

REVIEW ARTICLE

Innovations for promoting Thailand's soft power

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Abstract. Currently, soft power is considered a crucial approach for countries around the world, serving as a tool to add value to products to stimulate and expand the economy of a country. For Thailand, soft power is given importance through government policy implementation, including driving the One Family One Soft Power (OFOS) initiative. One key factor for successful soft power policy implementation is the use of digital innovations and technologies to facilitate business operations, such as product and service development, customer service automation, new virtual world business ventures, or data analytics for customized service design. Digital innovation in Thailand represents a blend of digital innovation and technology to facilitate businesses and the soft power industry, utilizing "creativity and technological innovations" like Artificial Intelligence (AI), which aids in accessing Big Data for market trend analysis, developing movie or video recommendation systems, etc. The Metaverse creates virtual worlds for interaction, activities, and living through immersive technology, and Web 3.0, which is still under development, focuses on enabling customer participation in various activities as desired. However, for soft power to grow and be sustainable, the public sector should collaborate with the private sector in developing innovations ready for production or market entry, including creating a sandbox for testing and further developing research into products and services.

Keywords: Digital Innovation, Soft Power, Sustainable

1. Introduction

Soft power is a significant tool for economic value enhancement, especially during the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, evolving from an economic policy of creative economy, built upon intellectual property, education, and creativity, linked with culture, historical foundation, society's knowledge accumulation, technology, and innovation, to develop businesses, produce new goods and services that offer competitive advantage or societal value.

Globally, countries utilize culture as a key instrument in creating soft power, like South Korea, which emphasizes promoting modern cultural products to differentiate and add value, stimulating and expanding the economy. Korean culture and identity, along with a positive national image through dramas and K-Pop, have continuously driven the growth of the entertainment industry, beauty products, food, language, culture, and tourism worldwide.

Thus, adjusting cultural forms to align with the interests or values of target countries increases the chances of such culture becoming the soft power of that country. For Thailand, soft power is represented by Thainess, the foundation of Thai thoughts and practices, which has become a distinctive feature known internationally, connecting to the roots of society, culture, traditions, lifestyles, manners, and utilizing them in society, like Rattanakosin-era Thai art, Thai culture and traditions in lifestyles, Thai civilization, archaeology in Thailand, or Thai society's customs and festivals.

The government has set policies and pushed soft power as a flagship (Flagship) of the country through the "One Family One Soft Power" policy. Successful policy implementation rapidly requires both technology and innovation, experiences integrated with Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality, Blockchain Technology, Artificial Intelligence, or Machine Learning, creating a country's innovation cluster across various businesses or industries, leading to future development and expansion.

This article will discuss the following topics: the meaning and types of innovation, the significance and definition of soft power, soft

power promotion policies in Thailand, and the use of innovation to promote soft power policies in Thailand, providing information for designing and setting directions for product and service development, enhancing business operations efficiency, and creating new market opportunities in the future

2. The Definition of Innovation

Innovation is considered a crucial element in creating competitive potential as well as improving the quality of life of the population within a country. Thailand has developed and utilized innovations in every sector, including industry, business, and various

objectives. This has been possible through the cooperation of both the public and private sectors, which have propelled the creation of innovations within the country through a variety of activities, such as the government's drive with the Thailand 4.0 policy vision that focuses on creating an economy powered by innovation and using innovation to improve the quality of life, or the collaboration between the private sector in Thailand and foreign companies to develop innovations for products and services.

Furthermore, from studying the meaning of innovation in academic documents, it is found that there are various but similar definitions as follows in table 1.

Table 1. studying the meaning of innovation in academic documents

Academics (Year)	The Definition of Innovation
Jiraphan Jantawichian, 2016	Doing things in new ways may also mean changes in thinking, production processes, or organizations, whether the change comes from further development, adaptation, or processes. And in many fields, it is agreed that for something to be considered an innovation, it must be clearly new and also add value to various things.
Public Sector Innovation Center, Thailand, 2018	Changing concepts to be more innovative in order to enhance efficiency and achieve the goals of the system. Innovation involves new ideas, practices, or inventions that have not been used before, or the development and modernization of existing ones to be more effective. The application of innovation will result in work processes that are more efficient and effective than before.
Chuchat Phuangsomjit, 2019	New things, whether they are products, services, or processes, arise from the use of knowledge, experience, and creative thinking. These innovations are developed and lead to benefits for the economy and society. The new developments resulting from the use of knowledge, skills, experience, and creative thinking can be in the form of new products, new services, or new processes that generate economic and social benefits.
Panchanok Duang-udom, 2019	New things that arise from the use of knowledge, skills, experience, and creative thinking in development may manifest as new products, new services, or new processes that generate economic and social benefits.
National Innovation Agency, Thailand, 2019	The use of knowledge and creativity leads to changes that create value.

Table 1. (continued)

Academics (Year)	The Definition of Innovation
Utterback, 2004	Innovation is an advancement of inventions that becomes accessible and accepted by the market as new products or as new processes that are developed for the first time and generate economic benefits.
Lemon and Sahota, 2003	Innovation results from the application of knowledge about new markets and/or new technical knowledge that leads to the development of products.
Schilling, 2008	Innovation is about applying ideas practically to obtain something new or a new process.
European Central Bank, 2017	The development and application of concepts and technologies to improve products and services or to enhance their efficiency.

3. Results

The results of academic literature studies related to defining the term "innovation" reveal that there are various definitions. The key points of innovation can be summarized as follows in table 1. It can be concluded that innovation refers to something new that arises from the use of knowledge and creative thinking that is beneficial to the economy and society. Originating from human thought, it involves transforming existing things into something new and different by leveraging changes in the surrounding environment to create new opportunities. Additionally, there is the dissemination or transfer of these ideas to benefit society.

3.1 Types of Innovation

The classification of innovation can be divided into various types based on characteristics, scope, and the purpose of its application as follows Tidd and Bessant (2013) described the classification of innovation into four types (4Ps' Innovation) as follows:

1. Product Innovation refers to the changes in products or services, with the main variables important for the development of product innovation (Mingkwan Boonrod, 2018) being two factors:

- Technological opportunities, meaning the body of knowledge in science and technology, tools, equipment, and processes that enable the development of new products.
- Market demand, meaning the needs of users who desire new products and are ready to purchase or use, resulting in economic or social benefits for the innovator.

2. Process Innovation refers to the changes in the organizational methods of creating and delivering products or services.
3. Position Innovation refers to the changes in how a product or service is presented, which introduces it in a different environment from before.
4. Paradigm Innovation refers to the change in culture, organizational structure, or the fundamental conceptual model of how an organization operates (Mental Model).

In addition, the National Innovation Agency, Thailand (2019) described the key types of innovation in Thailand as follows:

1. Social Innovation refers to the application of new ideas and appropriate technologies to enhance the quality of life, community, and environment, leading to social equality and a tangible reduction of disparities. This is in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the years 2015-2030.
2. Area-based Innovation means creating a suitable ecosystem for a specific type of business in a particular area to support the growth of new innovators, entrepreneurs, startups, and researchers.
3. Mandatory Innovation refers to innovations that have a significant impact on national transformation, such as niche tech innovations requiring multidisciplinary knowledge and advanced technology. Five target industries and businesses specifically focused on include: 1) Tourism and service industry, 2) Health-related herbal industry, 3) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV application) business, 4) Manufacturing industry using IoT (Internet of Things) technology, and 5) Urban social food innovation business.

The study of innovations that promote soft power in Thailand, following government policy, focuses on driving the creative economy for sustainable development, necessitating the use of technology and digital innovation to develop products and services in line with market demands. Therefore, this study focuses on researching Product Innovation to promote soft power in Thailand and lead to economic or social benefits.

3.2 The Importance and Meaning of Soft Power

Soft Power, or the power of persuasion, is a concept by Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, who stated that soft power is the ability to dominate by getting other countries to cooperate or follow our desires without feeling coerced, and possibly even with

admiration due to shared benefits. (Boworn Tosri-ngam, 2015) Furthermore, soft power could be redefined as the power of Thai culture, which includes food and lifestyle, all aimed at fostering soft power. The fundamental factors of soft power are threefold: culture, political values, and foreign policy (Krittaporn Sa-Aeung, 2019).

1. Culture is a set of values and practices that give meaning to society and can be expressed in various forms. Generally, it is divided into high culture, such as literature, art, and education, and popular culture, which primarily focuses on entertainment (Joseph S. Nye, 2004: 11). The ways in which culture becomes known include trade, visits, communication, and exchanges.
2. Political values, if a country has political values that align with other countries, its soft power will increase. For example, during the 1950s, the United States still practiced racial segregation, which resulted in its soft power being less influential in the continent of Africa.
3. Foreign policies are another main factor with the potential for soft power. If a country has foreign policies that promote peace and respect for human rights, the chances of building soft power increase.

3.3 Soft Power Promotion Policies in Thailand

The past government policies have given importance to the promotion of soft power by establishing its connection with the national strategic plan, including:

1. The National Strategy (2018-2037), which focuses on enhancing competitiveness by increasing production productivity using science, technology, research, development, and Thai innovation across all sectors of production and service. This is intended to lead to value creation and innovation.

2. The Thailand 4.0 policy aims at developing new mechanisms for driving high-value cultural and creative industries and services.
3. The 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) encompasses the development of the bioeconomy, circular economy, and green economy, emphasizing the application of modern scientific and technological knowledge and creativity for economic value addition.

Currently, the government has pushed forward Thailand's soft power as stated in the policy declaration by Prime Minister Seta Thavisin to the Parliament on Monday, September 11, 2023. The policy supports the creation of creative power or the country's soft power to enhance and develop the knowledge, skills, and creativity of the Thai people to create value and income. This includes conserving, restoring, and further developing art, culture, and promoting local wisdom to create added value.

Following these policies, the National Soft Power Strategy Committee was established with the goal of driving projects, plans, and measures that have a high impact through Thailand's 11 targeted soft power industries. The focus is on intensifying the drive for Thailand's soft power to achieve tangible success in all related sectors, accelerating the One Family One Soft Power (OFOS) initiative, and Thailand Creative Content Agency (THACCA), aiming to upgrade the skills of 20 million Thais to high-skilled and creative labor. This initiative aims to generate at least 4 trillion baht per year, create 20 million jobs, foster sustainable economic growth, and position Thailand as a global leader in soft power. Approaches to achieving the goals according to the OFOS and THACCA policies have been divided into 3 steps: 1) Developing people through the process of promoting and nurturing potential, 2) Developing various soft power industries within the country across 11 sectors, including food, sports, festivals, tourism, music, books, film, games, art, design, and fashion, and 3) Taking Thailand's soft

power industries to the global stage, where related government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce, will collaborate with the private sector to introduce Thai soft power to the global market.

3.4 Using Innovation to Promote Soft Power Policy in Thailand

From the policies and goals for promoting soft power in Thailand, it has been found that a critical factor driving the process is the use of "creativity and technology" to enhance economic value, extend the cultural and intellectual capital to develop both income and the quality of life for people, and manage the creation of a "creative ecosystem" that fosters an atmosphere, environment, and social structure where creativity can freely emerge. This integrates work in arts, culture, science, research, and innovation, and extends cultural capital into the development of new forms of Thai cultural products, elevating Thailand's economy in the future.

Currently, it has been observed that the development of the soft power industry has increasingly utilized "technology and digital innovation" within the soft power industries. This is partly due to government policies and measures to support creative economy entrepreneurs to develop or keep pace with global technology timely and utilize it for income generation. The significant trends posing challenges and impacting the growth of the creative industry (Foresight) include Cross Industry, Generation Aging, Soft Power, Metaverse, and Artificial Intelligence, especially AI and the continuously growing popularity of the metaverse.

The study of technology and digital innovation that promotes soft power in Thailand found that most are product innovations (Product Innovation), which help improve or enhance the efficiency of products and services. In particular, technology and digital innovations that support the approach to driving the soft power industry include significant digital innovations.

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) or intelligent computer systems is a new technology

with diverse capabilities that is developing rapidly. AI plays a significant role in transforming society and the economy by developing computer systems capable of learning and automatically processing data. AI systems have the ability to understand data processing, design, and facilitate user operations, and can analyze data and make decisions like humans. Currently, the industry has applied AI for various purposes, such as accessing large datasets like Big Data to analyze market trends and enhance marketing strategies, developing recommendation systems for movies or videos that consumers regularly watch, or Siri and Alexa, which can take voice commands from users, assisting and answering various questions. Using AI to promote soft power creates connections between different data domains or dimensions, fostering a diversity of creativity. It enhances people's ability to rapidly expand and create multiple variations of creative works, such as songs, videos, images, and literature. This helps researchers or product and service designers to quickly experiment with new concepts without having to create actual prototypes, which can potentially save costs.

Examples of Using AI in Business and the Soft Power Industry

- Using tourism, by developing the AI platform "LanG-Ta" or Land of Gold-Talk (Kanyaphak, 2023), which collects historical data in the areas of Chumphon and Ranong. AI is used to develop an interactive system that narrates historical stories and presents various information about tourist attractions along the connecting routes of both provinces. It includes a game function on electronic media that allows tourists to enjoyably experience the historical stories of the attractions and makes it easier for youth to access historical information. It also promotes community involvement in the area in developing tourist spots to generate income from tourism.
- Use in esports, where the company Sportlyze develops sports and esports technology, focusing on AI, Machine Learning Technology, and Computer Vision to develop sports and esports.

This includes analyzing the gameplay of gamers or athletes and developing content for game analysis such as FIFA, Efootball, etc. (Kittitach, 2023).

- Use in the public sector, where the Department of Intellectual Property has introduced AI and Blockchain systems to help develop intellectual property systems for Muay Thai and Thai music, and to improve the efficiency of public services to be faster and more convenient.

2. The Metaverse is a space or world that merges the physical world with the virtual world, enabling people to meet, engage in activities, and live in the Metaverse regardless of their physical location or time. Activities such as working, attending meetings, participating in seminars, going to concerts, studying, and more can be done through the technology of creating images and virtual experiences. The two main technologies are AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality), and the integration of these technologies is known as "Extended Reality" or XR. The use of the Metaverse in business or the soft power industry includes designing products in the virtual world, such as fashion brands launching collections in the Metaverse as Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), creating immersive consumer experiences like choosing to shop in the virtual world but receiving real products, trying on clothes virtually, and accessing post-sales services. It also includes new business ventures in the virtual world, such as virtual tour guides, virtual stewards, and more.

Examples of Using the Metaverse in Business and the Soft Power Industry

- Use in the public sector, where the Fine Arts Department (Fine Arts Department, 2020) developed the AR Smart Heritage application that utilizes AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) technology to promote tourism. It visualizes historical parks in Thailand in 3D when tourists use their smartphones to view the actual sites, the historical parks before damage appear on their screens. It also developed a Virtual Reality tour system through VR glasses,

VR Unseen Heritage, which can be played through VR glasses connected to a website or a standard computer, displaying various paintings without having to visit the actual locations. All these efforts aim to enhance the quality of tourism in Thailand, advancing hand in hand with the preservation of cultural heritage through virtual technology. Additionally, Khon Kaen University (Khon Kaen University, 2023) has developed digital innovations from cultural capital in the virtual world "Molam Metaverse," which is a new learning space where everyone can explore the world of Molam through a virtual universe. It aims to open new spaces and channels for digital age learning using Metaverse mechanisms and principles. Users can access cultural learning resources on Molam anytime, anywhere virtually, and connect to the Cultural Map platform, a supply chain network related to business operations under the Molam cluster.

- Use in the gaming industry, by creating and developing Thai Town on Bitkub Metaverse (The Story Thailand, 2023), including those who own Meta ID of Metaverse Thailand land can link their land to Thai Town on Bitkub Metaverse. There's also the development of quest games, which can lead to various items between the real world and the virtual world.

3. Web 3.0 is the concept or format of websites that are being developed for the future, with the goal of moving towards a read/write/own paradigm where content creators own and control their own data, and have greater rights to decide how to use and manage their information. It involves decentralized applications (dApps) that operate on blockchain networks to deliver a personalized experience to users. Additionally, it enables the secure storage of various data on the system. Utilizing Web 3.0, such as creating sales channels in the virtual world, involves using Web 3.0 technology with AR/VR technologies, including integration with the Metaverse, to design new online sales

methods that allow interaction with customers remotely. Industries that can adapt this component into a differentiation strategy include the real estate sector, where potential customers or interested parties can experience the virtual atmosphere of a house or condominium model before the actual construction begins. However, Web 3.0 is still in the development process. Yet, with the rapid development and transformation of technology, along with interest in Web 3.0 from technology companies such as Apple, Amazon, and Google, it is expected that the use of Web 3.0 in business and industry will become widespread quickly.

Examples of Using Web 3.0 in Business and the Soft Power Industry

- Use in the entertainment and sports industry for organizing events, performances, exhibitions, concerts, or sports competitions, which allows the audience to directly participate in the design of activities or to create their own content to be featured within the event. The audience becomes an integral part of creating entertainment activities, as if they are the owners of the event.
- Selling artwork, such as paintings that are often unique in the world, can utilize NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology to confirm ownership. Additionally, the fashion business sector can use NFTs to replace subscription models that involve paying fees to platforms, turning them into a source of revenue instead.

In addition to supporting businesses or the software industry, digital innovation also fosters "Local Content," which Thailand is rich in across various dimensions such as arts, culture, heritage, architecture, cuisine, entertainment, music, films, sports, and more. These represent the "cultural capital" of the country. By leveraging 5 G technology, the dissemination of software in the entertainment industry is facilitated, which is considered a key industry that Thailand has the potential to further develop in the future.

4. Summary

Soft Power is a crucial tool that enhances economic value by integrating knowledge, creative thinking, cultural connections, technology, and innovation to create competitiveness or social value. In Thailand, the government has set policies to support the creation of the nation's soft power. The goal is to develop 11 soft power industries through the "One Family One Soft Power" (OFOS) project and the Thailand Creative Content Agency (THACCA). One key success factor in driving soft power policy is the use of digital innovation and technology to facilitate business operations, such as product and service development, automated customer assistance systems, new ventures in virtual reality, or data processing to understand and recommend customer services.

However, for continuous and sustainable expansion of soft power businesses or industries, the government should open opportunities for private sector participation in a collaborative and mutually supportive manner. This includes implementing measures to support businesses, such as tax reductions, legal amendments to accommodate innovative digital business practices, especially supporting research and development of innovations or technologies that promote soft power, including Metaverse, AI, Web 3.0, and other innovations. This will create a sandbox for businesses to develop products and services to enter the market and gain competitive advantage in future competitions.

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