A Comparative Study of Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore

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Abstract

This qualitative study conducts a comparative analysis of Thailand and Singapore in addressing "A Comparative Study of Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore", drawing on document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 12 experts. Then coded and analyzed thematically. This study fills a gap by offering a comparative analysis of Thailand and Singapore in this dimension, emphasizing lessons from cultural management policies for economic development while treating territorial size as a secondary factor.

The findings reveal that Thailand's strengths include: 1) cultural diversity, and 2) legal frameworks supporting policy initiatives, while weaknesses include: 1) a protectionist approach, 2) policy ambiguities, 3) insufficient prioritization of cultural heritage, and 4) legislative inconsistencies. Conversely, Singapore's strengths include: 1) policy continuity, 2) top-down governance, 3) a forward-looking cultural vision, and 4) effective management processes, while weaknesses include: 1) leadership challenges, and 2) narrow cultural vision.

Despite contextual differences, both nations exhibit similarities in policy formulation, decision-making, and governance structures. The study highlights the importance of clear policy direction and integrated governance to enhance cultural heritage management's role in economic development. These insights offer valuable implications for policymakers in similar socio-economic contexts.

Keywords: Cultural Management, Cultural Policy, Economy Development, Cultural Capital, Singapore and Thailand

Introduction

Cultural heritage is an invaluable historical asset for humanity, contributing to both material and spiritual wealth. This acts as a fundamental guarantee for ensuring sustainable development, fostering diversity, and providing opportunities for the conservation and revitalization of cultural spaces through investment (Rossitti et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022). The preservation of cultural identity remains a core aspect of these initiatives.

UNESCO plays a pivotal role in establishing international conventions for the protection and conservation of cultural assets. It also ensures adherence to principles of cultural rights, development rights, and human rights through legally binding international agreements. Cultural policy has gained significant attention in the 21st century, as it has been recognized for its substantial contribution to economic growth by increasing public revenues. This approach is widely acknowledged by various nations (Marzano & Castellini, 2024; Burksiene et al., 2018; Duxbury et al., 2012; Liu, 2019). Consequently, most member states leverage cultural activities as economic drivers. They also enhancing historical aesthetics to facilitate public learning and engagement.

However, this development inevitably attracts a significant influx of culturally diverse tourists (Ali et al., 2024), resulting in both positive and negative impacts (Bayar et al., 2023). Hence, well-structured cultural management policies are essential to safeguarding cultural components while maintaining their intrinsic value. Such policies ensure the global recognition of local wisdom (local yet global), foster self-reliance and creative sustainability, and promote human resource development. Furthermore, they facilitate the balance between economic development

and cultural heritage conservation, emphasizing sustainable preservation through community participation—a critical challenge in defining the state's role in cultural governance (Ali et al., 2024).

Cultural policy frameworks contribute significantly to stabilizing economic and social structures, particularly in both normal and crisis periods, by addressing poverty-related challenges. Despite experiencing severe economic downturns between 2020 and 2021—where Singapore witnessed its worst economic contraction in Asia, with a decline of 41.2%, and Thailand suffered an economic shrinkage of over 7% (Bangkokbiznews, 2021)—cultural policies continued to drive national development. Although cultural management is vital to national development, no study has compared how Thailand, with its deep-rooted heritage, and Singapore, as a newly founded state, narrate history differently under a shared development framework. This study addresses that gap through a comparative analysis, focusing on lessons from cultural management policies for economic development while treating territorial size as secondary. The findings contribute to wider debates on cultural policy, governance, and sustainable development in Southeast Asia.

Grounded in these factors, this study hypothesizes that enhancing cultural capital and increasing economic value through the creative economy paradigm may serve as a key mechanism for addressing economic challenges. The research focuses on analyzing policy gaps in cultural management for economic development by comparing Thailand and Singapore, with the aim of synthesizing policy recommendations for balanced and sustainable economic growth.

Literature Review

Cultural Demarcation and Economic Growth in the Context of Contemporary Development

Territorial demarcation through boundary lines is a geographical construct, whereas cultural zoning requires cultural criteria, prioritizing shared heritage and historical continuity (Tambassi, 2018; Ergin, 2023; Phumplab et al., 2017). Thailand and Singapore are both located in Southeast Asia, a region rich in ancient civilizations and advanced socio-economic structures that facilitate community-level cultural exchanges. Consequently, their cultural policies emphasize cooperation within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) framework, which integrates 3 key dimensions: 1) social totality, 2) political governance (state, nation, and politics), and 3) economic production and consumption (Lamey, 2021). These domains are deeply impacted by globalization, leading ASEAN to develop a new local-regional identity that aligns with modernization and industrialization. This transformation has culminated in ASEAN's collective vision: one vision, one identity, one community (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (Public Organisation), 2014; Ngampramuan, 2016; Acharya, 2017).

Given this trajectory, cultural development must integrate cultural and social entrepreneurship within economic systems, wherein the state implements community-based welfare systems to foster economic participation, public awareness, and mutual benefit-sharing (Gehman & Soublière, 2017). This process entails representation, information exchange, transparency, autonomy, mutual respect, and networking, which collectively serve as catalysts for community-driven initiatives (Ard-am, 2011).

Community Participation and Cultural Empowerment for Sustainable Development

Community participation encompasses both rights and responsibilities, reflecting a sustainability-oriented development framework that can be reinforced through ethical systems, local knowledge, cultural capital, and equitable community governance (Kongjareon & Ratana-Ubol, 2011; Dushkova & Lvlieva, 2024; Lestari et al.,

2024). However, empowerment should be based on mutual promotion and knowledge exchange, ultimately ensuring the effectiveness of cultural and economic initiatives (Chandler, 1992; Gibson, 1991).

The outcome of empowerment and participatory engagement is the development of leadership capacities for community well-being and sustainability (Dushkova & Lvlieva, 2024). A key dimension of this approach involves leveraging cultural values to generate economic benefits without diminishing their social significance (Kamnoonwat et al., 2017; Dümcke & Gnedovsky, 2013). Economic value derived from cultural assets directly influences national well-being, as happiness is a psychological indicator of positive quality of life (Diener, 2009). Subjective well-being, in turn, is closely linked to income levels, as financial stability enables individuals to meet basic needs and enhance life satisfaction.

Policy Frameworks for Economic Development Leveraging National Cultural Resources

Cultural heritage that is widely acknowledged and respected serves as a guarantee of national stability, fostering economic and societal prosperity. Nations with strong cultural foundations tend to exhibit rational governance and sustainable livelihoods (Meekhotkong, 2008; El Husseiny et al., 2024; Katzenstein, 1996). This is largely due to the role of cultural policies in enhancing human dignity, promoting social equity, and empowering citizens at all levels, which collectively contribute to economic development, particularly in terms of utilitarian functions that emphasize the direct economic value of cultural assets (Dierksmeier, 2015; Kosaiyakanont & Sarnnoi, 2019).

Moreover, cultural resources serve as the foundation for creative economy-driven development, facilitating the transfer of cultural capital through innovation. To enhance the quality of life, the management of cultural capital must align with the principles of the creative economy, ensuring that policy frameworks actively facilitate innovation-driven economic transformation (Deshmukh et al., 2015; Udhnoon et al., 2017). However, significant policy gaps persist in the realm of cultural economic development, necessitating a more comprehensive and adaptive policy approach. A significant policy gap in cultural economic development lies in legislation and regulatory frameworks, particularly in Thailand. One of the primary weaknesses in Thailand's legal system is the lack of thorough impact assessments before policy implementation, which hinders social, political, and economic development. The failure to integrate legal evaluations into economic policymaking has created obstacles to economic progress, whereas Singapore has demonstrated greater efficiency in this area (Wisuttisak et al., 2020).

Additionally, Chainam (2021) asserts that while legal constraints may pose economic challenges, the ultimate objective of national policies remains national security and survival. Consequently, political, economic, and social systems should not be perceived as obstacles to international cooperation but rather as integral mechanisms for fostering mutual benefit and strategic alignment. In this context, the development of cultural policy serves as a critical driver for economic advancement, facilitating sustainable growth through cross-border collaboration and the strategic utilization of cultural assets. There are several strategic proposals for cultural policy reform to drive economic development. One of the most critical initiatives is the sustainable urban development strategy, which requires a well-defined cultural roadmap that aligns with economic interests and local identities. This approach fosters cultural revitalization and socio-economic transformation (Sangkakorn, 2020).

In Thailand, an evaluation of government policies promoting SMEs across regions and industries has revealed that an integrated administrative restructuring, involving collaboration between government ministries and the private sector, would accelerate policy execution and financial accessibility for SMEs. Improved budgetary support mechanisms would further enhance entrepreneurs' operational capacity, ensuring that cultural resources are leveraged for economic development (Chongsithiphol et al., 2020).

A results‑based approach to policy evaluation is crucial, necessitating systematic monitoring and assessment mechanisms. Public institutions should invest in capacity‑building programs for entrepreneurs, equipping them with knowledge and skills to utilize cultural capital for economic diversification. For instance, the development of cultural tourism has the potential to create new employment opportunities while simultaneously enhancing community well‑being (Ramkissoon, 2023; Kasempholkoon, 2018). In this context, leveraging cultural capital serves as a strategic approach to fostering community revitalization and sustainable socio‑economic development.

A fundamental aspect of cultural economic policy is the integration of cultural assets into community development. This includes heritage restoration, conservation, transmission, and dissemination, all of which require collective awareness and cultural appreciation. To achieve sustainable cultural development, historical knowledge must be preserved, incorporating local history, socio‑economic conditions, and community networks that highlight the interdependent nature of cultural ecosystems (Panompornsuwan, 2017; Charoensiri, 2013).

The review of existing scholarship elucidates critical dimensions of participatory cultural and economic governance. It reveals that policy instruments function as catalytic mechanisms for advancing responsible development, which, in turn, fosters sustainability through the enhancement of community well‑being. Such advancement must be anchored in normative systems of ethics, the mobilization of cultural capital, and the establishment of equitable governance frameworks that empower local communities and enhance quality of life. In this regard, policy initiatives aimed at leveraging national cultural resources for economic development have increasingly gained international recognition. More importantly, these initiatives are intrinsically linked to the promotion of social equity, particularly when cultural resources are harnessed as the foundation for a creative economy. In this process, cultural capital is not only safeguarded but also transmitted through innovative policy mechanisms, thereby facilitating the emergence of creative industries.

Nonetheless, the literature also identifies persistent gaps in economic development across cultural domains, most notably within legal structures and regulatory frameworks. Consequently, scholars have underscored a recurrent proposition: where policy frameworks exist, financial allocations follow; and where funding is available, entrepreneurial actors can mobilize cultural resources for economic development. To realize this potential, however, supportive institutional infrastructure and community‑driven development strategies are indispensable. So that the research serves to analyze policy gaps in cultural management for economic development by comparing Thailand and Singapore, with the ultimate aim of synthesizing policy recommendations that foster balanced and sustainable economic growth. Based on these insights, the following theoretical framework is proposed, as in Figure 1.
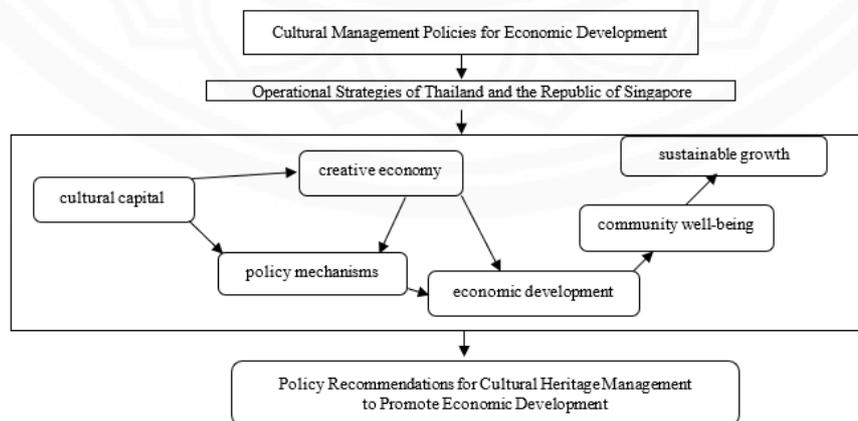

Figure 1 Research Framework.

Methods and Materials

This qualitative research employs a documentary research method and in-depth interviews to examine cultural management policies for economic development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore. The study is designed to ensure academic rigor, data validity, and interpretative depth, following established research evaluation criteria.

Documentary Research: The documentary research component is guided by four key criteria, namely authenticity – ensuring that the documents originate from legitimate and primary sources; credibility – assessing the reliability and intent behind the original documents; representativeness – evaluating the methodological validity of the selected documents; and meaning – ensuring a clear and comprehensive understanding of the content presented (Scott, 2006). The analysis involves a systematic review of academic literature, journal articles, theses, research reports, and digital sources, including scholarly networks specializing in cultural heritage policy in Thailand and Singapore.

In-depth Interviews: The in-depth interview phase focuses on 12 experts, was chosen to provide data saturation and analytical depth, in cultural policy management to provide comprehensive insights into national cultural governance frameworks. The participant selection process consists of 2 stages, namely 1) Identification of key informants: A systematic review of academic papers, policy reports, and professional networks was conducted to identify key figures with extensive experience in cultural heritage policy formulation in Thailand and Singapore, and 2) Purposive and snowball sampling: Key informants were selected based on their expertise in cultural policy administration, involving academics and relevant stakeholders engaged in the practice, governance, and development of cultural affairs in Thailand, employing the snowball sampling technique to expand the respondent pool by referrals from initial participants (Noy, 2008).

Governance Framework: This study applied the snowball sampling technique, allowing key informants to nominate additional participants who could validate and enrich the data. Three groups of informants were identified: 1) academics, 2) experts with extensive research and teaching experience in Thailand and abroad, and 3) practitioners in cultural policy and development networks, including an informant with over 30 years of experience currently serving with ICOMOS Thailand. Their expertise provided in-depth insights into cultural development, supported by case studies and verifiable references. Interview protocols were distributed online, and participants were informed of the study's objectives, their rights, and consent procedures. All data were substantiated with empirical evidence, with the researcher verifying physical sites mentioned by informants.

Research Instruments and Data Analysis: The study employs a semi-structured interview protocol and follows a structured data analysis approach, comprising 3 key stages, namely 1) Typological analysis: Data obtained from interviews were categorized into themes based on content, meaning, actions, relationships, and structural patterns. Thematic classification is systematically organized and further analyzed using the SWOT analysis framework to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the researcher manually conducted an independent interpretive analysis to generate deeper insights. To strengthen data credibility, triangulation was employed across both data sources and informants, ensuring consistency, reliability, and validity of the findings, 2) Content interpretation and synthesis: Thematic relationships were examined to derive policy-driven interpretations and construct analytical linkages between key findings, and 3) Descriptive presentation: The results were reported in alignment with the research conceptual framework through detailed thematic analysis and interpretation. To ensure data credibility, the study applies the triangulation technique, verifying consistency and data richness across

multiple sources, timeframes, and informants (Denzin, 2014). This approach ensures the findings reflect accurate, comprehensive, and context-specific insights into cultural policy mechanisms.

Research Ethics Approval

The research was approved by the Kasetsart University Research Ethics Committee, with approval reference KUREC – SS64/205, granted on November 3, 2021.

Results

The study reveals that the cultural and economic relationships between the Republic of Singapore and Thailand are historically and geographically mediated through Malaysia. Singapore shares a historical legacy with Malaysia, while Malaysia geographically connects to southern Thailand. Singapore's strategic maritime significance has been historically anchored by the Singapore River, serving as a pivotal hub for international maritime trade (Swee-Hock, 2012). Similarly, Thailand's Chao Phraya River has played a crucial role in its economic and cultural development (Think Beyond Genius Editorial Team, 2015). In terms of territorial scale, Thailand is 512,433 square kilometers larger than Singapore, resulting in significant differences in state responsibilities for cultural governance. The disparity in land area impacts policy mechanisms, resource allocation, and the governance of cultural sites.

Political structures and cultural governance shape human behavior, lifestyle, and cultural practices. The state exercises its sovereign power to regulate and modernize cultural management (Leepreecha, 2022). Both Singapore and Thailand have historically prioritized economic development, but their colonial and mercantile legacies differ significantly. Singapore inherited a commercial heritage from British colonial rule, fostering a globalized trade economy. In contrast, Thailand — though historically engaged in international commerce — did not inherit a distinct commercial heritage from any colonial power. Ethnic diversity remains a policy challenge for both Thailand and Singapore, shaping cultural identity and governance strategies. However, neither country can be exclusively defined by cultural authenticity based on empirical evidence. Instead, both nations have adopted cultural zoning strategies and cultural clustering models to curate national identity and urban cultural landscapes.

A notable manifestation of cultural hybridization and transnational cultural borrowing is observed in mutual cultural replications. For example, the Chatuchak Market replica in Singapore demonstrates the adaptation of Thailand's famous open-air market into an urban retail model in Singapore. The Naga fountain in Thailand, which resembles Merlion-inspired sculptures, symbolizes the blending of indigenous and borrowed cultural elements. These examples reflect cross-cultural adaptation, wherein both nations integrate and repurpose cultural symbols to reinforce national identity while promoting tourism and commercial appeal.

Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore

In Thailand, cultural management adopts a cultural zoning approach to delineate nine cultural identity zones: Ban Chiang, Dvaravati, Sri Kotrabun-Lan Chang, Lopburi, Srivijaya, Lanna, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Thonburi-Rattanakosin. These zones are systematically structured based on historical periods, with some receiving international recognition as UNESCO World Heritage sites (Lochai et al., 2016 as cited in Yampochai, 2020). Since 2019, these cultural zones have been integrated into the tourism sector through national budget allocations to facilitate economic growth by leveraging value systems and cultural capital (Suongtee, 2021). This initiative operates under the creative economic framework, incorporating creative power and soft power strategies to drive sustainable development. In the Republic of Singapore, the cultural management framework follows a similar

cultural zoning approach to Thailand but places a stronger emphasis on contemporary multiculturalism due to the country's ethnic diversity. Cultural governance in Singapore organizes ethnic residential clusters while promoting cultural development within these designated districts. Notably, within residential complexes, food systems are designed to cater to all ethnic groups, reflecting Singapore's multicultural integration model (Boonyakiet, 2014). The Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth (MCCY) actively promotes cultural landscape learning policies, fostering an understanding of cultural districts and ethnic communities. This approach has directly contributed to the growth of cultural districts, enhancing economic and tourism expansion. Singapore's CMIO framework—representing Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others (CMIO)—guides cultural policy by establishing 3 primary cultural management strategies: Chinese, Indian, and Malay heritage management.

Unlike Thailand, Singapore does not prioritize the conservation of original architectural structures due to spatial constraints. Instead, cultural management focuses on advanced data preservation systems, utilizing highly detailed digital documentation. These records are accessible through public digital platforms, signage, and QR codes embedded with historical information, which are widely integrated throughout Singapore's urban landscape, as in Table 1.

Table 1 Table of Comparative Analysis of Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development

Policy Dimensions	Thailand	Singapore
Cultural Zoning Approach	Defines 9 cultural zones based on historical periods; some zones recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites (Lochai et al., 2016 as cited in Yampochai, 2020).	Uses cultural zoning but emphasizes ethnic residential clusters and cultural districts for social integration (Boonyakiet, 2014).
Heritage Conservation Strategy	Focuses on historical preservation, maintaining original structures and cultural authenticity (Suongtee, 2021).	Prioritizes adaptive reuse over strict conservation due to spatial constraints (Leepreecha, 2022).
Economic Integration	Utilizes cultural assets to enhance local tourism and craft industries under the creative economy framework (Boonyakiet, 2014).	Integrates cultural policies with economic hubs, particularly through creative industries and trade sectors (Swee-Hock, 2012).
Multicultural Policy Framework	Primarily recognizes ethnic diversity within national identity but lacks structured multicultural governance.	Ensures cultural representation and governance through formalized CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others) policy.
Tourism Development	Promotes heritage-based tourism, integrating cultural landmarks with national tourism strategies (Suongtee, 2021).	Develops cultural precincts (e.g., Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam) as key tourism and economic hubs (Boonyakiet, 2014).
Digital Heritage Management	Limits digital documentation, relying on physical conservation and cultural festivals.	Emphasizes high-precision digital documentation, QR-coded historical archives, and interactive cultural displays.
State Support and Policy Implementation	Allocates national budgets for heritage conservation but faces bureaucratic inefficiencies in implementation (Yampochai, 2020).	Executes strong government-led cultural policies with systematic funding and private sector collaboration (Leepreecha, 2022).

Note: Data derived from document analysis conducted by the author (2022).

From Table 1, Thailand and Singapore exhibit both shared and divergent approaches to cultural heritage management. Thailand's strategy is deeply rooted in historical preservation and local economic empowerment, while Singapore adopts a pragmatic, adaptive, and digital-driven approach that integrates cultural policies into its broader economic and urban development plans. Additionally, Singapore's proactive multicultural governance and

efficient policy execution contrast sharply with Thailand's more decentralized and bureaucratically constrained model. Ultimately, both countries provide valuable lessons in cultural heritage management—Thailand's focus on historical authenticity enriches its cultural tourism appeal, while Singapore's innovative policy mechanisms ensure sustainable and adaptive cultural integration into a modern urban economy. Future collaboration between the 2 nations could facilitate best practice exchanges, fostering a more balanced approach that preserves cultural integrity while maximizing economic potential.

Comparative Analysis of Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore

The cultural management policies of Thailand and Singapore exhibit distinct strengths and weaknesses in their impact on economic development. The table below outlines key comparative policy dimensions, evaluating institutional strategies, economic integration, governance frameworks, and sustainability factors in both nations, as in Table 2.

Table 2 Comparative Analysis of Cultural Management Policies in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore

	Thailand	Republic of Singapore
Core Strength	Exhibits cultural diversity.	Emphasizes both cultural value and economic significance.
	Oversees cultural management through a primary governing body (Ministry of Culture).	Ensures a fair and equitable management process.
	Provides assistance through supporting organizations (ICOMOS & SCONTE).	Implements a top-down management approach that is concrete and continuous.
	Supports conservation, restoration, and further development through legal frameworks.	Applies a localized cultural management strategy.
		Incorporates a contemporary vision.
		Prioritizes cultural heritage stakeholders and custodians.
		Demonstrates effective management skills within resource constraints.
Vulnerability	Operates with a narrow vision for development.	Neglects cultural aspects while prioritizing economic management.
	Fails to align understanding and implement concrete management.	Adopts an economic-driven vision that distorts cultural realities and traditional ways of life.
	Perceives Thai culture as historical preservation rather than dynamic evolution.	
	Lacks a clear understanding of cultural values.	
	Demonstrates ambiguity in utilizing culture for economic purposes.	
	Considers local culture less significant than national culture.	
	Fails to provide comprehensive protection through legal frameworks.	
	Continues to follow a narrow vision for development.	

Note: Data derived from in-depth interviews with academic experts conducted by the author (2022).

From Table 2, this study identifies core strength and vulnerability in the cultural management policies of Thailand and the Republic of Singapore, revealing that Thailand exhibits more weaknesses than strengths, whereas Singapore demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses.

– Strategic vision and cultural management capacity: Academic experts interviewed in this study acknowledge that Singapore's cultural governance framework demonstrates greater strategic vision and management expertise compared to Thailand (Kong, 2000; Khiun, 2004). A key distinction is Singapore's profound understanding of "cultural value" and "economic value", an area in which Thailand is notably weaker. Singapore's strengths lie in its contemporary cultural management model, integrating cultural policies with creative industries and economic strategies (Michelle, 2005). Thailand's cultural governance remains preservation-oriented, with a strong focus on conservation and restoration rather than cultural adaptation for economic sustainability (Yampochai, 2020).

– Cultural ownership and policy prioritization: Another key difference is the approach to cultural ownership. Singapore emphasizes cultural custodianship, ensuring that ethnic communities maintain agency over their cultural heritage while integrating economic incentives for heritage promotion (Stent, 2012). Thailand, in contrast, prioritizes national heritage over local or regional cultural expressions, leading to a top-down approach that limits community participation in cultural policymaking (Haley & Low, 1998).

– Economic strategy and the risk of cultural distortion: Despite its policy strengths, Singapore's economic-driven cultural vision poses risks of distorting cultural authenticity by commodifying heritage for economic gain (Kawasaki, 2013). The integration of heritage into commercial urban planning and industrial sectors raises concerns regarding the erosion of intangible cultural traditions (Xuan, 2023). On the other hand, Thailand's cultural management strategy remains historically static, maintaining a preservationist stance that is deeply tied to past geopolitical conflicts and nation-building narratives. This historical freezing of cultural policy restricts the adaptability of Thailand's cultural sector in responding to contemporary economic and social transformations (Leepreecha, 2022).

Synthesis of Cultural Management Policies for Economic Development: A Comparative Analysis between Thailand and the Republic of Singapore

The policy processes and mechanisms governing cultural management for economic development in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore encompass several key dimensions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Table of Comparative Analysis of Policy Processes and Mechanisms in Cultural Management for Economic Development

Policy Processes and Mechanisms	Thailand	Republic of Singapore
1. Policy Formation	Primarily aimed at conservation, culture is recognized as a national asset that necessitates both succession and transmission. Consequently, cultural heritage management institutions, such as museums, have been established to safeguard its preservation and prevent its potential decline.	As a foundational resource for economic development, traditional culture is strategically preserved through systematic documentation. Moreover, cultural heritage knowledge is integrated into commercial processes, such as museums, serving as both educational platforms and revenue-generating entities.
2. Policy Decision-Making	Institutions and policymakers are developing diverse practical alternatives to support cultural heritage management. Cultural management focuses on preserving heritage sites for exhibition purposes.	Efforts are being made to establish clarity in practical implementation. Cultural management emphasizes documentation and exhibition while managing spaces for contemporary habitation.
3. Policy Implementation	The state's narrow interpretation leads to discriminatory practices, as cultural heritage is predominantly confined to traditions associated with temples and palaces.	The state remains receptive and flexible in practical implementation. There is a continuous development of cultural management experts.

From Table 3, the policy processes and mechanisms governing cultural management in Thailand and the Republic of Singapore can be analyzed through 3 key dimensions, namely 1) Policy formation: Both Thailand and Singapore share a similar conceptual foundation in cultural policy, as both countries aim to preserve cultural heritage. However, their approaches diverge in terms of policy orientation. Thailand emphasizes conservation and protection, ensuring that cultural heritage is preserved and safeguarded against disappearance. Singapore prioritizes cultural management for economic development, integrating heritage into contemporary socio-economic frameworks. Despite these differences, both countries operate within national legal frameworks and regional agreements to guide cultural governance, 2) Policy decision-making: Both nations implement similar cultural management activities, but Thailand's policy framework tends to be more abstract, while Singapore adopts a more pragmatic and structured approach. Thailand's policy decisions favor broad and flexible implementation strategies, allowing for multiple interpretations and diverse practical applications. Singapore enforces concrete and well-defined policies, executed by cultural management experts with clear operational frameworks. This distinction highlights Thailand's reliance on interpretative policymaking versus Singapore's expertise-driven, systematic execution of cultural initiatives, 3) Policy implementation: Both Thailand and Singapore delegate policy execution to governmental institutions, with key roles played by ministries and specialized cultural committees. However, significant differences exist. Singapore actively integrates ethnic community participation, allowing greater flexibility and adaptive governance in cultural policy implementation. Thailand faces challenges in policy interpretation, largely due to a shortage of cultural management experts. This leads to a narrow and rigid application of cultural policies, primarily focusing on temple and palace heritage as the dominant national cultural identity.

The comparative analysis from Tables 1, 2, and 3 demonstrates a progression from identifying policy dimensions to assessing strengths and weaknesses, and further to analyzing policy processes and mechanisms. Table 1 highlights the structural dimensions of cultural management, with Thailand adopting a preservation-oriented framework, while Singapore employs a more adaptive and economically integrated approach. Table 2 synthesizes these findings into strengths and weaknesses, showing that Thailand remains confined to a narrow conservation-focused vision, whereas Singapore demonstrates strong strategic capacity but faces risks of cultural distortion through economic-driven development. Table 3 extends the analysis to examine the policy cycle—formation, decision-making, and implementation—revealing that Singapore applies a pragmatic and expert-driven system, while Thailand continues to face challenges of abstraction and bureaucratic constraints. In conclusion, both countries have sought to promote economic development that emphasizes cultural capital under policy mechanisms and the creative economy paradigm. Despite encountering significant strengths and weaknesses during this process, the outcomes directly affect community well-being and sustainable development, ultimately leading to practical policy recommendations.

Policy Recommendations on Cultural Resource Management for Economic Development. The policy recommendations emphasize cultural resource management that enhances national economic development while safeguarding sustainability and community well-being. This approach is grounded in each country's cultural capital and integrates the creative economy paradigm through policy mechanisms.

For Thailand, it is recommended to establish a genuinely contemporary and modernized process for integrating cultural resources, supported by systematic knowledge documentation and transmission. Furthermore, mechanisms for collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, and local communities should be strengthened,

based on participatory principles. The development of additional cultural management experts is also essential to address challenges stemming from narrow interpretations of cultural policy.

For Singapore, it is recommended to maintain a balance between cultural authenticity and the integration of cultural resources into economic development. Greater inclusion of local communities and ethnic groups in policy formulation should be promoted, while caution is exercised to prevent the over-commodification of culture. Such measures are necessary to sustain a balance between cultural integrity and economic pragmatism.

Conclusion and Discussion

Cultural management policies are fundamentally shaped by knowledge systems, which significantly influence the strengths and weaknesses of Thailand's and Singapore's approaches to cultural governance. In this regard, Thailand exhibits more weaknesses than strengths, while Singapore demonstrates a stronger knowledge-driven approach to cultural management.

The Role of Knowledge in Cultural Management: A critical challenge in Thailand's cultural policy is the fundamental understanding and interpretation of culture in relation to development (Nerngchamnong, 2020). Thailand tends to emphasize heritage conservation, whereas Singapore focuses on the economic utility of culture, particularly in relation to cultural value and economic value (Granato et al., 1996). The impact of knowledge on cultural governance is substantial, as it shapes modern policy visions and adaptive management approaches. However, Thailand's cultural policy vision remains relatively static, prioritizing heritage conservation and restoration over innovation. This results in an imbalance between cultural and economic value, restricting cultural development potential (Namburi & Manmee, 2021). Conversely, Singapore prioritizes cultural ownership, actively rejecting Western-imposed cultural narratives as a means of resisting post-colonial legitimacy frameworks (Chevaprasert, 2021). This approach facilitates the construction of a multicultural national identity rooted in Asian heritage. While Singapore faces criticism for its hybridized cultural identity, the government maintains a structured ethnic classification system, wherein citizens are required to declare their ethnicity on identification documents. This contrasts with Thailand, where religion is prioritized in national identification records. Singapore's structured approach enables long-term ethnic-cultural categorization, reinforcing systemic acceptance of ethnic diversity within a national framework. However, the Singaporean state actively intervenes to reshape cultural perceptions, aiming to reduce inter-ethnic disparities. This intervention is largely motivated by government concerns over cultural resilience and identity consolidation. In contrast, Thailand's cultural policies prioritize national heritage over local culture, resulting in a restricted recognition of diverse cultural values. This limited scope of cultural appreciation constrains the economic potential of intangible cultural heritage, ultimately affecting heritage sustainability and intergenerational transmission. The findings of this study reveal that the key strength for sustaining cultural resource management lies in knowledge systems that are deeply grounded in local contexts, serving as the cornerstone for long-term sustainable development.

The Impact of Historical and Political Factors on Cultural Policy: Thailand's cultural governance remains heavily influenced by historical conflicts and nation-building narratives, leading to a preservationist stance that limits regional cultural cooperation. Similarly, Singapore's economic pragmatism occasionally results in distorted representations of cultural heritage to align with economic agendas. The formation of cultural policies in both countries reflects a shared commitment to cultural preservation, albeit with different objectives. Thailand focuses on ensuring that cultural heritage is not lost, leading to overprotective policies that often impose strict conditions

on cultural utilization. Singapore emphasizes cultural sustainability for contemporary relevance, integrating culture into economic and social systems. However, excessive protectionism in Thailand has become a policy weakness, as it often prioritizes regulatory control over economic adaptability. Legal frameworks, while essential for cultural protection, frequently serve as obstacles to cultural innovation.

Policy Decision-making and Implementation: Singapore's cultural policymaking process heavily relies on expertise from academics and specialists, ensuring evidence-based policy formation. Thailand, despite having a large academic community, exhibits low levels of academic participation in cultural policymaking due to bureaucratic constraints. This is evident in policy implementation, where government institutions dominate cultural administration through ministries and special committees. Singapore actively integrates ethnic group participation, allowing for greater flexibility in policy execution. Thailand's rigid policy structure prioritizes temple and palace heritage as national cultural symbols, while local culture is regarded as a functional, community-based asset rather than a significant component of national identity. This narrow policy perspective has resulted in limited investment in knowledge development, human resources, and balanced funding for cultural management, undermining Thailand's long-term cultural sustainability.

Cultural resource management in Southeast Asia increasingly develops on the basis of national cultural capital to drive economic prosperity. Regional cooperation should leverage each country's strengths into context-specific policies aligned with ASEAN's collective identity, enabling the attraction of both intra – and inter-regional tourism. At the same time, ASEAN mechanisms for cultural resource management must also be considered.

Suggestions

1. Establish collaborative frameworks that integrate knowledge-sharing, specialized expertise, and financial resources to support cultural sustainability.

2. Promote contemporary cultural expressions without compromising heritage integrity, systematically managing cultural diversity.

3. Implement systematic cultural governance mechanisms that prevent overlapping responsibilities and ensure expertise-driven policy execution.

4. Develop a contemporary cultural management vision that integrates local cultural identity while fostering cultural ownership.

5. Harmonize national and community-level cultural policies, cultivating leadership with cultural and economic awareness.

Acknowledgments

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