

'Soft power' is defined as the capacity to influence other countries using persuasion and attraction through Thai cultures. As of 2023, the government has promoted Thai soft power through the 5F approach, including Food, Film, Fashion, Fighting, and Festivals. Thailand boasts a multitude of cultural tourism destinations, such as Life Museums and cultural learning communities. These cultural aspects should be promoted and developed as authentic models for each region. For example, Ashton et al. (2020), Richards (2018), and Sukanthasirikul and Trongpanich (2016) emphasized that tourism has turned culture into a selling point, particularly for American and European tourists interested in learning about history, architecture, and the way of life of the local people. This form of tourism is referred to as 'Cultural Tourism'.

3.2. Strategies for Elevating Thailand's Tourism Industry

Prapasawasdi et al. (2018) and Ratanasuwongchai (2011) stated that the strategy for developing cultural tourism has led many community-based tourist destinations to lack quality due to inadequate management aligning with societal values, culture, and the environment. A significant cause of this issue is the unbalanced roles of various entities and local communities in planning, management, and marketing. Central government agencies often have a dominant role in policy formulation, planning, and execution, while the local communities in tourist destinations have limited participation. This has resulted in a lack of understanding among local communities about the plans and development methods for their areas, as they were carried out according to government policies. Therefore, achieving balanced participation among all groups is crucial in developing sustainable tourism. This balanced participation has necessitated collaborative planning and tool development that align with the needs of each stakeholder group. Each issue must have a coherent and interconnected relationship with the others.

Furthermore, this study reviewed the National Strategy (2018–2037), with a focus on the Tourism issue (2018–2037), which consists of six sub-issues. The researcher chose to discuss only the issues related to the study, which were as follows:

(1) Developing tourism products and services based on unique local cultural assets and indigenous knowledge. This involves utilizing cultural heritage and traditions as a foundation for innovation, knowledge enhancement, technology, and design to create valuable and unique tourism offerings.

(2) Fostering an environment conducive to promoting creativity for the development and advancement of tourism products and services. This includes initiatives such as research and development, innovation, investment promotion, building tourism business networks, communication, marketing, database development, and storytelling for tourists.

(3) Ensuring that individuals involved in the tourism industry have the necessary skills and knowledge across the entire tourism supply chain. This includes areas like design, research and development, technological innovation, business management, and marketing. The goal is to create differentiation and excellence in products and services that align with market demands.

(4) Encouraging the registration, protection, and utilization of intellectual property and local wisdom to support the development of creative and cultural tourism. This can help transform Thailand into a creative tourism hub at the regional level.

(5) Promoting Thailand's and each region's uniqueness on the global stage by using creative and innovative media and encouraging storytelling that showcases the distinc-

tiveness of each region and province through brand development and communication via popular marketing channels, targeting specific audiences.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

According to the research framework, Figure 1 reflects the process of achieving all research objectives from the beginning. To form alternative future scenarios, data from news, academic papers, books, websites, etc., were reviewed to identify those that fit most with Thailand's context. All data were analyzed and synthesized to match with factors, trends, disruptors, and potential customers to establish the final alternative future scenario. To propose the outcome of the research, several tools were developed, for instance, SWOT, TOWS Matrix, and Business Model Canvas (BMC). These tools were integrated with the results of the qualitative and quantitative data to form the strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the show business industry for cultural export as a means of creative economy development and tourism promotion in the future new normal era.

Figure 1. Process of acquiring strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the show business industry for cultural export as a means of creative economy development and tourism promotion in the future new normal era.

4. Research Methodology

To achieve the research outcomes, the research methodology, research populations and samples, research instruments, data collection methods, and data analysis approaches were identified. Table 2 illustrates how this research was undertaken to address objectives 1–4.

Table 2. Summary of research methodology.

Research Objectives	Research Methodology	Research Populations and Samples	Research Instrument	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. To study the alternative future scenario of Thailand's cultural show business industry as a cultural export and creative economy	Qualitative research	- In-depth data regarding the cultural performance and cultural export industry of Thailand, as well as international data on the same topics. - Total of 4 cultural performance exporters in Chonburi Province, namely, Tiffany's Show Pattaya, Alcazar Cabaret Show Pattaya, KAAN Show Pattaya, Tuxedo Magic, and Illusion Hall Pattaya	Semi-structured in-depth interviews with experts and individuals with knowledge in the Thai cultural performance industry	The data collection of in-depth field data from both domestic and international sources	Coding analysis
2. To determine the competitive potential of Thailand's show business industry by comparing it to the global show business industry	Qualitative research	- Data from academic documents, articles, journals, books, and online websites related to the potential and readiness of the Thai cultural performance and cultural export industry, compared to the international performance industry - Stakeholders, entrepreneurs, experts, academics, and related organizations in the Pattaya area who are involved in cultural performance and cultural export activities	Semi-structured in-depth interviews with experts and entrepreneurs in the Thai cultural performance industry	Utilizing geographical data and conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with experts and entrepreneurs in the Thai cultural performance industry who are engaged in cultural exports	Coding analysis
3. To examine market demands and behaviors within Thailand's cultural show business industry for cultural export and the creative economy	Quantitative research	1. A total of 400 foreign tourists who had previously traveled to Thailand and witnessed cultural performances and cultural exports in Chonburi 2. A total of 400 Thai tourists who had previously traveled within Thailand and witnessed cultural performances and cultural exports in Chonburi	Verified questionnaires containing (1) demographic information, (2) tourist behavior and psychology for on-site performances, (3) tourist behavior and psychology for online show performances, and (4) suggestions and additional comments	Survey using formatted online questionnaire to collect data from tourists with set criteria	- Descriptive statistics and content analysis - The statistical measures utilized for the quantitative data were mean, percentage, and standard deviation (SD) - SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used for data analysis

Table 2. *Cont.*

Research Objectives	Research Methodology	Research Populations and Samples	Research Instrument	Data Collection	Data Analysis
4. To propose strategies for elevating the competitive potential of the show business industry towards cultural export, promoting a creative economy, and fostering tour-ism in the post-pandemic 'Next Normal' era	Qualitative and quantitative research	- The final strategies were established by obtaining qualitative research from Purpose 1 and 2, which are qualitative, and Purpose 3, which is quantitative research. - The data collection methods included surveys, assessments, and expert opinions from key organizations, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and National Statistical Office. Additional data were sourced from the World Tourism Organization, encompassing tourist behavior, industry readiness, cultural export potential, and expert opinions and insights from industry stakeholders and operators.			

Source: Own illustration.

For the quantitative data of this research, both Thai and foreign tourists who had experienced cultural performances in Chonburi, including Tiffany's Show Pattaya, Alcazar Cabaret Show Pattaya, KAAN Show Pattaya, Tuxedo Magic, and Illusion Hall Pattaya, were targeted. A total of 800 respondents were divided into two sample groups, with each group consisting of 400 individuals. The criteria for selecting respondents from both groups were as follows: (1) The number of times they had attended cultural performances in Thailand within the past five years. Thai tourists should have attended a minimum of three times, while foreign tourists should have attended a minimum of two times. (2) The number of venues where they had witnessed cultural performances within the past five years. Thai tourists should have experienced a minimum of three different venues, while foreign tourists should have experienced a minimum of two different venues.

The criteria for selecting respondents from both groups were determined based on the number of popular cultural performance businesses in Pattaya, Chonburi that were frequented by both Thai and foreign tourists. These criteria were as follows: Thai tourists must have attended cultural performances in Pattaya, Chonburi a minimum of three times within the past 5 years, they must have witnessed cultural performances in at least three different venues within the past 5 years, and they should not be the owners or operators of the cultural performance businesses. In other words, they must be tourists and not directly involved in the industry. Foreign tourists must have attended cultural performances in Pattaya, Chonburi a minimum of two times within the past 5 years, they must have witnessed cultural performances in at least two different venues within the past 5 years, and they should not be the owners or operators of the cultural performance businesses. In other words, they must be tourists and not directly involved in the industry.

5. Research Results

(1) The study of exploring alternative future scenarios for Thailand's cultural performance industry in the context of cultural exports and creative economic development.

From intensive literature reviews and in-depth analyses, the study of alternative future scenarios for Thailand's cultural performance industry in the context of cultural exports and creative economic development identified three scenarios, as shown in Figure 2.
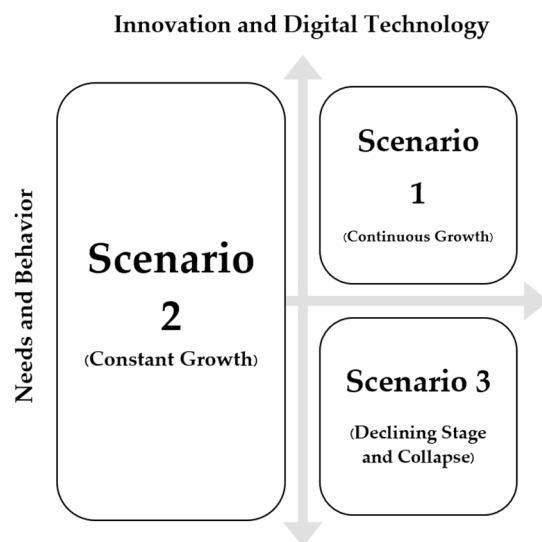

Figure 2. Alternative future scenarios for Thailand's cultural performance industry.

Scenario 1: In this scenario, Thailand's cultural performance industry will experience continuous growth, aiming to promote exports and foster creative economic development. It is expected that a large number of tourists will travel to Thailand each year to witness Thai cultural performances. New and innovative shows, incorporating cutting-edge technology in terms of lighting, sound, and effects, will be introduced. Consequently, ticket prices may significantly increase, and tourists may be concerned about the quality of their cultural

experience. With the increased creation and presentation of new cultural content, there will be more opportunities to meet the demands of audiences and tourists.

Scenario 2: The business situation in Thailand's cultural performance industry aims to promote exports and foster a creative economy and is expected to remain relatively stable. It is anticipated that tourists will continue to visit Thailand's performance industry as before, with the desire for entertainment and relaxation due to work-related stress, seeking various forms of entertainment. Trends in tourist behavior and preferences are expected to become more diverse. Thailand's cultural performance industry aims to export culture and foster a creative economy and focuses on presenting Thai cultural performances that can provide a truly exceptional experience for tourists, utilizing technology such as Virtual Reality (VR). This technology can address tourists' needs effectively.

Scenario 3: The situation of Thailand's cultural performance industry aims to promote cultural exports and foster a creative economy but is currently facing a decline and disruption. Tourists have been decreasing every year, necessitating a swift collaborative effort within the industry at both regional and international levels. Additionally, there is a need to focus on developing new talents within Thailand's cultural performance industry while establishing specialized institutions to promote and develop human resources and technology capabilities that can play a crucial role in elevating the industry and the creative economy.

(2) The study of Thailand's competitive potential in the entertainment industry by comparing it to the global entertainment industry.

Thailand can be considered a country with considerable potential that can be compared to many others. Upon analysis, it is evident that Thailand possesses a strong and distinctive culture, along with robust tourism resources. This allows Thailand to attract tourists and adapt to various forms of cultural presentations effectively. Additionally, Thailand boasts a diverse culture that links with various aspects such as food, clothing, and more, all of which can be integrated into the country's cultural industry. Moreover, there is a growing emphasis by government agencies on cultural exports and creative economies. The establishment of the Creative Economy Agency (CEA) in Thailand provides opportunities to promote creative tourism and creative businesses, particularly in the realms of cultural performances and cultural exports. Furthermore, there is a growing focus on education and training institutions to develop human resources and professionals in the cultural and export sectors. It is acknowledged that individuals working in the field of cultural performance are not just precarious workers, but require high-level creativity, contributing significantly to Thailand's cultural and entertainment industry.

Thailand's entertainment and cultural export industry has begun to incorporate innovation and business-related technologies, making it possible for tourists and viewers to access performances and shows from anywhere through the Internet of Things (IoT). There is a growing push to develop online platforms, expanding the audience and customer base. Additionally, there is a focus on creating luxurious and distinctive experiences (high value) for viewers and tourists, with modern and engaging storytelling processes. Thai performances offer a diverse range of formats and techniques, allowing viewers and tourists to choose based on their interests. This diversity is a significant strength of Thailand's entertainment industry. Furthermore, the cost of attending shows and performances in Thailand is relatively affordable when compared to experiences of similar quality in other countries. This affordability enables tourists with moderate budgets to access and enjoy these high-value experiences.

In addition, the soft power has had a significantly positive impact across various industries in Thailand, and the country has been actively developing policies and plans to strengthen its creative economy in the future. This involves creating channels for presenting various forms of creative content, although there may still be some limitations due to budget constraints and investment challenges. Issues related to copyright protection also pose challenges. The strategic development structure in Thailand's creative industry might not be very clear-cut at the moment, and it is an area where further enhancement is needed.

Nevertheless, Thailand's performing arts industry remains strong and has the potential to generate substantial income, contributing to the GDP in the creative industry sector. Among the 15 creative industries, Thailand's performing arts have demonstrated their significance. Thailand is making efforts to raise awareness among its citizens about their own culture, encouraging them to value their heritage. There have been initiatives such as promoting the wearing of traditional Thai clothing and revisiting historical dramas set in ancient Ayutthaya, although these trends might be relatively short-lived.

(3) The study of the market needs and behaviors in Thailand's cultural performance industry for cultural exports and creative economy development.

A verified questionnaire was used to collect the data. Table 3 compares sets of the data retrieved from a total of 800 respondents: 400 Thai tourist respondents and 400 international tourist respondents.

(4) Presenting a strategy to enhance the competitiveness of the entertainment industry for cultural exports, foster a creative economy, and promote tourism in the era of the 'New Normal' tourism.

Strategy 1: Accelerate the promotion of market segment exploration and diverse marketing efforts by designing services that enhance accessibility for all groups.

Strategy 2: Elevate the physical viewing experience to create a distinctive and memorable atmosphere for tourists' perception and memory.

Strategy 3: Promote and drive the adoption of the new innovation and digital technology for efficient show presentations.

Strategy 4: Upgrade and promote the integration of high-value contemporary Thai culture with shows to create a distinctive and memorable Thai cultural identity for tourists.

Strategy 5: Accelerate the development and promotion of the personnel and workforce in the Thai show business industry with contemporary and standardized standards.

Strategy 6: Accelerate the development of the cooperation between sectors and organizations in the Thai show business industry and related industries.

Strategy 7: Promote and advocate for the development of policies and strategies that align with the creative economy in economic development plans at the national, regional, provincial, city, and community levels.

Strategy 8: Accelerate the promotion and application of the alternative future scenario of the Thai cultural show business industry in order to develop the show and exhibition industry in Thailand, promote a creative economy, and reduce potential future impacts.

Strategy 9: Accelerate the promotion of high-quality services and activities that connect with the show business industry and exceed expectations.

Strategy 10: Promote the development and use of Thai show business industry business models that can efficiently demonstrate the entire system's process.

Table 3. Selected results from quantitative data.

Issues	Thai Tourists		International Tourists	
	Results	Percentage (%)	Results	Percentage (%)
Demographic Data				
1. Sex	Female	70.0	Female	64.4
2. Age	21–30 Years	69.3	41–50 Years	55.0
3. Marital Status	Single	62.4	Married	64.6
4. Education	Bachelor's degree	78.5	Bachelor's degree	74.8
5. Occupation	Private company employee	43.6	Private company employee	44.9
6. Average Monthly Income	THB 20,001–30,000	42.5	Over THB 50,001	65.2
7. Religion	Buddhist	81.2	Christian	82.4
8. Hometown Region	Central	45.6	-	-
Behavioral and psychological aspects of domestic tourists visiting the theater				
1. Expenses when traveling to see shows	Booking, admission, and ticket fees	56.5	Ticket and vehicle rental fees	30.4
2. Preferred day to see the shows	Weekends (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)	59.3	Vacation leave	42.5
3. Preferred time to see the shows	4:00 p.m.–7:59 p.m.	92.5	4:00 p.m.–7:59 p.m.	82.5
4. Seating zone or seating position to see the shows	Premium seat	40.9	VIP and VVIP seat	51.5
5. Transportation method to see the shows	Private vehicle	88.2	Rental vehicle	42.6
6. Staying overnight when seeing the shows	Yes	96.8	Yes	100
7. Preferred accommodation when traveling to see the shows	4-star hotel	55.4	4-star hotel	68.3
8. Planning time before traveling to see the shows	Avg. 10.4 days	-	Avg. 28.9 days	-
9. Preferred channel to find information before traveling to see the shows	Smart phone/mobile phone	83.2	Smart phone/mobile phone	55.3
10. Way to manage traveling to see the shows	Self-administration	69.5	Travel agents/travel operators	72.2
11. Preferred traveling companion to see the shows	Family	52.9	Family	61.5
12. The main purpose of traveling to see the shows	For new experiences	52.0	For new experiences	40.8
13. The main factor influencing the decision to travel to see the shows	The distinctiveness of the different shows	49.6	The show's reputation and popularity	53.2
14. The factors that discourage travel to see the shows	Dirtiness and uncleanness of the place	38.5	Difficulties in accessing the venues	32.1
15. The most expected feeling when traveling to see the shows	Surprising	40.3	Exciting	52.6
16. Expected types of shows	Shows with innovation and modern technology	43.5	Shows with insertion of Thai cultures	42.9
17. Possibility of referral after seeing the shows	Yes	99.4	Yes	99.8
18. Possibility of repurchasing after seeing the shows	Yes	98.5	Yes	99.5

Table 3. *Cont.*

| Issues | Thai Tourists | | International Tourists | |
	Results	Percentage (%)	Results	Percentage (%)
19. Priority of activity in travel itinerary	Secondary	87.4	Secondary	57.3
Behavioral and psychological aspects of domestic tourists when viewing online				
1. Decision to view online shows	No	65.3	Yes	55.0
2. Factors influencing or discouraging decision to view online shows	Price value	52.4	Unable to travel	52.9
3. Preferred channel for viewing online shows	Theater's direct websites	58.4	Platforms or applications	62.4
4. Affordable price per view	Avg. THB 835	-	Avg. THB 1978	-
5. Preferred form of payment when viewing online shows	Direct transfer or mobile banking	64.8	Credit or debit cards	73.5
6. Appropriate range of time per viewing online shows	Avg. 1.69 hrs.		Avg. 1.82 hrs.	-
7. Preferred devices for viewing online shows	Desktop or laptop	55.3	Smart television	40.5
8. Preferred genre of shows to view online	Fantasy	56.9	Action	42.8
9. Preferred time to view the online shows	Weekends	63.5	Weekends	58.9
10. Preferred companion when viewing online shows	Family	41.9	Family	51.2
11. Reasons for choosing to view online shows	To relax and rest	49.5	To seek new experiences	43.5
12. Reasons for not viewing online shows	Difficulties in access	57.4	Simple and repetitive	40.5
13. Supporting factors for viewing online shows	Internet and Wi-Fi signal	53.2	Viewing devices	70.8
14. Feeling after viewing online shows	Enjoyment and relaxation	45.5	Enjoyment and relaxation	61.8

Source: Research results.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The key factor that influences the cultural industry is digital communication, including the production process, content formats, distribution channels, and technology consumption. Digital communication has significantly expanded the scope and speed of the cultural industry, creating a networked society that drives culture without boundaries. This also aligns with the research of Lee-Anant et al. (2022), Kotler et al. (2021), and Kristensen et al. (2018), who stated that technology, such as communication technology and convenience technology, can be used as tools to create competitive opportunities and respond to tourist behavior. This results in convenience, speed, and confidence for tourists, reflecting the stability of service providers when deciding to travel. The research outcomes are consistent with several studies by Chen (2021), De la Vega et al. (2020) and Dixon (2015) which suggest that the show contents should be exclusively creative, diverse, and accessible to all segments. Also, the reputation of show providers is considered significant for audiences. Additionally, the research of Bardiot (2021) and Walmsley (2019) states that audiences in the modern age require not only a typical performance, but an exceptional experience. Hence, it is undeniable that designing unforgettable experiences from the beginning phase is mandatory in cultural show business to attract audience engagement.

Cultural tourism, in new and innovative forms that incorporate knowledge and technology innovation, is crucial for the development of tourism and the economy of Thailand. It plays a significant role in elevating and advancing Thailand's tourism promotion towards a sustainable and creative economy in all dimensions, aligning with the National Strategy (5) on tourism issues (2018–2037). In Part 3, a sub-plan of the national strategy, enhancing the export and presentation of Thai culture through tourism formats that reach a wider audience is vital, especially in crisis situations. This presents a significant opportunity for Thailand's cultural tourism to contribute to the recovery of the country's tourism industry, strengthen its economy, and boost income in key tourist cities and neighboring regions once again. The studies on Thai cultural tourism are widely present such as Pookaiyaudom and

Tan (2020), Prapasawasdi et al. (2018), Kasemsarn and Nickpour (2017), Sukanthasirikul and Trongpanich (2016), but they tend to be central to cultural tourism activities from all parts of Thailand. Additionally, it is hardly seen in form of cultural shows, especially performed by LGBTQ+ performers. The conclusions of the research results in brief are presented below:

(1) The study of exploring alternative future scenarios for Thailand's cultural performance industry in the context of cultural exports and creative economic development.

The study of exploring alternative future scenarios for Thailand's cultural performance industry in the context of cultural exports and creative economic development reveals three scenarios:

(1) Mass Show Tourism Industry: This scenario envisions significant growth in Thailand's cultural and show business industry, with a large number of tourists and viewers traveling to Thailand to experience various cultural performances.

(2) Exclusive Show Tourism Industry: In this scenario, the industry maintains steady growth, offering unique and novel experiences to tourists and viewers. It goes beyond entertainment, involving tourists and viewers as active participants in the cultural shows and performances.

(3) New Mega Show Tourism Industry: This scenario depicts a decline and fragmentation of Thailand's cultural and show business industry, with increased emphasis on collaboration with various business sectors, both domestically and internationally, at regional and sub-regional levels.

(2) The study of Thailand's competitive potential in the entertainment industry through a comparison with the global entertainment industry.

Thailand's show business industry has its strengths and weaknesses, as well as unique opportunities and challenges compared to other countries. These differences may stem from variations in culture, political structures, and management practices. Based on the study's findings, it is clear that Thailand has the potential to compete in the global show business industry and export its cultural products. To do so, the country must enhance its internal systems and management for greater efficiency and strength. In the future, Thailand can undoubtedly become a recognized exporter of culture known worldwide.

(3) The study of the market needs and behaviors in Thailand's cultural performance industry for cultural exports and creative economy development.

In terms of the demography, it was found that the majority of Thai tourists who attend cultural performances are female. The average age is in the range of 21–30 years old. Most of them are single. The majority of Thai tourists in this industry hold bachelor's degrees and work for private companies. The average monthly income of these tourists is in the range of THB 10,001–20,000; they are also Buddhist, and originate from the central region of Thailand.

In terms of the behavior and psychology of Thai tourists in the context of theater performances, it is found that the main objective of traveling to watch shows is to create new experiences, and the key factor influencing the decision to attend a show is the uniqueness of the performance. Factors that discourage attendance include the perceived inconvenience and the cleanliness of the venue. The feeling that tourists find most desirable when attending shows is excitement. The types of Thai shows that tourists are interested in watching are those that incorporate innovation and modern technology. The majority of tourists often choose to recommend shows to others for future viewing and are likely to return to watch shows again in the future. Typically, they attend shows as a secondary activity in their travel plans.

Furthermore, in terms of the behavior and psychology of Thai tourists in the context of the online viewing of shows, it is found that the majority of Thai tourists do not choose to watch shows online because it is not worth it compared to attending shows in theaters. When watching online, they typically choose to watch through the company's website, and the average cost they are willing to pay is approximately THB 835 per session. The preferred payment method for online shows is bank transfer or mobile banking, and regarding the

genres or styles of shows viewed online, fantasy is the most popular. The primary reason for choosing to view shows online is relaxation and stress relief, while the main reason for choosing not to is the perceived complexity of the access process. The supporting factors for online show viewing are internet or Wi-Fi signals, and the feelings that tourists experience the most when watching online shows are enjoyment and stress relief.

In term of demography, it is found that the majority of international tourists who attend cultural performances are female. The average age is in the range of 41–50 years old. Most of them are married. The majority of foreigners in this industry hold bachelor's degrees and work for private companies. The average monthly income of these tourists is more than THB 50,001, and they are Christian.

In terms of the behavior and psychology of international tourists in the context of theater performances, it is found that the main objective of traveling to watch shows is to create new experiences, and the key factor influencing the decision to attend a show is the reputation of the show. The factors that discourage attendance include access difficulties. The feeling that tourists find most desirable when attending shows is excitement. The types of Thai shows that tourists are interested in watching are cultural shows. The majority of tourists often choose to recommend shows to others for future viewing and are likely to return to watch shows again in the future. Typically, they attend shows as a secondary activity in their travel plans.

In terms of the behavior and psychology of international tourists in the context of the online viewing of shows, it is found that the majority of international tourists choose to watch shows online because of their inability to travel to theaters. When watching online, these tourists typically choose to watch through an application, and the average cost they are willing to pay is approximately THB 1978 per session. The preferred payment method for online shows is debit or credit cards, and regarding the genres or styles of shows preferred for online viewing, action is the most popular. The primary reason for choosing to view shows online is to find new experiences, while the main reason for choosing not to is the perception of shows being too ordinary. The supporting factors for online show viewing are having the necessary equipment for viewing, and the feelings that they experience the most when watching online shows are enjoyment and stress relief.

(4) Presenting a strategy to enhance the competitiveness of the entertainment industry for cultural exports, foster a creative economy, and promote tourism in the 'Next Normal' era.

Based on the study's analysis and synthesis, the following are the key strategies for the development of Thailand's show business industry:

1. Accelerating the promotion of market exploration and diverse marketing strategies.
2. Elevating the physical viewing experience with a unique and appealing atmosphere.
3. Fostering and driving innovation in technology and digital technology for efficient show presentations.
4. Enhancing and promoting the integration of contemporary Thai culture into shows.
5. Enhancing and promoting the development of skilled personnel in the show business industry.
6. Strengthening the cooperation between sectors and relevant organizations in the show business industry.
7. Promoting policies and strategies aligned with the creative economy across all levels.
8. Promoting and implementing alternative future scenarios in the Thai show business industry to stimulate the creative economy and mitigate future impacts.
9. Improving the quality of services and activities linked to the show business industry beyond expectations.
10. Developing and utilizing effective business models that showcase the entire system efficiently.

Some research reveals that cultural and performing arts critically develop an influential soft power in particular countries; for instance, Nur Mutia and de Archellie (2023); Roongsangjun (2023); Praditsilp (2022) and Nye and Kim (2019). Those research outcomes

disclose that soft power is considered as the power of persuasion using non-coercive means in which culture is a fragment of the strategic drive. Culture requires means to transfer, and show business seems to be an effective one. Having strategies to manage the cultural exports via shows and performances would not only strengthen Thai cultural tourism, but also leverage economic competitiveness of Thailand on the global stage. In the past, the show business industry was viewed as a standalone industry, not relevant to the tourism industry, but they are now currently reliant on each other. Additionally, in the past, the tourism industry played an important role in attracting tourists to visit the destination and later decide to visit theaters to see the shows. On the contrary, at present, the show business industry, whether experienced on-site or online, can be a powerful stimulus to attract people to the destination and give opportunities to visit other tourist destinations.

7. Suggestions, Limitations, and Implications

7.1. Research Suggestions

1. Academic dimension: Public and private sector organizations, communities, educational institutions, professors, students, and other interested parties can utilize the research findings for learning and expanding the knowledge around the development of tourism within Thailand. This should align with and cater to the needs of both Thai and international tourists in the performing arts industry. It aims to foster understanding and create new knowledge to enhance Thailand's competitiveness in the performing arts industry. This, in turn, can be used to identify and address weaknesses in the industry, improve its competitive edge, and contribute to sustainable economic development and tourism in the country.

2. Policy and strategy dimension: Relevant government and private sector agencies can use research data on strategies to enhance the competitive potential of the performing arts industry for cultural export. These data can serve as a fundamental basis for policymaking, strategic planning, and upgrading the cultural export potential. It is aimed at developing a creative economy, promoting sustainable tourism, increasing income, and revitalizing the nation's economy. Additionally, this information can be used to support domestic resource development and encourage domestic spending, especially in times of crisis, instead of foreign tourism in the future.

3. Economic dimension: Government, private sector, and community organizations can leverage research data on the behavior and needs of both Thai and international tourists as well as the potential and readiness of the Thai performing arts industry compared to its foreign counterparts. This can be used as a guide for providing quality services and products that cater to a wider range of tourists. It presents an opportunity to increase income for businesses, distribute revenue to communities and areas, and contribute to the post-crisis economic recovery of the country.

4. Social, cultural, and community dimension: The communities and organizations involved should prioritize promoting the fusion of contemporary Thai cultural values with performances. This helps create an identity and cultural experience for tourists that align with the local and national context. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on creating a physically appealing and unique environment for tourists to experience these performances.

7.2. Limitations

1. The study and data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, an external factor that affected travel behavior and demands. After the spread of the COVID-19 virus decreased, the behavior and demands of both Thai and foreign tourists changed in more interesting dimensions. Therefore, in the future, more studies should be carried out on the behavior and demands of tourists in Thailand's performing arts industry.

2. Due to the severe spread of COVID-19 throughout Thailand, on-site data collection and subgroup meetings became inconvenient, leading to project delays. The

researchers attempted to adhere to the project timeline, but there were some delays at certain stages.

3.　Additionally, the show business industry itself once ignored the inclusion of cultural components in shows, claiming that the industry is modern. When globalization plays a role in connecting the world together, cultural factors become more in demand for the sake of the tourists. As a result, entrepreneurs in the show business industry are now showing more interest in these once-neglected cultural aspects, connecting culture into the shows and igniting the interest of tourists who wish to visit the destinations shown in the show scenes.

7.3. Implications

1.　This study may be extended to other areas as well, including those with renowned show industries such as Phuket, Samui, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai. This expansion aims to provide additional perspectives in developing strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the performing arts industry in the context of cultural exports. The intention is to foster a creative economy and promote tourism in the era of the 'new normal' in future tourism.

2.　Other tools may be used for data analysis, both in terms of statistical tools and collaborative data collection methods. These could include observations, group discussions, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), or identifying correlations with other data.

3.　A broader study may be conducted involving a more diverse group of data providers, covering various aspects of management, operational practices, and work procedures. This could encompass central and local government sectors, civil society organizations, associations, business owners, the general public, and local communities involved in the tourism sector, among others.

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