

An Analysis of Success and Popularity of Thai Boys Love Series among Chinese Fans

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ABSTRACT

The Thai Boys Love series has gained popularity since the 2010s, notably in China. Chinese fans have demonstrated their ability to popularize the Thai Boys Love series by translating and reediting the material, viewing the related content. This research aims to examine the success and popularity of the Thai Boys Love series among Chinese fans, and to analyze Chinese fandom and fan economy. In terms of methodology, this research used two qualitative methods that included textual analysis on the text of two series, *I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the Series*, and focus group discussions with two groups of 8 to 9 participants aged between 16 and 26. The investigation has revealed the significance of the series' settings, Chinese elements, and the plot's color and tone settings. Moreover, the most significant elements influencing their choices are gorgeous scenery and attractive story settings. Based on the discussion, there are several suggestions for both Thai media producers and the Thai creative industry stakeholders.

Article Info
Received November 6, 2023
Revised April 30, 2024
Accepted May 17, 2024

Keywords: Boys Love series, Chinese fandom, Creative industry, Drama Series, Thailand

Introduction

Concern among the wider populace has been raised over the Thai Boys Love series since the 2010s (Prasannam, 2019; Zhang & Dedman, 2021), especially in China. Fan subbing as a sort of fan labor, has played a significant role for introducing foreign content into China (Sun, 2020). As the receiver of those foreign content, Chinese fans are the key power of fandom and the fan economy (Boonchutima & Lou, 2022; He, 2014; Wang, 2017). As a result, assessing fandom and fan subbing as a form of fan labor is critical for both cultural and economic values. The result will benefit for the infectors of the intentions to give guidance to stakeholders in the creative industries in Thailand.

In this research, two Thai Boys Love series have been analyzed, *I Told Sunset About You* and

KinnPorsche the series, which have garnered a significant number of fans: *I Told Sunset About You* has 208,000 fans, and *KinnPorsche the series* has 355,000 fans. Meanwhile, the two couples of main male characters in the series each have plenty of adoring fans of their own; the *BillkinPP* page has 833,000 fans, while the *MileApo* page has 177,000 fans (based on Jan 8, 2023, according to data from *Sina Weibo*, the most famous social media platform in China) (Gao et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2012). Until April 25, 2024, *I Told Sunset About You* maintained its seventeenth rank on *Sina Weibo*'s overseas drama series list, while *KinnPorsche the series* ranked thirteenth. Both the focus group discussions and the comments from the Chinese audience on *Sina Weibo* frequently highlight the shared Chinese elements between the

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two series, including their filming locations, unique plots, and the color and tone of specific series. These characteristics can be viewed as major attractions of specific series that can establish a sense of connection between the Thai Boys Love series and Chinese fans and make the audience intrigued about the culture represented by the series. However, fewer scholars have mentioned the importance of these factors.

Thus, it is evident that the two series are important to research because of their widespread influence and popularity among Chinese audiences and fans. As a group of people who are in colleges or universities, those between the ages of 16 and 26, who have a great deal of free time to watch Thai Boys Love series that they are interested in. Furthermore, most of them are still unemployed and require financial support from their families to follow their favorite series and the celebrities who acted in them.

Meanwhile, the expression of LGBTQ+ people in Thailand can undoubtedly be viewed as an important soft power of Thailand, which can be seen not only in daily life but also as a powerful cultural expression to other countries around the world. China, on the other hand, has a strict censorship policy on managing this kind of theme in media products, which has allowed the Thai content to become popular among Chinese fans. However, there is no certain answer as to whether China will continue this strict censorship in the future or not. Studying the Chinese fandom of the Thai Boys Love series can therefore be beneficial for the development of media production in both countries.

Even though China's restrictions make it practically difficult to show Thai Boys Love series, fan subbing groups have helped deliver them to China. Most Chinese audiences must watch fan subbed videos, but other fan-made videos have also contributed to the Thai Boys Love series market. Therefore, research requires fan-subbed and fan-made videos, which is fan labor and fandom. Fan labor has significant cultural and economic benefits, but few academic studies have examined it.

As the result, the findings of this study would strengthen Thai creative industries stakeholders' understanding of Chinese fandom. As a form of Thailand's soft power, the exploration of the success and popularity of Thai Boys Love and their influence throughout Asia would contribute to the development of the television program production industry and related creative industries.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the success and popularity of the Thai Boys Love series among Chinese fans.
2. To discuss the suggested strategy for the promotion of the Thai Boys Love series among Chinese fans.

Theoretical Concepts

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) divided the creative industries into four broad groups: heritage, art, media, and functional creations (UNCTAD, 2010). Among them, media stands out as a significant industry. The Thai television industry, particularly the Thai Boys Love series, has garnered global attention as one of Thailand's most significant creative industries.

Fans, as a group of people who are obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV program, or band, participate in communal activities and create their attention through a process of subjective exploration (Hills, 2003). Although fan has been classified as who are filled with excessive and often misguided enthusiasm, and also from "fanciers," who are really connoisseurs or enthusiasts (Duffett, 2013).

As an important group of internet users, and as soon as new social media platforms emerged, fans promptly set up fan pages for their idols to share information with one another (Duffett, 2013). Meanwhile, as Jenkins (2006) commended that the web has brought these consumers from the margins of the media industry into the spotlight, then the research about fandom has been issued. Then, the term "fan" is increasingly used to refer to a wide variety of ordinary people who have a positive emotional connection to popular culture.

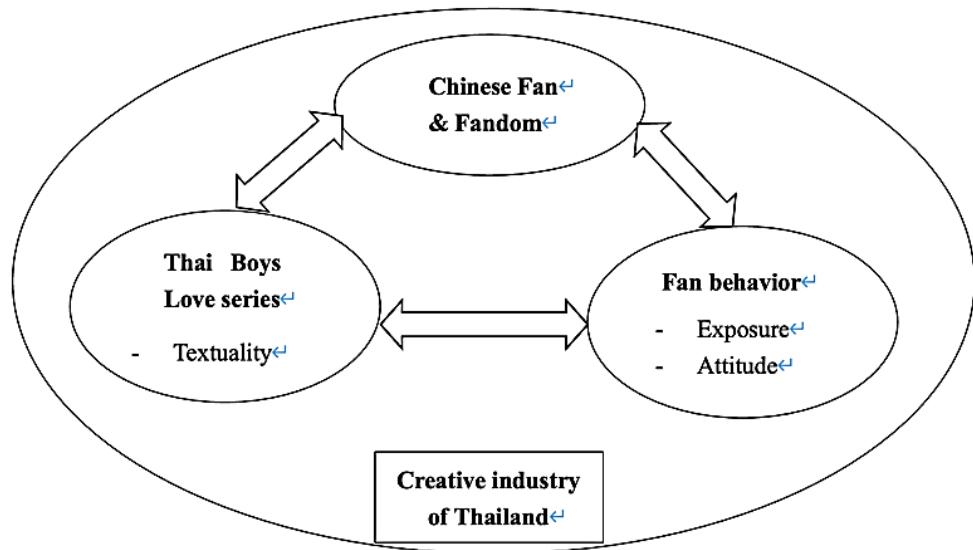
As for this study, a fan can be considered an "enthusiast," which can be referred to a group of ordinary people who are obsessed with a kind of popular culture. Meanwhile, fans in this study are particularly refer to the Chinese fans, who have a positive emotional connection to the two Thai Boys Love series, *I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the series*. The practices of fans' cultural consumption, along with the occasional practice of fans' own (re)production of their idols' images, products, and side products that manifest the creative dimension of fandom in addition to the cultural aspect of fandom (Zubernis & Davis, 2016). As the more enthusiastic Chinese fans are, the higher the cultural value they create, which means that the fan economy cannot be ignored as a kind of fandom. Meanwhile, the focus of this study on fandom will not only be on understanding Chinese fandom but rather on the ways in which

fandom affects other participants in the system.

From the discussion about theories and concepts of fan and fandom above, focusing on Chinese fandom and its influence is an important part of fandom studies. However, Chinese fans, as a sizable group of Thai Boys Love series fans, can have a significant economic impact on certain Thai creative industries. The values of both the

economy and culture are therefore important, which is one of the reasons why this study will analyze Chinese fans of two Thai Boys Love series: *I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the series* to discuss their viewing habits, consumption behaviors, and attitudes. The theoretical framework is as follow (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework



Method

As the main basis of this study, textual analysis is here investigating the success and popularity of the Thai Boys Love series among Chinese fans, which is the first objective of this research. Therefore, the analysis focused on the various aspects of the series' settings, such as the narrative settings, filming locales, and color and tone settings. The second aim, which involves discussing the suggested strategy for promoting the Thai Boys Love series among Chinese fans, is examined through a focus group discussion supplemented with snowball sampling. Details of the two methods are as follows:

Textual Analysis

Part 1: The narrative model of the series - In this part of research, the narrative of each series has been analyzed. Different series has different narrative storylines that can be seen at the findings part.

Part 2: The filming locations - In this part of the analysis, the filming locations in each series have been analyzed, as well as the Chinese cultural features in the scenes.

Part 3: The color and tone settings - In this part of the study, the color and tone settings of the series be investigated, both the color changes of the main characters in *I Told Sunset About You* and the unique settings of two series have been analyzed.

Focus Group Discussions

In order to find participants, posts via Chinese social media platforms and fan groups were used, paired with snowball sampling. Finally, 8 to 9 people who identify as fans of the specific two Thai Boys series have been participated in each focus group discussion, *I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the series*. The focus group questions consist of three main parts: 1) demographics and pattern of viewing; 2) engagement and exploration questions; 3) exit questions.

Part 1: Demographics and pattern of viewing - In this part, respondents were asked about (1) their exact age; (2) gender; (3) educational level; (4) occupation; (5) monthly income; (6) their fan identity of one of the series (*I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the series*) ;(7) the experience they watch these two Thai Boys Love series.

Part 2: Engagement and exploration questions - In this part, there have been several questions made to comfort participants and to drill down to the focus of this study, which include: (1) the reasons why they like the series; (2) their attitudes toward the fansub or fan edited videos; (3) their favorite parts of the series and the reasons; (4) their favorite characters; (5) their advice on the further production of Thai Boys Love series.

Part 3: Exit question - In this part, there were several questions made to pick up on

anything that may have previously missed in the focus group discussion.

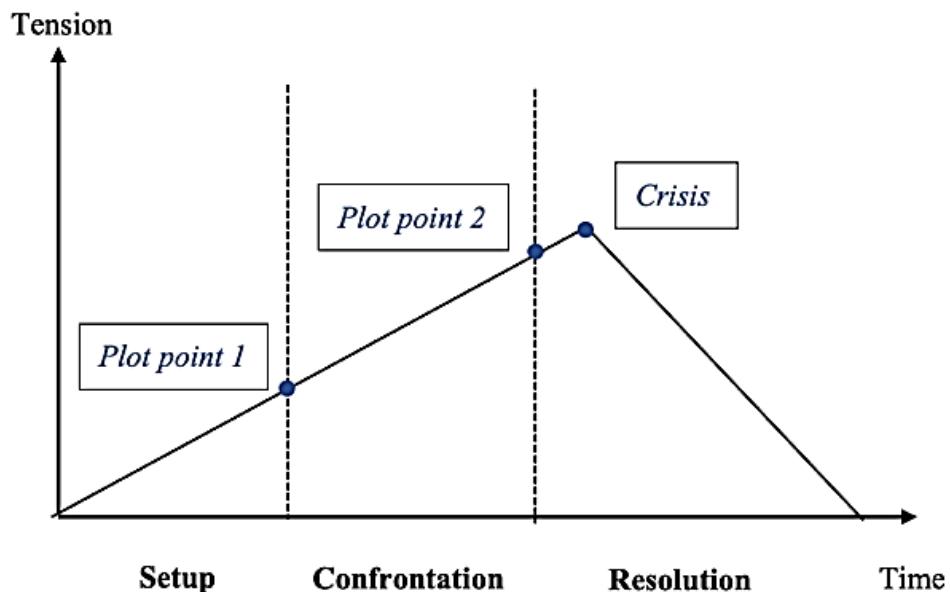
Findings

Findings from Textual Analysis

The Characteristics of *I Told Sunset About You*

I Told Sunset About You is a Thai Boys Love series that released in 2020. It has depicted the interaction between two teenage guys named *Teh* and *Oh-Aew*, live in Phuket who used to be childhood best friends but had a falling out and have not spoken for several years. After competing with one another at first, they finally make up and begin to repair their connection as *Teh* assists *Oh-Aew* in preparing for the impending Chinese examination at their final year of high school. They get more intimate with one another, developing a new closeness that begins to expand beyond friendship but also puts the relationship they share to the test as *Teh* battles to comprehend and cope with his emotions. In the end, they decide to be friends and give an open ending to audience. *Teh* and *Oh-Aew*, played by "Billkin" *Putthipong*

Figure 2: The Narrative Model of This Series



2) The Filming Location

When it comes to this series, the majority of the filming takes place in Phuket, Thailand. However, out of all the filming locations, there are a select few that need special attention.

a) *Teh's Home (Kopitiam)* - In this series, *Teh's* home has a lot of Chinese cultural elements,

Assaratanakul and "PP" *Krit Amnuaydechkorn*, are two teenage boys in the film. It explores their connection as they struggle with issues of identity, adolescence, and love.

There are three parts of the series *I Told Sunset About You* that have been investigated in this section. These features include the narrative model of this series, the filming location, and the color settings.

1) The Narrative Model of *I Told Sunset About You*

Plot point 1: *Oh-Aew* and *Teh's* relationship is repaired.

Plot point 2: *Oh-Aew* confesses his affection on *Teh* to him.

Crisis: The fact that the two characters seem to enjoy each other and even kiss doesn't change the fact that they can't end up together.

Based on the study above, this series revolves around the initial attraction and innocent love between two adolescents. As a result, the presence of mistakes and confusion regarding the crush has improved the story's allure for the audience (see Figure 2).

such as the red lanterns, Chinese words, Chinese traditional custom, and so on. The location setting like this can not only show the seriousness of the director and the crew, as well as the degree of importance of Chinese audience for the crew, but also the fitness between the story and the main location, Phuket, where has a lot of Thai culture that influenced by China (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Teh's Home (Kopitiam)

b) The Main Street (Thalang Road) - As for the primary roadway in this series, there are several locations along this road that serve as the primary settings for this series. These locations include the dessert shop, where the boys frequently choose to congregate, as well as the Chinese language school, in which the boys pursue their studies of the Chinese language. In

addition to the scene that was portrayed, *Teh* and *Oh-Aew* were able to mend their broken relationship and then went out for a ride on the road together on a motorcycle. Therefore, this road is an important location for the development of the plot and the relationship between the two main characters (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: The Main Street (Thalang Road)

c) The Temple of Restoring Relationship (Sang Tham Shrine) - This temple appears twice in this series, the first one is when the two main characters are telling their feelings in the past years to each other and crying for a new beginning to each other. As for the second time, when *Oh-Aew* tells *Teh* how he feels and he likes him, after *Teh* thinks for a night and they meet at beach then come to there. It can be seen as a symbol of restoring relationship and their new beginnings for their lives. This series has featured this temple on two

separate occasions. The first one takes place when the two main characters are sharing their thoughts and emotions from the previous year with one another and about the lack of a fresh start. The second one is when *Oh-Aew* reveals to *Teh* that he has feelings for him and that he likes him, *Teh* takes some time to answer *Oh-Aew*, and then the two of them head to the beach to meet up. It can be interpreted as a symbol of repairing relationships and making new beginnings in their lives (see Figure 5).

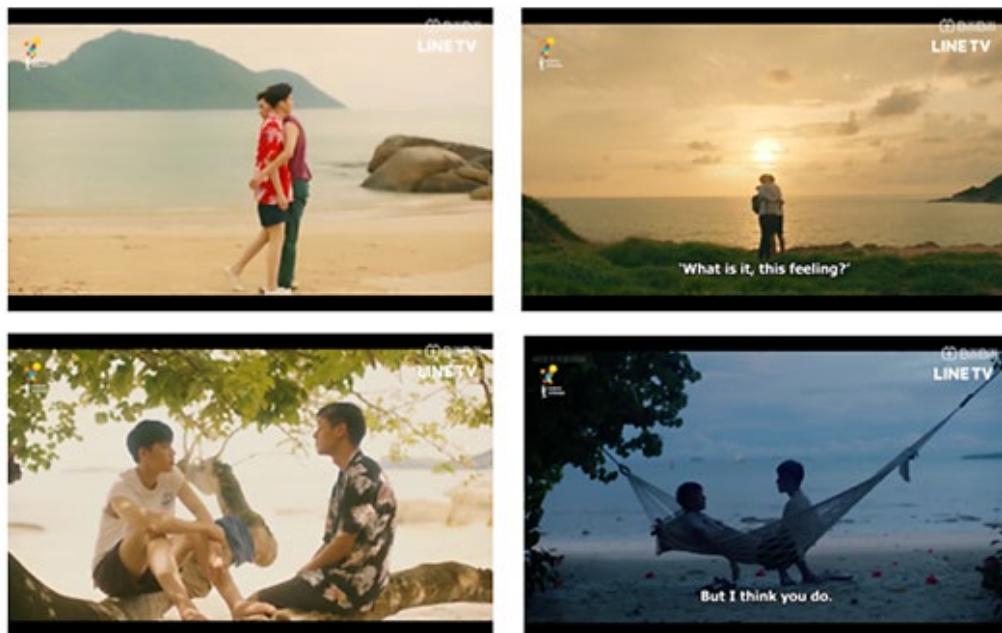
Figure 5: The Temple of Restoring Relationship (Sang Tham Shrine)



d) Beach and Sea in Phuket - Beaches are another significant location because of how frequently they are visited by the two main characters throughout this series. This series has a number of shots that take place on or near the beach or sea, including the scene in which the two of them make up, the scene in which *Oh-Aew*

declares his affection for *Teh*, the scene in which *Teh* returns to look for *Oh-Aew*, the scene in which the two of them race to catch the sunset together, and many other scenes. The beaches and waters of Phuket have been a major factor in the creation of those stunning landscape photographs that have garnered a lot of positive feedback (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Beach and Sea in Phuket



To summarize, four different categories of filming locations have been examined, all of which have been utilized for illustrating Phuket, Thailand. The filming locations in the series accurately depict several elements of Chinese culture, including the temple, *Teh*'s home, and the Chinese school. Additionally, the series showcases a combination of Thai and Chinese culture. The presence of these cultural components in the series can be viewed as an important contributor to its success.

3) The Color Settings of the Series

a) Color Changes - As for this series, the comparison of red and blue is so evident that it can be seen as the distinctive color of the various

characters, such as *Teh*'s color is blue, *Oh-Aew* is red and *Tarn*, who is placed as *Teh*'s crush, is purple. Meanwhile, the color of each character varies as the plot develops; in the end, the colors of their garments transform into white, which may be viewed as a possibility to each other and themselves. The specifications are as follows:

Teh: Blue – Red – Blue – White

During the progression of the narrative, *Teh*'s clothing primarily turns from blue to red. When *Teh* has a crush on *Oh-Aew* and eventually falls in love with him, this phrase describes the progression of their relationship. This signifies that *Teh*'s signature color is blue, and *Oh-Aew*'s signature color is red. Then, when they have a

sorrowful conflict, the color changes to blue; nevertheless, the blanket *Teh* uses is red, which signifies the relationship between *Teh* and *Oh-Aew* is continuing despite the conflict. When it comes to the final scene of two characters running, the color

of their clothing changes to white, which can be regarded as a possibility. The possibility is about the relationship between them and their future lives (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Main Color Changes of Teh



Oh-Aew: Red – Blue – Red – White

Red is the color that best represents *Oh-Aew*, as was just discussed, and it is also the color that serves as his signature. *Oh-Aew* is wearing a lot of red at the beginning of the series; this can be seen on his flower, his phone case, and his clothing. Then, when their relationship is going through some rough patches, the color changes to blue, and

the statement "Things that I never say" on his T-shirt refers to an uncertain crush that *Oh-Aew* has had in the past. The next thing that happens is that red goes back to *Oh-Aew*, which essentially implies that he goes back for himself. In conclusion, in order to convey the concept of possibilities, the color of *Oh-Aew* transforms into white, just as *The* (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Main Color Changes of Oh-Aew



Tarn: Purple – Blue – Purple – White

As for *Tarn*, as she has romantic feelings for *Teh*, she gets ready for a date with *Teh* in the mistaken expectation that he will choose her. It is clear from her attire that her original color is purple, which can also be inferred from her clothing. However, *Teh* doesn't choose her, leading her to consider the reasons for his decision and hope he

loves her deeply. Therefore, the fact that the color of her fabric changed to blue, which is *Teh*'s color, indicates that *Tarn* is in love with *Teh*. Next, she realizes that *Teh* has affection for *Oh-Aew*, which breaks her heart and leaves her feeling helpless. As a result, the color transforms into purple, which is her signature color. In the end, it turns white, which, like *Teh* and *Oh-Aew* before it, signifies the possibility of life in the future (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Main Color Changes of Tarn



b) Gentle Color Tone - Overall, it is clear that the tone of this series is very gentle and full of sunlight, which brings a gentle tone of color to this series. The gentle color tone so matches with the

plot that make an effort on the development of the story, the scenery shots examples as follow (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Gentle Color Tone



The color and tone of this series are gentle, and it has used a lot of natural lights, such as sunshine and its reflection, as well as the light that reflects from the ocean in the morning and at sunset. Additionally, the gentle artificial light, characterized by its dark and yellow tone, aids in conveying the emotions between the two characters. Furthermore, in this series, the main color changes among three characters are different from other series, which help reflect the plot's development and enrich every character.

The Characteristics of *KinnPorsche the series*

KinnPorsche the series has presented a story about "Kinn" Anakinn Theerapanyakun, the second son and de facto heir of the Theerapanyakun crime family, is attacked on his way home from making a business deal. He meets "Porsche" Pachara Kittisawasd, a barman and underground warrior, while fleeing for his life. Then *Porsche* reluctantly consents to become *Kinn*'s full-time bodyguard in order to earn enough money to support his younger brother *Porchay* through college and to continue living in the home that belonged to their deceased parents. When he develops his fighting abilities over the coming months, he also starts to fall in love with *Kinn*. Even though *Kinn* is open with his sexual orientation, the future is not easy for them. *Kinn*'s uncle is the head of the family's second (minor) branch, which is eager to seize power. His younger brother, *Kim*, is a growing celebrity, his older brother, *Tankhun*, is a PTSD-stricken mess, and *Vegas*, his cousin from the minor family, is also becoming a rising threat to him. It stars "Mile" Phakphum Romsaithong as *Kinn* and "Apo" Nattawin Wattanagitphat as *Porsche*.

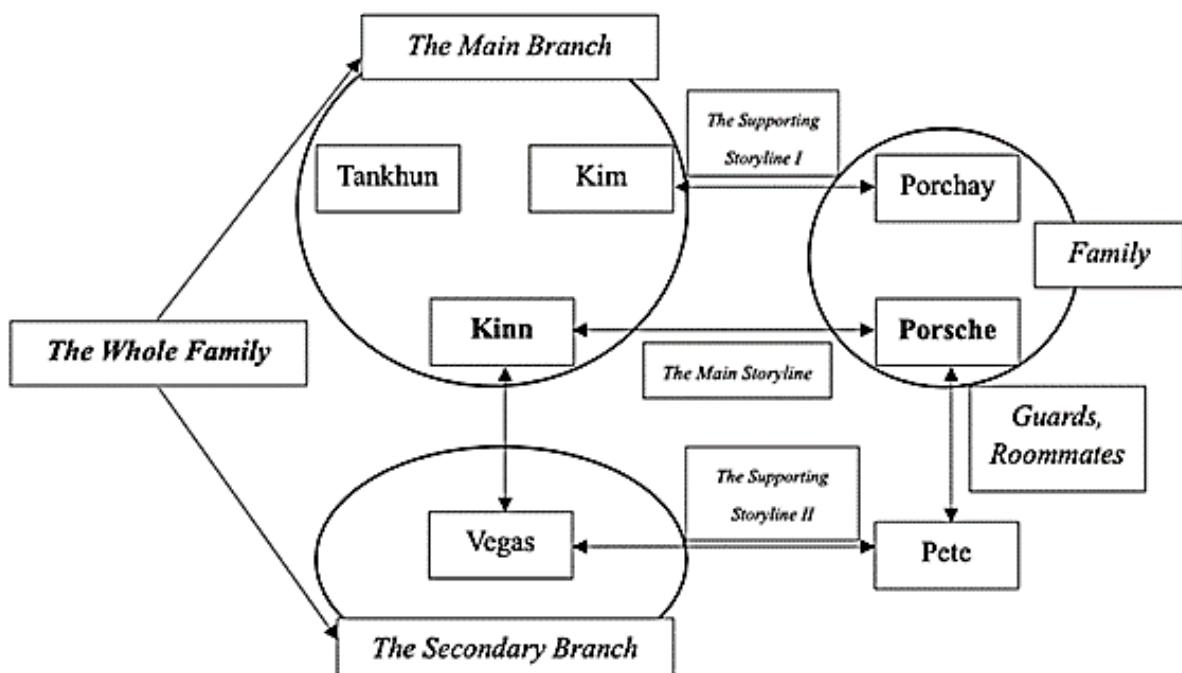
In this area of the review, there are also three aspects of *KinnPorsche the series* that have been analyzed. These aspects include the intricate narrative plots of the series, the filming locations, and the color and tone of the scenes.

1) Narrative Storylines

In contrast to the format of *I Told Sunset About You*, *KinnPorsche the series* consists of numerous stories that will coexist with one another and develop at the same time. That means that even though *Kinn* and *Porsche* are referenced in the title of the series, the storyline of the series also focuses on a range of other characters; the particulars are as follows.

This series is about adult relationships, which are more sophisticated and mysterious than *I Told Sunset About You* because of its unique background. The plot is both thrilling and complicated, attracting many groups of fans. Nevertheless, the supporters become increasingly enthusiastic as the narrative storylines become more complex (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: The Narrative Storylines of *KinnPorsche the series*



2) The Filming Locations

As for *KinnPorsche the series*, the filming

locations of it are mostly in Bangkok, Thailand, among all of them, the followings are the details of two main locations that should be pay attention to.

a) Chao Phraya River & Wat Arun - A temple known as Wat Arun may be found close to the Chao Phraya River, which is the most important river in Thailand. The initial filming of the first kiss course between the two major characters takes place next to the river, which may

Figure 12: Chao Phraya River & Wat Arun in the Series



b) Chan Ta Then Waterfall - There is an additional filming location that should be brought into consideration, and that is the forest. In Episode 6, both of the main characters are forced to flee to the forest in order to avoid being tracked down by others. This action takes place at the Chan T Then waterfall, which is located in the Chonburi province of Thailand. When the scene is shot with a darker and colder tone, the relationship between

play a role in the progression of the romantic narrative. In addition, the filmmaker decides to film those intimate scenes in the evening, under a golden light. When there is a greater feeling of romance in the atmosphere (see Figure 12).

the two can be better understood; when the scene is shot with a more pleasant tone, the shots of the scenery are more realistic and authentic.

In conclusion, there have been two primary filming locations that have been analyzed throughout the series. These filming locations have displayed the scenery of Thailand in a variety of different ways (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Chan Ta Then Waterfall in the Series



3) The Color and Tone Settings of the Series

The color of this series is darker, in contrast to *I Told Sunset About You*, which has lighter colors. This series features a significant amount of black and makes extensive use of darkness, which results in a diverse range of viewing experiences for the audience. The series manages to maintain a sense of mystery while also maintaining a certain level of

integration with its plot because of the contrast between the darkness and the flowing light and color. In addition to that, the cold tone of the color is perfectly suited to the plot of the story, which is about the gangster and his bodyguard. The use of a cool color tone combined with golden light can be a contribution to the audience's experience because the narrative focuses on a conversation that takes place between two mature men (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Color and Tone of the Series



Since the gangster serves as the background in this series, the director chose a darker tone to symbolize the intriguing mystery of the relationship between the two characters. This choice further explains why Chinese fans are so enamored with this series, to the extent that the Chinese mainland media industry rarely features it.

To sum up, this section of the essay has examined the two series' textual aspects. The narrative plots, color and tone schemes, and filming locations have all been addressed. *I Told Sunset About You* was primarily filmed in Phuket, Thailand, whereas *KinnPorsche the series* was shot in Bangkok, Thailand. Regarding the color and tone of *I Told Sunset About You*, the series' major characters' colors have altered as light-toned plots have been developed. The tone of the *KinnPorsche the series*, on the other hand, has always been gloomy and mysterious. As for the narrative lines, as it has been demonstrated above, *KinnPorsche the series* contains richer narratives about various individuals from all branches of the entire family, in contrast to *I Told Sunset About You*, which only has one primary plotline about Teh and Oh-Aew.

Findings from Focus Group Discussions

According to the methodology of this study, two focus group discussions regarding the two Thai Boys Love series, *I Told Sunset About You* and *KinnPorsche the series* have been held on April 9, 2023, served as the pilot study for the subsequent questionnaire survey. There were 8 participants in the focus group discussion I (*I Told Sunset About You*) and 9 participants in the focus

group discussion II (*KinnPorsche the series*). The following are the discussion's specifics and findings:

Demographic information

There were two groups of people who have participated in the focus group discussion for the series. The focus group discussion I was held for *I Told Sunset about you*, and there were 8 people joined in. The focus group discussion II was held for *KinnPorsche the series* with 9 participants. These two groups of participants have similar demographic information. Whereas their age is mostly around 18-25 years old (6 for the focus group I, and 6 for the focus group II), there was only one male participant in each group. As for their educational levels, they are mostly undergraduate students (4 for the focus group I, and 5 for the focus group II). Thus, their occupation is mostly student (6 for the focus group I, and 6 for the focus group II), and their monthly income is around CNY1,501-3000 (approximately THB7,500 -15,000) mostly.

Watching Experience

According to the information that was provided by the participants, the two set of participants who took part in the study have watched the two Thai Boys Love series separately. Mostly, they would choose to watch on the weekends, holidays, or evenings when they had time for themselves. They did not devote a significant amount of time to watching the series with their parents or other family members.

Platform of Watching

As a result of China's stringent censorship, most of the main streaming services do not carry

Thai television shows in which the primary plot involves two males falling in love with one another or other LGBTQ+ related scenarios.

However, this does not keep Chinese fans away from interacting with their favorite Thai Boys Love series in any way. They choose to follow the official accounts of fansub groups on *WeChat*, which enables those groups to share cloud links of videos they have already translated from Thai to Chinese. In addition, a few of the participants mentioned that in order to find a certain television show, they would either use Baidu or Google to conduct a search for the title of the show; in some cases, this allows them to jump right into watching the show. There was also the opinion that they have chosen other unapproved platforms, that may not be officially approved by the Chinese government, such as *Duoduo Video* (多多视频), *Renren Video* (人人视频), *Taiju TV* (泰剧TV), *Taijutu* (泰剧兔), or others.

Attitudes towards Fan Made Videos and Fansub Videos

During the portion of the discussion devoted to their perspectives on the videos remade by fans or the subtitles translated by fans, they voiced their appreciation for the fans' labors of love. Especially those fan subbing groups that have volunteered to be the ones to bring foreign culture to the Chinese public and have accepted the obligations that come with doing so. Sharing those videos that they translated does not profit them in any way, notwithstanding the possibility that they get money through tie-in ads in their account on *WeChat*.

Aside from the fansub videos that these fan subbing groups translated from Thai to Chinese and then shared on the cloud for free, other videos that fans altered from series or event videos have also been brought up. These videos may be found on the internet. According to what the participants provided, the fan-made videos have helped some series or actors gain a better reputation. They suggested a Chinese platform called *Bilibili*, which is like *YouTube* but available in China. It has thousands of users, and anyone may share their own legally produced videos on the network. As a result, there are a great deal of fan-remade videos that are based on the series. Our participants have indicated that those films provide them with another channel through which they may learn about the various fan communities and about the companies that are associated with the Thai Boys Love series.

When it comes to the influence of those fan-made videos, most of them have mentioned that they learned about a particular series from the fan-remade videos first. This is since those videos are typically edited from the highlights of the series, such as the kiss scene, the fighting scene, the

scenery shots, and so on. In the meantime, those fansub videos and fan-remade videos can demonstrate the enthusiasm of Chinese fans who are willing to contribute to the distribution of the Thai Boys Love series without expecting anything in return.

First Impression of Chinese Fans on the Series

For *I Told Sunset About You*, two out of eight participants in the focus group discussion stated that they were initially uninterested in the series. Some of the participants held the opinion that the previous narrative focused on purely romantic feelings or limerence. Chinese audience will base their judgment not only on their first impression of the series but also on the leading actors' appearance, the plot of the first episode, and the makeup and outfit style of the main actor. However, the presence of the series' lead actor is what ultimately convinces them to start watching the show again and turns them into fans of the franchise.

As for *KinnPorsche* the series, four of the nine participants remarked that they had been interested in the Chinese name of the series. The Chinese term, 黑帮少爷爱上我, which has a different meaning than either the Thai or the English name, was brought up throughout the discussion. It literally translates to "gangster fell in love with me" in Chinese. This name is frequently used in Chinese online romance fiction, which has a significant following among Chinese women. In contrast to the replies given during the focus group discussion I, the major of participants indicated that they had been drawn to the setting of this series at the beginning of the first episode.

Therefore, casting holds significant importance for a forthcoming Thai TV program, since it has the potential to effectively draw in a larger audience. Additionally, the title of the series holds significance as it should be fascinating and recognizable to the viewers, particularly those targeting the Chinese audience. The more attractive and culturally appropriate the Chinese name of a series is, the greater the number of Chinese fans it will attract.

Attractive Scenery Shots and Actors

During the discussion, practically every participant from the focus group of *I Told Sunset About You* brought up the fact that there are many gorgeous scenes of landscape in the series, and they all agreed on its contribution. The processing of the story was helped along by the inclusion of those amazing shots and color tone of the environment.

Four participants in the discussion claimed that the appealing pictures of the environment around them were an important factor in their initial decision to watch this series. Based on the

release date, most viewers watched this series between 2020 and 2021, which happened to be the same time as the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. During this period, China implemented strict measures to control the spread of the disease. As to their account, the picturesque landscapes captured in the shots provided them with a refreshing experience among their regularly stressful lifestyles. Particularly in the last scenes of the series, the two main protagonists are shown rushing across the island with a stunning sunset visible in the background.

Regarding *KinnPorsche the series*, a significant number of participants in the discussion have mentioned the issue of performers' physical attractiveness at some stage. Apo, the actor representing Porsche, significantly contributes to the public's appreciation of this series. Most participants were drawn to *Apo*'s attractive appearance. They believe that while the director emphasized the beauty of Bangkok in the series, the presence of handsome actors is another factor that attracted them.

To summarize, the development of the Thai Boys Love series relies heavily on the rich characteristic lines that are present throughout each novel. That indicates that the main storyline, which has a lot going on, is not enough for the audience, at least the Chinese audience. For Chinese audience, the supporting plot may be the primary factor in their decision to watch a particular television series. When it comes to *KinnPorsche the series*, nearly every character has a unique adventure to recount, which is one of the things that contributes to the overall success of the series.

Discussion

Media Settings

One of the most important factors that makes the two series can be that successful and gain the massive numbers of Chinese fans is the settings, especially three setting that have been analyzed, the narrative storylines, the filming location, and the color tone.

From the conclusion and discussion above, firstly, the narrative storyline needs to be attractive. However, it doesn't matter if the storyline is about pure love between teenagers or adults that is mature and mysteries. The crisis and the complexity of the storyline are necessary to decide whether the series can be popular and successful. That means, there should not be just one simple storyline, but need more reversions and exciting plots. Meanwhile, casting is also important for contributing the success of the media products.

Secondly, the filming locations should be chosen carefully. One of the most important pilar industries of Thailand is the travel industry.

Undoubtedly, the filming locations in the certain series can attract fans to visit, which can bring plenty of economic values. However, the filming location choice can also benefit for the development of the plot, the more Chinese cultural elements there are, the more Chinese fans there would be.

Finally, the color and tone of the series can contribute to both the narrative storylines and the watching experience of audience. The producers of two series have chosen the suitable tones to match with the development of the plot, which help audience be fascinated into the story.

Chinese Cultural Features

During the discussion, there were three people out of the eight participants who brought up the Chinese cultural features of this series, providing perspectives that were both favorable and negative. From the standpoint of the Chinese audience, it is an honor to see Chinese elements in foreign television programs. As the participants pointed out, this demonstrates how important the Chinese audience is to the filmmakers and how willing they are to expose themselves to these programs with their own native Chinese culture. Even though there is something strange, as they noted, they can still comprehend it because something may have changed after the former Chinese culture was introduced to Thailand.

Meanwhile, the producers of the show made the decision to combine elements of both Thai and Chinese culture. This not only responded to the curiosity of the audience interested in Thai culture but also made Chinese viewers feel appreciated. Although many Chinese features in the series may appear unfamiliar to contemporary Chinese society, the inclusion of Chinese cultural components in international media should be seen as a key contributing trigger to the widespread popularity of these two series, attracting a significant number of Chinese followers.

Therefore, in order to get into the Chinese market, future Thai media producers ought to recruit Chinese employees or professors with an understanding of Chinese culture to provide guidance on aspects such as cosmetics, costumes, and settings in order to ensure that the series corresponds closely with Chinese cultural norms.

Contribution on Social Issues Discussion

Social issues in the Thai Boys Love series have been infrequently discussed in academic literature. Two of the series that have been investigated in this research have shed light on an additional facet of the evolution of Thai society and culture. One of the reasons why they prefer to watch the series that the samples mentioned is so that they may understand Thailand and Thai

culture more, which can be viewed as one of the contributing factors to the success of the two series among Chinese fans. Combined with the current social issue in Thailand about Pride Month in June 2023 and 2024, there were a lot of posts on Chinese social medias about how people felt while attending the parade in the Siam area. This has reflected that Chinese people are interested in the LGBTQ+ groups of people and their status in Thailand.

Thus, the social setting of this series, the experience of accepting one's sexual orientation, and the status of women and LGBTQ+ individuals in society are additional fascinating elements that media producers should consider. In the meantime, the series has demonstrated that the receptive personality of Thai culture can be comprehended in a simpler way by using a different approach. Not only may the Thai television sector profit from the successful settings of two series, but other industries may also benefit from the rewards of their successes. For instance, the Thai tourism industry, which has traditionally been the backbone of the Thai economy, has the potential to entice an increased number of Chinese travelers with an interest in Thai culture and society.

Chinese Fandom

As Duffett (2013) points out, fandom is a sociological phenomenon that is related to contemporary capitalist cultures, electronic media, mass culture, and public performance. As for this research, Chinese fans of the two series have contributed to the development of society, culture, and the economy.

First, as the focus group has discussed, several Chinese fans hold the view that *I Told Sunset About You* is not only a simple Thai Boys Love series that talks about a story about two boys, which is an old-fashioned story that a lot of Thai Boys Love series have been working on. However, the series is about the social issues facing LGBTQ+ groups of people that need a lot of attention from different groups of people. Meanwhile, the age setting of the two main characters is about 18 years old, and they are still teenagers that are curious about gender and sex orientations. On the other hand, *KinnPorsche the series* talks about the social status and class in Thailand, which is as important to Thai society as the LGBTQ+ groups of people that can discover the dark side of the development of Thai society as well.

Second, Cavicchi (1998) asserts that fandom is more about "what it does" than "what it is." Thus, it is imperative to discuss the behavior of Chinese fans. They pay attention to both Thai and Chinese culture in the series, as well as their own unpaid work on the series, such as fan-edit videos

on electronic platforms, which can be viewed as UGC (User-generated Content), and fan-subbed videos, which are created by unpaid fans (De Kosnik et al., 2015; Terranova, 2000). According to Jenkins (2006a), fan-subtitled content, which can be thought of as a type of "user-generated content," has involved a wide range of media texts and formats on numerous internet platforms. On the other hand, these new communication platforms enable followers to share information, collaborate virtually, and contribute what is known as "user-generated content." Such fan activities are commonly viewed as an element of a participatory culture, in which fan interpretations and social interactions result in the production of cultural products that serve the fans' fandom. According to the findings, the most significant impact of fan-subtitled or fan-edited videos is establishing a positive reputation among the Chinese public. Thus, what Chinese fans do is cultivate a positive reputation for their favorite series and celebrities among a diverse group of ordinary people who have a positive emotional connection to the Thai Boys Love series. Their admiration then becomes the driving force behind their efforts to edit, translate, and distribute their work on the Thai Boys Love series for free.

Chinese fandom is different from others due to the special social media platforms. *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and other social media platforms are not officially allowed in the mainland of China, however, as the participants referred, they were attracted by those fan-edited videos on Chinese streaming platforms or social media platforms, such as *Bilibili*, *Sina Weibo*, and *Xiaohongshu*; however, as a group of internet users, as soon as new social media platforms emerged, fans promptly set up fan pages for their idols to share information with one another (Duffett, 2013). They have always used the platforms (*Sina Weibo* and *Xiaohongshu*) to share their own feelings and opinions on the series or celebrities. On *Sina Weibo*, they have gathered on certain fan pages to discuss their beloved celebrities and series. As for *Xiaohongshu*, they share their points of view by using hashtags to get more attention from others. Meanwhile, *Bilibili*, as a streaming platform in China, finds it interesting that more than half of the fans who participated in the questionnaire survey chose to watch the related comment about a certain series.

Finally, Chinese fans have demonstrated satisfied purchasing power by following the official account of *Caremate* on *Sina Weibo*. There are 88 thousand followers of *Caremate* and 78 thousand followers of *Srichand*. Concerning their sales, it was reported that during the month of May 2023, more than 200 fans purchased the lipstick of *Caremate*, which was sponsored by *Billkin* and *PP*,

and 300 fans purchased the beauty kit of *Srichand*, which was endorsed by *Mile* and *Apo*. Therefore, Chinese fans have contributed to the products endorsed by celebrities they look up to, as part of their fan culture consumption system. Several participants have expressed their willingness to buy replicas of their idols' photos or other fan-made content, in addition to their consumption patterns of idol-related content. This kind of purchasing behavior contributes not only to the growth of the economy but also to the development of the creative industries, as stated by Zubernis and Davis (2016).

Recommendations

Based on the previous discussion, the Chinese fandom of the Thai Boys Love series stands out from others because of their unique political, cultural, and economic origins. Consequently, we have proposed multiple suggestions for Thai media producers and marketing strategists who intend to reach the Chinese market.

For Thai media producers, the settings of Thai series are necessary to expand the Chinese market. As previously mentioned, narrative narratives are of crucial significance, and it is essential to acknowledge the importance of revisions and crises inherent in these stories. Moreover, the representation of LGBTQ+ communities and female issues plays a crucial part in expressing societal concerns. This is particularly significant in Thailand, where there are numerous events supporting these groups and attracting both Chinese and worldwide audiences. Furthermore, as the tourism industry is a fundamental component of the Thai creative industries, the choices made about filming locations can significantly impact the whole viewing experience. Chinese fans, in particular, feel a sense of being valued when they find Chinese cultural elements in foreign content. This leads to increased support for the series and its actors, which is often demonstrated through travel to the filming location in Thailand (Zhang, 2021). Consequently, it benefits both the Thai travel industry and the media industry. Thai media makers must prioritize casting, color, and tone setting. It is undeniably essential to cast attractive actors to attract the attention of viewers (Zhang, 2021). Nevertheless, the analysis of the two series emphasized the importance of color and tone configurations, which must be in accord with the progression of the plots and the backgrounds of the stories. Alternatively, the series could potentially achieve success by altering the colors of the main characters and adjusting the narrative tone of the stories.

The Chinese fanbase is unique for marketing strategists due to the platform they utilize for content consumption and comment exchange. Choosing an appropriate platform for advertising on Chinese social media and streaming platforms is crucial, as the majority of Chinese users stream relevant programs from fan subbing groups or other unofficial platforms and gather interest in the Thai Boys Love series through fan-edited videos. Given that Chinese fans primarily purchase series-related merchandise due to their admiration for the presenters, it is crucial for marketing strategists and media producers to select the most fascinating actors to enhance the growth of Thai creative industries.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study utilized a mixed method in order to compile its findings. On the other hand, it appears that only young female students were included in the samples. For future research, there should be a more in-depth examination of the various demographic samples, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of those particulars from the point of view of the various audiences. It has been suggested that the level of exposure of Chinese fans should be subjected to a more in-depth analysis. Because of this, the subsequent research ought to consist of an analysis that is more particular to the subject and can be quantified.

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