

The Demands for Thai Arts and Cultural Activities: A Case Study of Thai People in Luleå, The Kingdom of Sweden

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Received: June 3, 2024

Accepted: July 30, 2024

Online Published: September 15, 2024

doi:10.5539/jel.v14n1p212

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v14n1p212>

Abstract

This research aims to 1) study the demands for Thai arts and cultural activities utilizing a case study of Thai people in the city of Luleå, Sweden, totalling 50 people. The result showed that the overall demand for Thai arts and cultural activities is at an extremely high level. The highest demand for Thai arts and cultural activities is traditional Thai dance performances, with an average demand rating of 4.43 (SD = 0.74); traditional Thai music, with an average of 4.42 (SD = 0.73); and traditional Thai craftsmanship also, with an average of 4.42 (SD = 0.73), respectively. 2) Guideline recommendations for organizing Thai arts and cultural activities should include the following activities: traditional Thai craftsmanship, traditional Thai food, regional Thai costumes in four regions, regional Thai dialects in four regions, traditional Thai dance performances, traditional Thai music, traditional Thai folk music/Mo Lam music, traditional Thai classical music singing, the art of decorating in Thai styles, and participation in Thai arts and cultural activities. This quantitative research collects data from a questionnaire of 50 individuals using statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Keywords: demands, Thai Arts and Culture, the Kingdom of Sweden

1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is an educational exploration of areas or regions with significant historical and cultural characteristics. It involves storytelling about societal and human development through the interconnectedness of history, culture, knowledge, and societal values through valuable architecture or natural environments that express the beauty and benefits derived from nature and serve as the reflections of ways of life across different periods such as economic, social structures, or cultural traditions. These become focal points to attract the interest of international tourists, particularly Americans and Europeans, eager to learn about cultural and historical heritage, visit architectural wonders, experience the way of life of people in each country, especially those in Asia and Africa, and purchase souvenirs crafted by local artisans. The type of tourism described is known as cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is an endeavour to seek new experiences, encompassing learning, experiencing, and admiring the uniqueness of cultures, historical values, ways of life, and the existence of other communities. It involves exploring cultural differences among societies, such as arts, architecture, archaeological sites, artefacts, narratives and historical values, ways of life, languages, costumes, foods, beliefs, religions, and traditions. These aspects serve as captivating elements for tourists, leading to sustainable tourism (Loysakdiwong, 2007).

Thai cultural activities, including performing arts, music, handicrafts, and various traditions, hold significant importance in many aspects of Thai society. These activities help preserve and promote the invaluable nature of cultural heritage. For national identity and fostering national pride, Thai culture serves as a representative of the distinctive identity and uniqueness of Thailand. Cultural activities help foster a sense of pride in the nation and cultivate a shared sense of identity among Thai people through the promotion of tourism and economics. Regarding economic and tourism promotion, Thai culture serves as a magnet for tourists from around the world. Cultural activities help promote tourism and generate income for the country. For societal and community development, Thai cultural activities also foster community relations, promote participation, health and well-being, and create a sense of ownership in their area. In regard to good health and well-being, performing arts and other cultural activities can help reduce stress, promote creativity, and enhance overall mental health. As it relates to understanding and harmonization, cultural activities can create understanding and unity among people from diverse backgrounds by showcasing the diversity and beauty of Thai culture. Cultural activities can be valuable

tools for the promotion of education and learning, helping people learn about the history, culture, and traditions of Thailand. Overall, Thai cultural activities are crucial for preserving the nation's identity, promoting tourism and the economy, fostering social and community development, and enhancing people's well-being.

Apart from its importance to people within the country, Thai culture plays a particularly significant role for Thais living abroad. Cultural heritage serves as a medium that creates identity and fosters pride, which makes Thai people unique from citizens of other nations. It helps Thai people living abroad feel like they're part of a community and have a clear identity and promotes participation in Thai cultural activities such as music performances and traditional dances. All of this enhances pride in being Thai and fosters a sense of connection to their homeland, linking them back to their Thai roots. Thai culture also promotes learning about Thai history and traditions and helps Thai people abroad better understand their own culture and feel more connected to their homeland, which lays the groundwork for building communities abroad and bringing Thai people together, fostering various cultural activities such as temple fairs and Thai musical performances, providing spaces for Thai people to socialize and build strong communities.

Today, Thai people are dispersed worldwide for various reasons, such as work, continuing education, and residence. One notable city where Thai people reside is Luleå, Sweden. Luleå is situated on the northern coast of Sweden and serves as the capital of Norrbotten County, the northernmost county in Sweden. Luleå has a population of 48,728 within the city limits (2018) and is the location of the Luleå Municipality, with a total population of 77,832. Luleå ranks as the 25th largest city in Sweden and is the largest city in Norrbotten County. The city boasts the seventh-largest port in Sweden for cargo transportation. Luleå is home to large-scale steel industries and is a hub for extensive research. Luleå University of Technology is one of Sweden's three universities of technology (the other two are KTH and Chalmers) and is the northernmost university in Sweden. The university has approximately 15,000 students. In 1805, Luleå had a population of only 947, but by 1865, it had succeeded in establishing Piteå as the main town in Norrbotten and had around 1,400 inhabitants. Then, in the 1860s, various industries began to take root in the city (The Kingdom of Sweden General Information, 2022).

Now, Luleå has been home to a large Thai community for over 20 years, making it easier for them to come together for various events on important occasions. This has led Thai people to recognize the importance of cultural aspects in different areas, prompting foreigners to accept and participate in their activities. On August 12, 2023, the Thai Association in Luleå, Sweden, sent an invitation to the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, to participate in their Thai Festival. The event featured various aspects of Thai culture, including traditional arts, cuisine, clothing, regional traditions, dialects, dance performances, traditional music, Mo Lam folk songs, and traditional Thai venue decorations, and promoted participation in Thai cultural activities. This event was highly successful; as a result, in 2024, the president of the Thai Association in Luleå, Sweden, extended another invitation to the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, to participate in the event once again.

2. Objectives

- 1) To study the demands for Thai cultural activities among the Thai people in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.
- 2) To recommend guidelines for organizing activities to promote Thai culture abroad.

3. Expected Benefits

- 1) Understanding the demand for Thai cultural activities among Thai people in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.
- 2) Obtaining guidelines for organizing activities to promote Thai culture abroad.

4. Scope of Research

1) Area

The research was conducted in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.

2) Time frame

Data collection took place at the Thai Festival 2023, held at Stadsparken Central Park in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, on August 12, 2023.

3) Content

This study aims to focus on the preferences of Thai people in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, regarding Thai cultural activities. The research findings will be used to improve and develop future cultural activities.

4) Population and Sample Group

The population and sample group for this study consisted of 50 Thai people in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden. The study used a questionnaire and simple random sampling method as the research instrument, targeting Thai individuals participating in the Thai Festival 2023 at Stadsparken Central Park in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.

5. Research Method

This research is quantitative, and the researchers have designed the study as follows:

Population and Sample

The sample group in this study was determined by the researchers, who calculated an appropriate sample size. The researchers did not have precise information on the population size. For data collection to conduct an appropriate statistical analysis method, the researchers have adopted the method of Thanin Silpcharu (Silpcharu, 2007), which collected data from 50 Thai people in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden using questionnaire and simple random sampling method as the research instrument, targeting Thai individuals participating in the Thai Festival 2023 at Stadsparken Central Park in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.

6. Research Instrument

The researchers used a quantitative research method, employing a questionnaire to obtain comprehensive and truthful data. The questionnaire was structured to align with the stated objectives and purposes. It consisted of three sections as follows:

Section 1: Personal information.

Section 2: Questionnaire regarding the demands for Thai cultural activities.

Section 3: Recommendations.

In evaluating the questionnaire responses, the researchers used a rating scale by dividing the interpretation range based on class intervals. The average score level in each interval will be calculated by using a formula based on the width of the interval (Silanoi, 2015) as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Formula} &= \frac{\text{Range of Data}}{\text{Number of class interval}} \\ &= \frac{\text{Upper Limit} - \text{Lower Limit}}{\text{Number of class interval}} \quad (1) \\ \text{Stand for} &= \frac{5 - 1}{5 - 1} \\ &= 0.80 \end{aligned}$$

Then, the values will be used to calculate the average score in order to apply criteria for interpreting data meaning as follows:

Highest demand rate	average score between 4.21–5.00
High demand rate	average score between 3.41–4.20
Moderate demand rate	average score between 2.61–3.40
Low demand rate	average score between 1.81–2.60
Lowest demand rate	average score between 1.00–1.80

Instrument validation

1) Validity

The questionnaire was presented to experts to examine content validity and adjusted based on their suggestions. The analysis of the results of content validity revealed an index of congruence (IOC) of 0.86 for the overall questionnaire. Only questions with an IOC value ranging from 0.5 to 1.00 were selected (Pipitkun, 2018).

2) Reliability

The questionnaire was tested on a population group similar to the sample studied, a total of 50 individuals. The data obtained were subjected to item analysis to find the overall reliability by using Cronbach's Reliability Coefficient Alpha (Thaweratana, 2000, p. 125), which was found to be .95.

7. Data Collection

The researchers collected data by themselves from Thai individuals participating in the Thai Festival 2023 held at Stadsparken Central Park in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden.

8. Data Analysis and Statistics

The researchers have checked for the completeness of the questionnaires and analyzed the data by using the statistical package programs as follows:

- 1) Independent variables regarding the personal factors of the questionnaire respondents, which require information on the number of samples categorized by characteristics only. The statistics used in the study are frequency and percentage (Vanichbuncha, 2012).
- 2) Independent variables regarding the personal factors and statistics used in the study are the mean (\bar{X}) and the standard deviation (S.D.).

9. Results

The results were categorized into the following sections:

Section 1 Personal information

Table 1. Number and percentage of personal information

Personal information	Amount (Person)	Percentage
1. Gender		
1.1 Male	42	84.00
1.2 Female	8	16.00
Total	50	100.00
2. Age		
2.1 Under 18 years old	1	2.00
2.2 18–35 years old	11	22.00
2.3 36–59 years old	31	62.00
2.4 Over 60 years old	7	14.00
Total	50	100.00
3. Religion		
3.1 Buddhism	48	96.00
3.2 Islam	1	2.00
3.3 Christian	1	2.00
Total	50	100.00
4. Occupation		
4.1 Business owner	5	10.00
4.2 Employee	27	54.00
4.3 Student	3	4.00
4.4 Unemployed	2	4.00
4.5 Others	14	28.00
Total	50	100.00

From Table 1, it is found that more than half are male, accounting for 84 per cent, followed by females at 16 per cent. The majority fell within the age range of 36–59 years old, accounting for 62 per cent, followed by those aged 18–35 years old at 22 per cent. Those aged over 60 years old added up to 14 per cent, while those under 18 years old were only 2 per cent. The vast majority are Buddhist (96 per cent), followed by Islamist and Christian, each at 2 per cent. Regarding occupation, the majority are employees, accounting for 54 per cent, followed by others at 28 per cent. Subsequently, business owners account for 10 per cent, while students equal 4 per cent, and the least common occupation is unemployed, at 4 per cent respectively.

Section 2 Study results of the demands for Thai arts and cultural activities of Thai People in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation for Thai arts and cultural activities

Activities	\bar{x}	S.D.	Demand Rate
1. Traditional Thai dance performances	4.43	0.74	Highest
2. Traditional Thai craftsmanship	4.42	0.73	Highest
3. Traditional Thai music	4.42	0.73	Highest
4. Traditional Thai food	4.40	0.67	Highest
5. Traditional Thai place decoration	4.40	0.75	Highest
6. Regional Thai dialects in four regions	4.36	0.74	Highest
7. Regional Thai costumes in four regions	4.34	0.79	Highest
8. Participation in Thai arts and cultural activities	4.34	0.74	Highest
9. Traditional Thai folk music/Mor Lam music	4.34	0.74	Highest
10. Traditional Thai classical music singing	4.22	0.72	Highest
Total	4.36	0.73	Highest

From Table 2, it is found that the overall level of demand for Thai cultural activities is at the highest level, with a mean score of 4.36 (S.D. = 0.73). When considering individual aspects, it is found that the highest demand is for traditional Thai dance performances, with a mean score of 4.43 (S.D. = 0.74), Traditional Thai music, with a mean score of 4.42 (S.D. = 0.73), traditional Thai craftsmanship, with a mean score of 4.42 (S.D. = 0.73), traditional Thai food, with a mean score of 4.40 (S.D. = 0.67), traditional Thai place decoration, with a mean score of 4.40 (S.D. = 0.75), regional Thai dialects in four regions, with a mean score of 4.36 (S.D. = 0.74), regional Thai costumes in four regions, with a mean score of 4.34 (S.D. = 0.79), Thai traditional folk music/Mor Lam music, with a mean score of 4.34 (S.D. = 0.74), participation in Thai cultural art activities, with a mean score of 4.34 (S.D. = 0.74), and traditional Thai classical music singing, with a mean score of 4.22 (S.D. = 0.72), respectively.

Section 3 Guidelines for organizing Thai arts and cultural abroad

From studying the demands for Thai arts and cultural activities of Thai People in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, including interviewing Thai participants at the Thai Festival 2023, it was found that most Thais are proud to see their own culture represented abroad and being accepted by foreigners. Thai culture reflects the delicacy, way of life, diversity, and beauty of Thai culture, which is not found in other cultures.

In organizing cultural activities to promote Thai culture abroad, it should cover the following aspects:

1) Traditional Thai dance performances

Traditional Thai dance performances should include performances representing all four regional styles. Additionally, the performances should incorporate lively rhythms and entertaining songs, along with beautifully designed costumes.

2) Traditional Thai music performance

Traditional Thai music performances should be live performances using authentic traditional instruments to be performed with a soundtrack or instrumental music. As many authentic traditional instruments have unique appearances and sounds, it would attract a lot of interest from international audiences, which also reflects the pride of Thai culture.

3) Traditional Thai craftsmanship

Traditional Thai craftsmanship should include demonstrations or workshops on traditional Thai craftsmanship such as fruit carving, flower garland making, elephant-face net weaving, Thai-style paper cutting, and Thai perfume making. These activities aim to represent the delicate way of life based on Thai cultural wisdom.

4) Traditional Thai food

Traditional Thai food should include activities featuring demonstrations, practical workshops, or sales of Thai food from all four regions. These activities should be coordinated by Thai individuals living in those countries, and booths should prioritize cleanliness. The presentation should focus on the authentic flavours of Thai cuisine, as foreign visitors prefer to taste original flavours rather than modified ones to suit foreign tastes.

5) The art of decorating in Thai styles

Traditional Thai place decoration should have a staging area reflecting the beauty of the Thai decoration style, which also enhances the Thai ambience. This area can serve as a photo spot and a space for Thai dance or musical performances.

6) Thai language

For running a stage program, the moderator should use the language of the host country and the Thai language in the local dialects of the four regions to enhance the Thai ambience and promote pride among Thais from all four regions residing in that country.

7) Traditional Thai costumes

The host of the event should encourage all Thais participating in the event to wear traditional Thai local costumes representing the four regions. Most Thais living abroad already have their regional Thai costumes from Thailand. This helps to create a Thai ambience and fosters regional unity among Thai nationals.

8) Traditional Thai folk music/Mo lam music

Traditional Thai folk music/Mo lam music should be coordinated by Thai individuals living in those countries who have singing skills for this type of music and provide opportunities for participants to enjoy traditional Thai local dance.

9) Participation in Thai arts and cultural activities

Thai individuals living abroad should be supported as hosts of the event by opening Thai restaurants, decorating venues with Thai architectural designs, wearing local Thai costumes representing the four regions, or participating in Thai performing arts. These activities will foster unity among Thais and share a sense of event ownership.

10) Traditional Thai classical music singing

Traditional Thai classical music singing, especially Khap Se – Pha (Thai Verse Singing), should be organized to represent the uniqueness of Thai culture, which is different from other music genres. This Thai verse singing is often attractive to Thais living abroad due to its rarity. For this type of music, the musical note must be drawn out. It always attracts the interest of both Thai and non-Thai audiences.

10. Discussion and Conclusion

The demands for Thai arts and cultural activities of Thai People in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, were overwhelming in all aspects. This indicates that Thais living in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, have not forgotten their Thai roots and continue to support, promote, preserve, and spread Thai culture to ensure that people in the country where they live recognize the value and beauty of Thai culture as the royal speech from Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn said on the occasion of National Cultural Heritage Day of Thailand on April 2, 2024 (Musigakama, 2002):

“...Our Thai nation has developed both arts and culture, which were inherited from our primitive period. This is our valuable national treasure, which represents Thai identity and is different from other nations. All Thai people should represent their value to others and preserve it by using all of their knowledge and deliberation to avoid extinction and deterioration. This must be known in every Thai people to develop and realize that the key to education and Thai cultural preservation is Thai identity preservation, and this is the responsibility of the Thai people...”

In organizing activities to promote Thai culture abroad, there is a demand for hosting Thai Festivals, and notably, this leads to foreign tourists who come to see the event enjoying the activities and participating together through applauding, joining traditional dance circles, and dancing along with the performances. In organizing activities to promote Thai culture abroad, the team from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, achieved great success with Thai arts and cultural activities at this event. The activities included traditional Thai craftsmanship, traditional Thai food, regional Thai costumes in four regions, regional Thai dialects in four regions, traditional Thai dance performances, traditional Thai folk music/Mo Lam music, traditional Thai classical music singing, traditional Thai place decoration, and promoting the participation in Thai arts and cultural activities. The results of the demand for Thai Arts and Cultural Activities, a Case Study of Thai People in Luleå, the Kingdom of Sweden, relates to the study of Tripat (Tripat et al., 2017) that the demand refers to the expectation or desire of customers or service recipients that arises from emotional stimulation which is an individual personal motivation, resulting in behaviours aimed at obtaining what they want in response to their own emotional needs. Therefore, it is difficult to directly measure demands, but attitudes can be measured by assessing individuals' opinions.

Thus, measuring demands can be done in various ways depending on convenience, appropriateness, and objectives, resulting in effective and reliable quantitative results. This also relates to Kotchapun Raksri (2018), who summarized that those individual demands are their expectations and desires that act as driving forces, causing everyone to have desires for specific products or services according to their wishes. If they receive good responses

that meet their expectations, it will affect their intention to use the service. In promoting Thai culture, in addition to relevant agencies, educational institutions in Thailand should play a crucial role in pushing for the spreading of Thai culture in all its forms and branches. This is because educational institutions in Thailand have an important mission, one of which is to preserve and promote Thai cultural heritage.

11. Recommendation

11.1 Policy Recommendation

1) The Thai community in the city of Luleå can adopt the organization of Thai Arts and Cultural Activities from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, to be a model for organizing Thai events in the local tourist attraction area by organizing traditional Thai craftsmanship, traditional Thai food, regional Thai costumes in four regions, regional Thai dialects in four regions, traditional Thai dance performances, traditional Thai folk music/Mo Lam music, traditional Thai classical music singing, traditional Thai place decoration, and promoting the participation in Thai arts and cultural activities in the next Thai event organization.

2) Educational institutions or both public and private organizations that play a role in spreading Thai culture should have guidelines for organizing cultural activities abroad to meet the demand for Thai arts and cultural activities of Thai living abroad.

11.2 Recommendation for Further Study

1) There should be a study of the requirements for organizing Thai cultural activities for Thais living abroad.

2) Research should be conducted to design and develop Thai cultural activities for Thais living abroad, as well as to promote these activities for foreigners to experience Thai culture.

Acknowledgments

We greatly appreciate the valuable contributions of our team members. We would also like to thank Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon for providing access to online database and all necessary for the study.

Authors' contributions

Dr. Chauratana and Asst. Prof. Dr. Suwannavej were responsible for study design and revising. Dr. Kuntawong and Miss Inorn were responsible for data collection. Dr. Chauratana drafted the manuscript and Asst. Prof. Dr. Suwannavej revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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