ORIGINAL PAPER

The Role of Thai Foundations in Promoting Soft Power through Public Diplomacy

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Abstract: The Thailand Foundation promotes a deeper understanding of Thailand, its culture, heritage, and the core values of respect, compassion, and openness. This study examines the policies, planning, and activities of Thai foundations as key actors in driving Thailand's Soft Power policy through public diplomacy. Utilizing qualitative research methods, the study involved in-depth interviews with officials from Thai foundations, along with an analysis of documents and information available both online and offline. The findings reveal that Thailand's Soft Power policy is advanced through public diplomacy in various ways. Thai foundations frequently promote cultural, educational, and social initiatives on an international scale, highlighting Thailand's rich heritage, traditions, and values. These efforts contribute to shaping a positive global image of the country, in line with soft power principles. Foundations engage in cultural exchanges, provide scholarships, and support international events that showcase Thai culture, cuisine, art, and tourism. In doing so, they enhance Thailand's global influence through non-coercive means, fostering goodwill and mutual understanding.

Keywords: Thailand foundation, Public diplomacy, Soft power, Thai cultural

1. Introduction

A nation may frequently secure favorable outcomes in international politics when other states are motivated to align with its leadership, driven by admiration for its values, the desire to emulate its model, and the aspiration to achieve comparable levels of prosperity and openness (Nye, 2019). The concept of "soft power," introduced by Harvard Professor Joseph Nye, is highly valuable when properly understood. Nye defines soft power as a nation's ability to attract and influence others, in contrast to the coercive nature of hard power, which is derived from military or economic strength (Rugh, 2017). Based on Nye's concept of soft power, the primary goal often appears to be promoting politics and democracy. However, the objective of the Thai Foundation is more focused on cultivating admiration and affection for Thailand among foreign audiences, aiming to create a community of international supporters. This study examines Public Diplomacy in relation to the Thai government's policy aimed at fostering the country's creative power, also known as Soft Power. It provides a framework for enhancing the creative capacities of the Thai population to generate value and income, strengthen the nation's competitiveness, and elevate Thailand's leadership position on the global stage. These efforts are expected to contribute to economic growth and international trade (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023). The research specifically explores the role of a Thai foundation in advancing the successful development of Soft Power by employing public diplomacy as a strategic tool for achieving this goal.

The Thailand Foundation engages in public diplomacy to foster goodwill and strengthen relationships with people worldwide, while identifying areas of cooperation based on mutual interests. Its initiatives include promoting a deeper understanding of Thailand and its people through programs in Thai studies, cultural exchanges, and the dissemination of Thai culture, heritage, and values, often referred to as "Thainess." Additionally, the

Foundation offers online Thai language courses for non-native speakers to further enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding (Thailand Foundation, 2024).

The Thai foundation has acknowledged the growing scope of diplomatic activities and, as a result, has placed increased emphasis on and taken concrete measures to implement public diplomacy. This strategy was subsequently integrated into the nation's foreign policy. The government has established communication channels with the public by collaborating with private organizations and regional partners, facilitating the exchange of information with citizens. Public diplomacy has been employed alongside efforts to enhance the country's soft power by leveraging national resources, including culture, values, and foreign policy. These assets have been mobilized through public diplomacy to foster diplomatic relations by sharing and promoting the nation's history, traditions, culture, art, values, policies, and vision through direct communication with international audiences. The objective is to strengthen diplomatic relations, promote mutual understanding, build trust within the international community, and expand global influence. Amidst the shifting paradigms of diplomacy, a country can exert influence on others without constraint, shaping public opinion and fully leveraging public sentiment. This influence extends not only to its own citizens but also to those of other nations. Since 2010, public diplomacy has undergone significant development. The government has made concerted efforts to advance public diplomacy, and in August 2017, Thailand enacted the Public Diplomacy Act, accompanied by the creation of a master plan and action plan. The Thailand Foundation has collaborated with various countries at both bilateral and multilateral levels to promote public diplomacy initiatives, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serving as the primary leader. A diverse array of public diplomacy activities has been implemented, including the

exchange of information, culture, values, and education, to strengthen international relations and foster engagement with individuals and non-state actors. Thailand has categorized public diplomacy into three distinct forms: 1) cultural public diplomacy, 2) policy-based public diplomacy, and 3) knowledge-based public diplomacy. The researchers have recognized the necessity of studying public diplomacy as one of Thailand's foreign policy tools used to mobilize the country's resources to build its soft power. This is in alignment with the country's strategies and objectives. The study focuses on the public diplomacy activities of the Thai foundation, which serve as a concrete effort to enhance Thailand's soft power.

1.1 The research objective

The research objective is to study the approach of the Thailand Foundation in advancing Thailand's soft power policy through the use of public diplomacy.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is the practice by which a country communicates and builds relationships with foreign publics to advance its foreign policy goals. It has evolved from traditional, government-led communication to a more inclusive model involving non-state actors, media, and civil society. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which focuses on governments, public diplomacy targets the general public in foreign countries through tools like cultural exchanges, international broadcasting, and digital diplomacy (Gilboa, 2008).

1.2.2 Evolution and Key Concepts

Public diplomacy first gained prominence during the Cold War as a method for the U.S. and the Soviet Union to influence global public opinion. The United States, in particular,

utilized agencies such as the United States Information Agency (USIA) to broadcast news and information to foreign audiences (Cull, 2009). Over time, the concept expanded beyond mere propaganda to involve dialogue and engagement to foster mutual understanding (Nye, 2004).

In the 21st century, with the rise of social media and global interconnectedness, public diplomacy has transformed into "digital diplomacy," where governments utilize online platforms to reach and engage foreign publics (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). Digital diplomacy enhances the scope and speed at which public diplomacy can be conducted, enabling more immediate reactions and interactions with foreign publics.

1.2.3 Actors and Tools of Public Diplomacy

Traditionally, governments were the primary actors in public diplomacy. However, non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and even influential individuals now play a substantial role in shaping international perceptions (Melissen, 2005). These actors employ various tools, including international media channels, public events, and educational exchanges, to enhance a country's image and reputation abroad.

Cultural diplomacy, a subset of public diplomacy, is also significant in this context. Through the promotion of cultural values and practices, countries can create a favorable image and foster goodwill with foreignn publics. The Fulbright Program, for instance, is an example of successful cultural diplomacy that has been instrumental in fostering educational and cultural exchange between the U.S. and other countries (Snow & Taylor, 2009).

1.2.4 Challenges and Criticisms

While public diplomacy offers numerous benefits, it also faces challenges. The credibility of the message and the messenger is critical in public diplomacy (Entman, 2008). Countries perceived as manipulating information for political gain may lose the trust of foreign publics, rendering their efforts ineffective. Furthermore, public diplomacy efforts can be seen as paternalistic if they fail to engage in two-way dialogue and instead simply broadcast messages without considering the perspectives of the audience (Zaharna, 2010).

1.2.5 Future Directions

As digital technologies advance, public diplomacy is expected to become more interactive and participatory. Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data will play key roles in helping governments understand foreign public sentiment. Additionally, global challenges like climate change and pandemics will push public diplomacy to involve global partnerships with international organizations and grassroots movements, expanding beyond just state actors (Pamment, 2013).

1.2.6 Soft Power

Soft power, a concept coined by Joseph Nye in the late 20th century, refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. It is based on the appeal of a nation's culture, political values, and foreign policies, which draw others to adopt favorable views or cooperate willingly. Soft power contrasts with hard power, which relies on military force and economic sanctions (Nye, 2004). Over the years, soft power has gained prominence in international relations, especially as global interconnectivity and media have made cultural and value-based diplomacy more impactful.

Soft power primarily rests on three pillars: culture, political values, and foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in showcasing a nation's way of life, creativity, and entertainment, which can positively shape foreign perceptions (Bound et al., 2007). Popular media, music, education, and art are some of the tools countries use to project their

culture globally. For example, Hollywood movies have long served as an instrument of American soft power, presenting the U.S. as a land of freedom and opportunity.

Political values are another key component of soft power. Nations that uphold democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are often seen as legitimate and attractive models for other states. When these values are consistently demonstrated, they contribute to the nation's soft power. However, inconsistency between a country's domestic policies and its international image can undermine its soft power influence (Ikenberry, 2005).

Lastly, foreign policies that are perceived as legitimate and aligned with global interests, such as development aid or peacekeeping missions, enhance a country's soft power (Nye, 2004). Nations that are seen as cooperative and constructive actors in the global arena, working on issues like climate change or poverty reduction, can strengthen their appeal and influence.

1.2.7 Soft Power in Practice

Countries like the United States, Japan, and France have long used soft power to build alliances and promote their national interests. For instance, Japan's "Cool Japan" strategy highlights its culture, including anime, fashion, and cuisine, as a soft power tool to promote a favorable image globally (McGray, 2002). Similarly, South Korea's promotion of K-pop and Korean dramas has significantly boosted its international image, a phenomenon often referred to as the "Korean Wave" or Hallyu (Jang & Paik, 2012). Additionally, educational exchanges and programs such as Fulbright scholarships or China's Confucius Institutes offer another avenue for enhancing soft power. These initiatives provide opportunities for foreigners to experience a nation's culture and values firsthand, often fostering long-term positive relationships (Nye, 2008).

1.2.8 Challenges to Soft Power

Despite its many advantages, soft power has limitations. Its success depends heavily on the credibility of the source. If a nation is seen as hypocritical, such as promoting democracy abroad while suppressing it at home, its soft power can be diminished (Entman, 2008). Additionally, soft power operates in a crowded global arena where competing narratives from other states can dilute its impact. Furthermore, soft power is often difficult to measure, making it challenging for policymakers to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives. While military and economic power have clear metrics, such as troop numbers and GDP, the influence of soft power is more subjective, as it deals with attitudes, opinions, and cultural shifts (Nye, 2008).

Moreover, global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and terrorism require collective international responses, giving countries that contribute to solving these issues additional soft power. Nations that position themselves as leaders in promoting global public goods can gain influence and strengthen their global standing (Nye, 2011).

1.2.9 How public diplomacy builds soft power?

Public diplomacy employs various tools to build soft power, such as cultural programs, educational exchanges, international broadcasting, and strategic communication. Media and digital diplomacy also play a significant role. With the rise of global connectivity and social media, nations have more avenues to disseminate information and promote positive narratives. Successful public diplomacy campaigns engage foreign audiences in meaningful ways, contributing to the nation's soft power by portraying its policies, ideals, and culture in a favorable light (Zaharna, 2010).

1.2.10 Impact of Public Diplomacy on International Relations

Countries that effectively leverage public diplomacy can enhance their soft power, resulting in more favorable diplomatic outcomes. Positive public opinion can influence foreign governments' policy decisions. For instance, countries perceived as leaders in innovation, human rights, or environmental sustainability are more likely to gain international support for their positions on global issues (Nye, 2011). Public diplomacy facilitates the development of this positive image by fostering trust and dialogue between nations and their citizens.

However, it is crucial to note that public diplomacy efforts must be consistent with a country's actions. Mismatches between what a nation promotes and its actual policies or behavior can erode credibility and diminish its soft power. As Nye (2008) suggests, credibility is a key asset in soft power, and public diplomacy efforts must maintain integrity to be effective.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015), focusing on principles and concepts related to the Thailand Foundation's approach in advancing Thailand's soft power policy through public diplomacy. The research procedure is as follows:

1. In-depth interviews with key informants, selected through purposive sampling, including the secretary of the Thailand Foundation and personnel involved in soft power policy implementation.

2. Analysis of information and documents related to soft power activities conducted by the Thailand Foundation, collected from Foundation documents and website content. The analysis involves synthesizing, summarizing key points, and recording data in a document analysis form created to address the following issues: the goals and mission of the Thailand Foundation concerning soft power, the core pillars of soft

power development, strategies for creating distinctive soft power, and soft power activities.

3. Results

3.1 The goals and mission of the Thai Foundation.

The goals are to enhance the understanding of Thailand, Thai culture, and the Thai people, while fostering trust, strengthening relationships, and expanding collaborative networks at the public level. In pursuit of these objectives, the foundation is committed to promoting and preserving Thai cultural heritage, language, and spiritual values. Additionally, it plays a key role in organizing and supporting exchange and orientation programs to further cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

The mission of the Thai Foundation encompasses two primary objectives: 1) to engage in public diplomacy on behalf of Thailand, fostering goodwill and friendship globally, while identifying areas for cooperation grounded in mutual interests; and 2) to promote a deeper understanding of Thailand and its people through academic programs in Thai studies, cultural exchange initiatives, and the preservation of Thai culture, heritage, and values, including the distinctive concept of "Thainess." Additionally, the foundation offers online Thai language courses for non-native speakers to further facilitate cross-cultural communication and understanding.

3.2 The core pillars of soft power development.

The core pillars of the Thai Foundation's efforts to promote Thainess through soft power activities are based on three intrinsic characteristics or values of Thainess and the Thai people: Respect, Compassion, and Openness. These values are essential for understanding Thai culture, as they have been deeply ingrained in Thai society for generations, influencing almost every aspect of

daily life. The Thai Foundation seeks to emphasize these values through its initiatives, which are structured around four key pillars. These are as follows:

1) Culture and Heritage. The Thailand Foundation curates, publishes, and compiles a range of articles, videos, and other multimedia content to offer comprehensive insights into Thai culture and heritage, specifically in English. This effort is aimed at enhancing global access to the principles and origins of Thainess. The content is systematically categorized into various thematic groups, including Art and Craftsmanship, Thai Cuisine, Music and Dramatic Arts, Local Wisdom, Muay Thai, Traditions and Festivals, Literature and Folklore, and Contemporary Culture. For example, an online lesson on Thai dancer which has demonstrated in figure 1.

2) Thai Studies and Exchange Programs. The Thailand Foundation organizes and supports exchange programs aimed at fostering mutual understanding, trust, cooperation, and synergies between Thailand and the global community. To achieve this goal, the Foundation is dedicated to connecting Thai citizens with individuals from around the world, including students, researchers, youth, volunteers, and expatriates. These initiatives encompass a wide range of activities, such as cultural courses, academic forums, orientation programs for expatriates in Thailand and exchange students, scholarships for international students, exchange programs, and volunteer projects in various regions globally. Example, Thailand Foundation welcomed German exchange students of the "IAAW Buriram_Project@HU-Berlin." During the meeting, both parties exchanged ideas about Thai culture, Thai society, and intercultural understanding that has demonstrated in figure 2.

Figure 1. Thai dancer (www.thailandfoundation.or.th)

3) Thai Language Course. The Thailand Foundation offers free online Thai language courses, available in more than 13 foreign languages, to enhance communication between foreigners and Thai speakers. These programs are specifically designed to meet the growing global demand for Thai language learning, catering to a diverse audience including students, business professionals, diplomats, travelers, long-term residents, and retirees who engage with Thailand in various capacities. Through these courses, participants gain the ability to communicate in everyday Thai conversations, supported by instructional videos and e-books.

4) Spiritual Values and Meditation. The Thailand Foundation seeks to provide essential resources on the influence of religion on Thai society, beginning with Buddhism, the faith practiced by over 90 percent of the population. In response to the growing global interest in meditation, the Foundation also offers scientifically-based guidelines for practicing Buddhist meditation. These guidelines are designed to enhance mental health, improve concentration, and support individuals in

addressing the challenges of modern life. Ultimately, the practice aims to guide individuals towards achieving peace of mind.

Figure 2. Thai Studies and Exchange Programs (www.thailandfoundation.or.th)

3.3 Strategies for creating distinctive soft power.

The public diplomacy strategy of the Thai Foundation is to build a fan base for Thailand. This means making foreign audiences aware of, understand, and appreciate Thailand. Ultimately, if foreigners come to know and like Thailand, the result will be a love or admiration for the country without any specific reason. Therefore, the fan base building strategy has been implemented under three key concepts, which are: Respect, Compassion, and Openness. Respect, as demonstrated by the Thai people, is deeply rooted in their kind-hearted nature, characterized by empathy and thoughtfulness. Thai individuals consistently seek to assist others without any expectation of reciprocation. Their warmth and approachability are evident in their daily interactions, where they frequently prioritize the well-being of others over their own. This genuine kindness is a fundamental aspect of their character, reflected in their readiness to offer support, both in small gestures and more significant acts of assistance. Compassion, it is a phenomenon that the love for making merit is inherently present in each individual, instilled by family and Buddhism. This has resulted in Thai people being notably characterized by their high level of kindness and generosity. Openness, who freely gives their time, resources, or kindness to others without expecting anything in return. They are often compassionate, willing to help, and considerate of others' needs, whether through acts of charity, support, or simply offering their attention and care. Generosity can also extend to emotional support, sharing knowledge, or being patient and understanding in various situations.

4. conclusions

From the study results, it can be concluded that the Thai Foundation has utilized public diplomacy through various soft power activities, which are explained and presented as shown in Figure 3.

In figure 3, it illustrates the promotion of activities related to soft power by using public diplomacy as a tool to build knowledge, understanding, and appreciation among foreigners towards Thailand. The core elements of Thainess, which include Respect, Compassion, and Openness, serve as the foundation for this effort. These activities are communicated and carried out through online platforms, such as the Thai Foundation's website, and through on-site events.
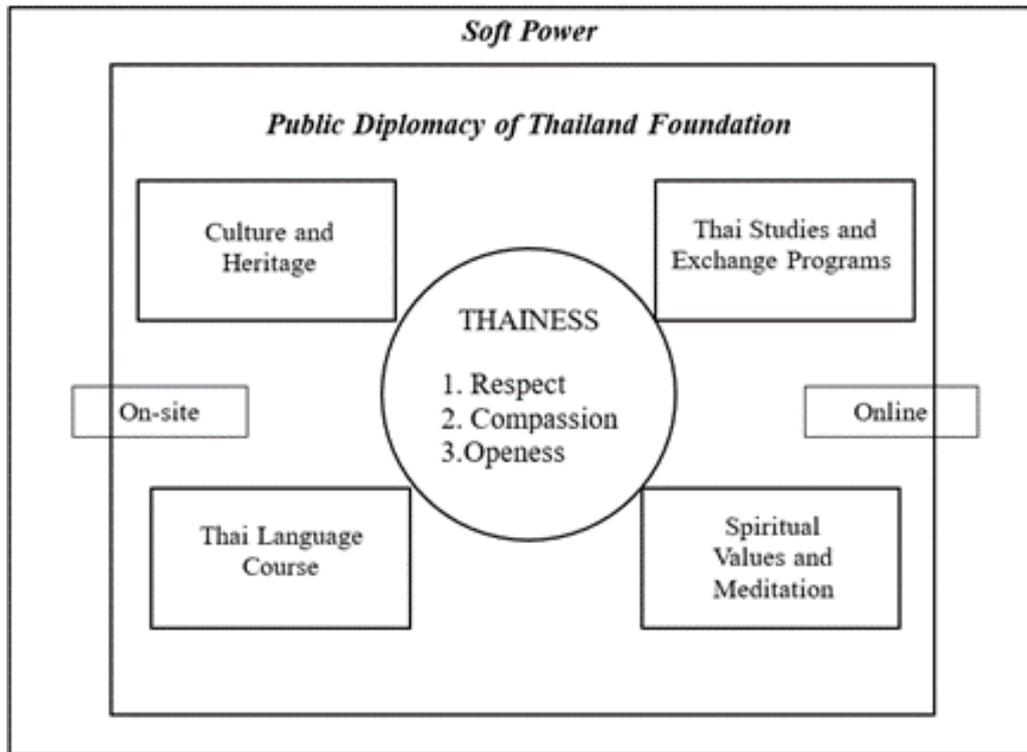
Figure 3 The relationship between public diplomacy and soft power in the role of the Thailand Foundation

5. Discussion

The use of public diplomacy to foster a foreign fan base that understands and appreciates Thailand is rooted in the concept of "Thainess," which is characterized by respect, compassion, and openness. Kindness, in this context, refers to sincerity that transcends self-interest, emphasizing empathy and recognizing the value of others. It involves caring for others, being attentive to their well-being, and readily offering assistance and support. A kind individual not only gives and volunteers to benefit society but also shares, sacrifices personal comfort, and empathizes with those in distress. These qualities of kindness align with the traits of generosity and compassion, which are strongly associated with the Thai people, shaped by their cultural, religious, and societal influences. This is largely due to the fact that Thai society is predominantly Buddhist, with Buddhism serving as a defining aspect of its cultural identity. For generations, Thai Buddhists have adhered to the teachings of Buddhism as the guiding principles for their

way of life (PhaThongchareon Oppasunto, 2024). This religious influence has shaped the distinctive temperament and personality of the Thai people, setting them apart from other nationalities. For instance, the characteristic cheerful smiles, friendliness toward all, and warm hospitality extended to strangers are manifestations of Thai kindness. Conflicts between Thais and foreigners are relatively rare, This phenomenon can be attributed to the deep-rooted and profound devotion to Buddhism among the Thai population, which has long played a significant role in shaping the social and cultural structure of the country. The majority of Thais practice Buddhism, adhering to its three core pillars: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Through this practice, they cultivate a mindset that promotes personal well-being and contributes to the broader well-being of Thai society (Suwan, 2020). These distinctive traits can be strategically employed in public diplomacy efforts to enhance understanding and admiration of Thailand among foreign audiences.

The concept of Soft Power has recently garnered significant attention in Thailand, prompting discussions on various fronts. These include understanding its true nature, exploring strategies for its effective expansion, and engaging in theoretical debates within academic circles regarding possible revisions and its application in countries of different sizes. This heightened interest follows the introduction of the theory by Joseph Nye (2004), who pioneered the concept. The rise of Soft Power, particularly as a theoretical construct, indicates a substantial evolution in international relations, leading to the emergence of new diplomatic strategies previously unfamiliar (Alexander, 2020). Nye (2008) identified public diplomacy as a crucial mechanism for operationalizing Soft Power. Public diplomacy refers to interactions not directly aimed at foreign governments but rather focused on individuals and non-state actors. Beyond merely creating a positive image of a country, its goal is to cultivate a favorable long-term environment conducive to future foreign policy objectives (Cull, 2009).

Historically, diplomacy was the domain of elites, characterized by specific techniques, including language use, demeanor, personal relationships, and belief systems. These practices developed alongside the formation of nation-states and a growing understanding of territorial boundaries. However, over time, diplomacy has expanded beyond this exclusive sphere, allowing a broader range of actors to participate (Wiseman, 2010). This expansion has been driven by the increasing interconnectedness of the modern world, facilitated by advancements in internet technology, travel, and communication methods that have become more accessible and cost-effective.

Consequently, diplomacy now operates on a global stage where not only elites but individuals from various sectors can contribute. This shift enhances the role of Soft Power

through public diplomacy, enabling countries to extend their influence more broadly (Melissen, 2005). When public diplomacy is effectively implemented, it can lead to the enactment of policies or laws in the target country that align with the needs of civil society (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008). In case of Turkey leverages its history, culture, and geography to enhance its soft power globally, especially in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Islam, 2021). Its public diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and cultural influence position Turkey as a growing global player. In Thailand, the Thai Foundation has played a pivotal role in advancing public diplomacy by leveraging Soft Power through online media activities and special events, such as seminars and conferences, to disseminate its influence. In addition to the aforementioned outcomes, public diplomacy also helps to enhance Thailand's positive image. Moreover, public diplomacy promotes a country's image by fostering understanding and positive relationships between the nation and foreign publics. It focuses on attraction through culture, values, and policies rather than coercive power. This includes cultural events, media outreach, and educational exchanges, all of which help create a positive perception and enhance the country's credibility. Furthermore, public diplomacy builds long-term positive relationships, facilitating smoother implementation of foreign policies (Gregory, 2008; Zaharna, 2010).

Public Diplomacy as a Tool of Soft Power
Public diplomacy is the vehicle through which a nation's soft power is communicated and exercised. While soft power focuses on the ability to attract and co-opt, public diplomacy represents the active processes and initiatives aimed at reaching foreign audiences and shaping their perceptions. Through public diplomacy, governments project their cultural, political, and societal values, which are essential components of soft power (Cull, 2009). For example, cultural programs, international educational exchanges, and media

outreach are classic public diplomacy tools that help countries exert soft power by enhancing their attractiveness and credibility on the global stage.

Thailand's soft power strategy, driven through public diplomacy, emphasizes the projection of "Thainess," which is characterized by core values such as respect, compassion, and openness. This strategy is implemented through initiatives led by organizations such as the Thailand Foundation, which promotes cultural exchange, online Thai language education, and Buddhist-based meditation programs to foster mutual understanding and emotional connection with international audiences. In comparison, Vietnam adopts a form of heritage diplomacy by leveraging its rich cultural assets and UNESCO-designated sites, including Hoi An Ancient Town, My Son Sanctuary, and the Complex of Hue Monuments, to assert national identity and enhance its international cultural presence. While Thailand's approach focuses on cultural values and people-to-people engagement, Vietnam strategically mobilizes its historical heritage to build cultural influence and achieve soft power recognition on the global stage.

6. Recommendation

Based on the detailed goals, mission, core pillars of soft power development, and strategies provided, the following recommendations can help the Thai Foundation further enhance its efforts in building soft power and promoting Thailand's global image.

6.1 Refine and Focus the Goals and Mission

The Thai Foundation's mission to promote Thai culture, values, and heritage while fostering global goodwill is commendable. However, to increase the effectiveness of these efforts, the Foundation should clearly differentiate between short-term and long-term objectives. For instance, the long-term goal of

promoting a deeper understanding of Thailand and its people can be broken down into more specific initiatives such as:

- Increasing international collaborations in specific fields, such as cultural research or sustainable tourism.
- Expanding the network of cultural ambassadors to act as liaisons in different countries.

The Foundation should also continuously assess how their activities align with these objectives, measuring success through participation rates in exchange programs, the reach of online Thai language courses, or feedback from cultural participants.

6.2 Expand Digital and Online Engagement

With the growing importance of digital diplomacy, it is crucial for the Foundation to maintain and expand its online presence. The current offering of online Thai language courses and digital content is excellent, but further enhancement in the following areas could bolster these efforts:

- Interactive Cultural Content: Develop interactive platforms such as virtual reality (VR) experiences that allow users to explore Thai cultural heritage sites, festivals, or even participate in virtual cooking lessons or Muay Thai training sessions. This will enhance user engagement and immersion in Thai culture.
- Social Media Campaigns: Increase the use of social media platforms for targeted campaigns, engaging both younger audiences and those unfamiliar with Thailand. This can involve creating cultural challenges or trends, such as inviting users to share their experiences of Thai food or festivals, encouraging user-generated content.

6.3 Foster Deeper Academic Collaborations

While the Foundation already offers Thai studies and exchange programs, these initiatives could be further enhanced by:

- Expanding Collaborative Research Programs: Collaborating with global universities and think tanks to produce and promote research on Thai culture, history, and society. These collaborations can further promote academic interest in Thailand and enhance the country's reputation as a hub for cultural and social studies.
- Bilateral Cultural Research Grants: Offering funding for collaborative cultural research projects between Thai scholars and their counterparts from around the world would not only strengthen ties but also position Thailand as a leader in cross-cultural research.

6.4 Leverage Spiritual Values and Meditation

The Foundation's emphasis on spiritual values and meditation aligns well with global trends, especially the increasing interest in mental health and mindfulness practices. The following recommendations could help the Foundation strengthen its position in this area:

- Global Wellness Programs: Partnering with international wellness organizations, mental health institutions, or corporate wellness programs to incorporate Thai Buddhist meditation practices could enhance Thailand's image as a leader in mental and spiritual well-being.
- Cross-Cultural Spiritual Retreats: Developing spiritual and meditation retreats that blend Buddhist principles with modern health sciences could attract a global audience. These retreats could offer immersive experiences in Thai temples or countryside settings, appealing to individuals seeking mindfulness and relaxation.

6.5 Strengthen the Fan Base and Public Diplomacy Strategy

The Foundation's focus on building a global fan base through respect, compassion, and openness is highly strategic. To enhance this approach:

- Cultural Ambassadors and Influencers: Engage cultural ambassadors and influencers from various countries to promote Thai culture, language, and values. These ambassadors can help bridge the gap between Thailand and foreign publics by sharing personal experiences and promoting Thai content on their platforms.
- Collaborative Cultural Events: Hosting or supporting international cultural events, such as Thai film festivals, culinary events, or Thai arts and crafts exhibitions, will enable the Foundation to showcase Thailand's soft power to a global audience in diverse regions.

6.6 Strengthen Metrics and Evaluation Systems

To measure the success and reach of its soft power initiatives, the Thai Foundation should develop clear metrics that include both quantitative and qualitative data. For example:

- Participant Feedback Surveys: Collecting feedback from exchange program participants and online course attendees can provide insight into areas of success and improvement.
- Media Reach and Engagement: Analytics: Analyzing social media engagement metrics, such as shares, likes, and comments, can help evaluate the global impact of digital campaigns. Additionally, tracking international media coverage of Thai cultural events will give a clearer picture of public diplomacy successes.

7. Future Study

In order to further enhance the Thai Foundation's soft power efforts and public diplomacy strategies, the following areas of future study are recommended. These studies will provide valuable insights for improving the effectiveness and reach of the Foundation's initiatives while adapting to global trends and challenges.

7.1 Impact of Digital Diplomacy on Cultural Perception

With the increasing shift towards digital platforms, future studies should examine the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in shaping global perceptions of Thailand. This includes investigating how digital campaigns, social media engagement, and online cultural content (e.g., videos, virtual tours, and interactive media) influence foreign audiences' understanding and appreciation of Thai culture. Research should also explore how digital diplomacy strategies compare to traditional methods, such as in-person cultural exchanges and educational programs.

Suggested Focus:
- Measuring the engagement and long-term cultural impact of digital diplomacy versus traditional public diplomacy.
- Understanding the role of different social media platforms in promoting Thai culture globally.

7.2 Soft Power Measurement and Assessment

A key challenge in soft power development is accurately measuring its impact. Future research could focus on developing metrics and methodologies to assess the effectiveness of soft power initiatives, particularly those related to public diplomacy and cultural promotion. This study could look at how to quantify cultural influence and develop indicators that reflect changes in international perceptions,

media coverage, and the global reputation of Thailand.

Suggested Focus:
- Creating a framework for soft power metrics that incorporates both quantitative (e.g., number of participants in cultural programs, media reach) and qualitative data (e.g., public perception surveys).
- Conducting case studies on countries that have successfully measured and enhanced their soft power.

7.3 Cultural Diplomacy in Emerging Market

While the Thai Foundation has primarily focused on global outreach, future studies could investigate the potential for cultural diplomacy to influence emerging markets, particularly in regions with growing economic and political significance such as Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. These studies could explore how cultural diplomacy can foster deeper economic, social, and political ties with emerging markets, and how Thailand's cultural values, such as Thainess, can resonate in different cultural contexts.

Suggested Focus:
- Identifying cultural values or aspects of Thainess that are most appealing to emerging markets.
- Examining how Thailand's soft power initiatives can be adapted to the specific needs and preferences of different regions.

7.4 The Role of Language in Soft Power Development

Since language plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication, future research could explore the long-term impact of Thai language programs on enhancing Thailand's soft power. This could involve assessing the global demand for Thai language learning, the motivations of non-native speakers, and the effectiveness of

online Thai language courses in fostering deeper cultural understanding and connections.

Suggested Focus:
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Thailand Foundation's Thai language programs in terms of engagement, learning outcomes, and long-term cultural influence.
- Researching how multilingual language programs, including Thai, impact diplomatic and business relations with Thailand.

7.5 Spirituality and Soft Power Global Interest in Thai Buddhism and Meditation

Given the growing global interest in mindfulness and wellness, a future study could focus on the role of Thai spirituality, particularly Buddhism and meditation, in enhancing Thailand's soft power. Research could examine how spiritual values resonate with international audiences and contribute to positive perceptions of Thailand. This study could also explore the potential for Thailand to position itself as a global leader in mindfulness and mental health practices.

Suggested Focus:
- Investigating how Buddhist principles and meditation practices can be integrated into global wellness programs to strengthen Thailand's cultural influence.
- Studying the influence of Thailand's spiritual practices on its international image, particularly in regions with increasing interest in wellness and mental health.

7.6. The Impact of Global Challenges on Soft Power

Future research could explore how Thailand can use its soft power to address global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics,

and sustainability. This study could focus on how Thai cultural values, such as respect for nature and community, align with global movements toward sustainability and environmental protection. By positioning itself as a leader in these areas, Thailand can further enhance its soft power and global standing.

Suggested Focus:
- Examining how Thailand's cultural and spiritual values can be promoted as part of global sustainability efforts.
- Investigating the role of public diplomacy in fostering international cooperation on global challenges, with Thailand as a key player.

7.7 Longitudinal Studies on Cultural Exchange Impact

Finally, longitudinal studies should be conducted to examine the long-term impact of cultural exchange programs organized by the Thai Foundation. These studies could follow participants in cultural and academic exchanges to assess how their experiences with Thai culture influence their professional paths, diplomatic relations, and personal views of Thailand over time. Understanding these long-term effects could provide insights into how to optimize exchange programs for maximum soft power impact.

Suggested Focus:
- Tracking exchange program participants over time to assess the lasting effects of their exposure to Thai culture.
- Studying the role of cultural exchanges in building long-term diplomatic, academic, and business relationships.

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