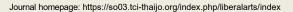


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Variables predicting ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai

Kittinan Krueaphat * and Kasetchai Laeheem

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

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Abstract

This study examined variables predicting ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai and created a prediction equation for the ritualization. The data were collected from 160 subjects who were selected using purposive sampling and data were analyzed using the R program to calculate Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients and multiple linear correlation coefficients. The results of the study revealed seven predictors of ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai with predictability at a significance level of .001. Four predictors were found to have positive relationships with ritualization: family (X1), economy (X4), new media (X5), and governmental policy (X6). Governmental policy (X6) had the highest level of relationship, and family (X1) was the lowest.

^{*} Corresponding author
E-mail address:
kittinan.krueaphat@gmail.com

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) is the biggest festival of Chinese culture. It is on the first day and the first month of lunar calendar. Comparing with the solar calendar, it is a day between January and February (Luengsaksri, 2019). It is the best time to start agriculture after the cold winter. This time is interpreted as the new year of Chinese people (Pawat, 2018). In 1999, the Chinese government announced this day to be the New Year of the Chinese people. Additionally, it is a long holiday in the People's Republic of China. Chinese people spend the time for family reunions and oblation rituals (Liang, 1973).

In Thailand, the festival consists of three ceremonial days. They are the preceding day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. Chinese people clean their house and prepare family meals and offerings on the preceding day. They initiate the oblation from early morning until midnight on New Year's Eve. There are the oblations to the god of heaven, ancestor spirits, relatives' spirits, and the god of wealth (Luengsaksri, 2019). On New Year's Day, children are encouraged to bless their family members with oranges, and red packets are given to the children by family members (China Highlight, 2020).

It is presented that this Chinese festival has a positive effect on the economy. Local merchants can receive high income for merchandising the ritual equipment and offerings. Additionally, the festival is encouraging people to go back to their homes, so the hospitality industry is positively affected as well. During the ceremonial days, Chinese people are taught to speak only nice words, conduct proper behavior, and make merit. This is a significance of the religious tradition (Chitwiboon & Tepsing, 2017).

However, globalization is shaping people's behavior nowadays. It is analyzed that globalization is a trend supporting popular culture (Steger, 2017). And the ritualization affects the newer generation to feel bored, as it must spend a long time for many procedures (Buakaew, 2017). Several studies also indicated that fewer teenagers participated in the ritual because of the modern lifestyle (Dhammajong, 2016).

This problem is also discovered in Hat Yai. Hat Yai is a city that was partially developed by the business activities of Overseas Chinese. According to the research

of Siripaisan (2007), Hat Yai consists of many Chinese organizations such as Chinese markets, Chinese associations, Chinese schools, Chinese hospitals, and Chinese welfare organizations. Once, Mandarin Chinese and other Chinese dialects were used as the main medium of communication among them. And all Chinese traditions were successfully preserved. However, the globalization affects the adaptation of using English and Thai for communication nowadays. They must use Thai to communicate within workplaces and schools. Furthermore, English is taught from kindergarten to higher education. But fewer Chinese descendants in Hat Yai ritualize the Spring Festival oblation because of the economic crisis and modern way of life (Buakaew & Janjula, 2015).

To conserve the ritualization among the newer generation, this social phenomenon should be studied and analyzed for predicting variables to the ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai. The result of this study would be beneficial to bilateral governmental and private organizations for preserving the ritualization of the Spring Festival.

1.2 Objective

This study aims to examine variables predicting ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai and create a prediction equation for ritualization.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Spring Festival

The Spring Festival is the most significant festival of Chinese people. It is the first day of spring in the lunar calendar. Chinese call this day "The Spring Festival" (Ren, 2015). During this time, agricultural products are ready to be harvested, and Chinese people believe that it is a good time for the beginning of the year. Therefore, they propose to do something new such as buying new clothes. Red represents an auspicious occasion. Chinese people decorate red colored objects in their houses such as pictures, calligraphy, and sculpture. Many Chinese people travel to their hometown and celebrate together with family members. Although it is only three ceremonial days in Thailand, there are totally seven ceremonial days of the Spring Festival in China

which was officially announced as national holiday by the Chinese government (Pawat, 2018).

2.2 Social Institutions

There are many variables related to causes of ritualization of the Spring Festival. It can be concluded from the following studies that there are seven causes of the ritualization of the Spring Festival.

Family

Family is the most significant social institution. It is the first social institution of most people in a society. It socializes cultural inheritance and proper personality to social members (Mueansit, 2010). The teaching provided by the family is a pattern of daily life, social skill, and cultural practice (Burgess & Locke, 1945). An example of the result would be that on Christmas that people understand that they are going to do the same activities on this day. People are learning during the festival time. And family is the most significant factor that teaches children how to participate in social activities (Horton & Hunt, 1980).

Chinese Shrines

Chinese shrines are recognized as religious sites in Thailand (Kataoka, 2012). A religious site consists of teaching, faith, holy objects, and ritual conductors. The role of this institution is to socialize social norms for the orderliness of the society (Mueansit, 2010). Additionally, there are significant days at Chinese shrines in Thailand such as the Spring festival, the Vegetarian festival, and Chinese deities' birthdays. There are also rituals for each significant day, such paying respect to the deity, benediction, and exorcism. The functions of religious institutions can be categorized into two types. Firstly, for a personal function, the religious institution brings peace of mind to the participant. It also creates relief from anxiety. This institution establishes the power to do something with a positive mind until success. It also creates orderliness in the society. Secondly, the religious institution controls people in the society by teaching people to do the right thing. Additionally, it establishes social norms and social values encouraging orderliness of the society (Sengpracha, 1994).

Educational Institutions

Education institutions teach people to have physical, mental, intellectual, moral and cultural completeness. This completeness can directly affect living in society. The educational institutions provide the knowledge related to daily life of people in the society such as religion, art, culture, sport, and local wisdom (Office of the Council of State, 1999). Additionally, cultural practice is fostered within educational institutions. On the day of Christmas, students are encouraged to participate in the activity held by the school. They are taught to sing Christmas songs, receive a gift from teachers, and have a Christmas meal with friends.

Economy

Economy is one of the most significant variables supporting ritualization, because money support is what ritualization badly needs. In the Spring festival, Chinese require money to purchase new clothes and go travelling during the festival time. Furthermore, money for purchasing offerings is also required. Chinese people believe that the more they offer to the gods, the more benefit they can receive (Ren, 2015). Therefore, any social activity providing money to people would encourage them to participate in the festival.

New Media

New media can be images, voices, and texts. Nowadays, science and technology are developing very rapidly so people are very familiar with new media in their daily life. The media are directly related to people's life such as business, education, medication, military, politics, and culture (Kaewthep & Chaikunpol, 2012). We can bilaterally produce and receive the information with only a fingertip on the world of the internet. Therefore, this is a way of cultural promotion. Research also found that people are getting to know religious tourism of other countries from the internet (Wattanarong, 2011)

Governmental Policy

The Ministry of Tourism and Sport (2012) announced that cultural tourism, religious tourism, and creative tourism are the main targets of Thailand. Because Thailand has freedom of religion and faith, there is much culture related to religion and faith in Thailand. One researcher found that developing the cultural capital can positively affect the development of tourism of Thailand (Sritharet, 2017). Moreover, a survey

shows that 61.8% of people of Chinese descent in Bangkok can positively continue their cultural practice by the support of tax reimbursement which is a government supported project (Kasikorn Bank Research Center, 2019).

Ethnic Associations

There are in total four objectives of establishing Chinese ethnic associations. Firstly, it is to create the harmony and preserve the honor of Thai-Chinese members. Secondly, it is to promote Thai-Chinese culture. Thirdly, it is to promote the economic cooperation between Thailand and China. Finally, it is to cooperate with other social organizations for public interest (Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association, 2017). A study found that the Thai-Chinese Association in Hat Yai has a main priority to preserve Chinese culture in the area. There are the celebrations of the Spring festival, Qingming festival and Vegetarian festival. All festivals are supported by funding and advice from Chinese culture experts (Cummings, 2014).

2.3 Related Studies

Our related studies only found six independent variables of this study. They are family, Chinese shrines, educational institutions, new media, governmental policy, and ethnic associations.

Family

Family directly affects the inheritance of culture. In society, the older generation has a duty to teach traditions to the younger generation, especially in the family institution (Buaphuan, 2017). This result conforms to the research of Boonchom and Preelekha (2020) which found that Chinese-Thai families affected the inheritance of Chinese language and culture of the younger generation. Moreover, it is suggested that traditional culture should be conserved in the current time because people are more familiar with popular culture. Therefore, fewer people would recognize the significance of traditional culture (Ungsitipoonporn, 2014).

Chinese shrines

Chinese religious places commemorate Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism (Krueaphat & De Jong, 2018; Sowcharean & Yongphet, 2016). The function of the shrine is a place for paying respect to the deity, perform rituals, and for Chinese

cultural preservation. There are also annual festival celebrations such as the Spring festival, Qingming festival, Lunar festival, and Vegetarian festival (Sodsongkrit, 2013).

Educational Institutions

A research study found that an educational institution was trying to create multimedia for conserving the Chinese culture. It was developed by both students and teachers in the educational institution. The multimedia was evaluated by local philosophers and Chinese Ethnic Association members (Satiman et al., 2013). Furthermore, one research study also found that there are Chinese festival activities in the educational institution. There are exhibitions of Chinese arts, Chinese language, and Chinese culture (Sankaburanurak, 2016).

New Media

A research study found that younger Chinese-Thai generations in Phuket used new media to share their cultural inheritance, such as photographs, video, and infographics. Furthermore, the news related to Chinese culture in Phuket was broadcast through the radio, television, online social media, and newspapers (Krueaphat & de Jong, 2018).

Governmental Policy

Government directly affects cultural expression. According to research by Sodsongkrit (2013), it was found that the Chinese government has a main duty to communicate Chinese culture. Furthermore, Chinese culture was also supported by the Government of Thailand as a main purpose of cultural tourism. Chinese culture can also bring much money to the Thai economy (Sritharet, 2017).

Ethnic Association

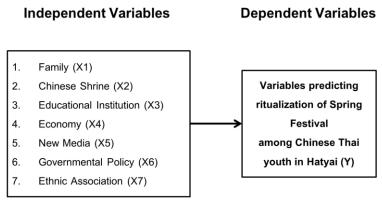
A research study by Zhao (2017) found that there is Chinese cultural conservation in Chinese ethnic associations in Thailand. There are the celebration of important Chinese festivals, the Spring Festival, Qingming Festival, Lunar Festival, and Vegetarian Festival. Moreover, Guitong et al. (2018) stated that Chinese people in Thailand used social connection (Guanxi) to communicate within Chinese society in Thailand for Chinese cultural conservation.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

As we reviewed the relevant literature, we found in total seven independent variables affecting ritualization of the Spring Festival of Chinese-Thai people: family, Chinese shrines, educational institutions, economy, new media, governmental policy, and ethnic associations.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of this research



Developed by Researcher (2021)

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Subjects

The subjects of this study were 160 Chinese-Thai youth who were the representatives of Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai, Thailand. They were selected by using the sampling concept of Wiratchai (1999). The prospective participants were interrogated about two preliminary questions: their age and Chinese-Thai forebearers. Those who met the requirement of the preliminary questions were asked to complete the questionnaire.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a 5-point rating scale questionnaire. It was separated into seven parts or variables predicting ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai: family, Chinese shrines, educational institutions,

economy, new media, governmental policy, and ethnic associations. Each part of the questionnaire was synthesized from related literature, then developed into questions related to the ritualization of the Spring festival.

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected in January 2020. There were three steps in data collection. Firstly, the questionnaire was written in Thai, and it was evaluated by three academic experts, then calculated for IOC. Secondly, it was answered by 45 respondents who were Chinese-Thai youth in Songkhla province. Thirdly, after eliminating some questions that did not meet the reliability criterion, fieldwork data collection was finally undertaken. The respondents were firstly asked for their consent to fill out the questionnaire. Then, they were informed that their data were completely confidential.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the R program to determine the frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation. The relationships between family, Chinese shrines, educational institutions, economy, new media, governmental policy, and ethnic associations and ritualization of the Spring festival were analyzed by calculating Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients, and creating a backward multiple regression equation that could predict the ritualization by calculating multiple correlation coefficients.

3.5 Interpretation Criteria for Mean Values

The researcher employed the interpretation criteria of Best (1981) for mean values of predictors and variables where 1.00-1.49 = Lowest; 1.50-2.49 = Low; 2.50-3.49 = Moderate; 3.50-4.49 = High; and 4.50-5.00 = Highest.

4. Results

4.1 Profiles of the Subjects

The subjects of this study were 160 Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai, 41 males and 119 females. Subjects were in the age 18 years (3.75%), 19 years (30%), 20 years (44.38%), 21 years (13.12%), and 22 years. Most young people are in the university level. There are seniors (65.62%), juniors (15.62%), freshmen (13.12%) and sophomores.

The subjects' study result was mostly in the rate of 4.00-3.00 (51.88%), 2.99-2.00 (44.38%), and below 1.99.

Descriptive Statistics of the Outcome Variable (Ritualization of the Spring Festival) and Predictor Variables

The outcome variable of this study consisted of ritualization of the Spring Festival (Y), and the analysis showed that Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai had a high level of ritualization of the Spring festival (mean = 4.44). The analysis of predictor variables related to ritualization of the Spring festival revealed that most Chinese-Thai youth were influenced by ethnic associations (X7) at the highest level (mean = 4.44), followed by new media (X_5) with the mean score 4.26. Chinese shrines (X_2) and economy (X_4) played an important role on the practice with 4.20 mean score, following by the institution (X_3) mean score 4.19. Finally, family (X_1) and governmental policy (X_6) although located at the last mean score (4.16), were discovered as a high level of Chinese New Year practice influence (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the outcome variable (ritualization of the Spring Festival) and predictor variables

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
	score		
Outcome			
Ritualization of Spring Festival (Y)	4.44	0.38	High
Family (X ₁)	4.16	0.82	High
Chinese shrines (X ₂)	4.20	0.53	High
Institutions (X ₃)	4.19	0.63	High
Economy (X ₄)	4.20	0.55	High
New media (X ₅)	4.26	0.56	High
Governmental policy (X ₆)	4.16	0.51	High
Ethnic associations (X ₇)	4.44	0.38	High

4.2 Relationship between the Outcome Variable: Ritualization of the Spring Festival and the Seven Predictors

According to the Pearson Product-moment Correlations (Table 2), all determinants were positively correlated with ritualization of the Spring Festival at the .001 level. The governmental policy, r = 0.55, the economy and r = 0.52 had a high correlation with

ritualization of the Spring Festival. Remaining variables, the family, r = 0.44, institutions and the ethnic associations, each r = 0.43, the Chinese shrine and the new media, each r = 0.42 had a medium correlation with ritualization of the Spring Festival at .001.

 Table 2

 Relationship between the outcome variable: (Ritualization of the Spring Festival) and predictor variables

Predictor variable	r	р
Ritualization of the Spring Festival		
Family (X1)	0.44	.000
Chinese shrines (X2)	0.42	.000
Institutions (X3)	0.43	.000
Economy (X4)	0.52	9.857
New media (X5)	0.42	.000
Governmental policy (X6)	0.55	3.258
Ethnic associations (X7)	0.43	.000

4.3 Variables Predicting Ritualization of the Spring Festival

Table 3 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis and there were statistically significant exploratory relationships between Chinese New Year practice and four of the determinant variables: family, economy, new media and governmental policy. The largest beta coefficient obtained was .20 for governmental policy, meaning that this made the strongest contribution in explaining ritualization of the Spring Festival. Economy was the second strongest determinant contributing to ritualization of the Spring Festival with a beta value of .013. The third largest beta coefficient was new media with a beta coefficient of .10. The final determinant, family, had a value of .09. The raw score prediction equitation for Chinese New Year practice among Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai, Thailand could be written:

$$\hat{Y}_{v} = 2.19 + 0.09X_{1} + 0.13X_{4} + 0.10X_{5} + 0.20X_{6}$$

Table 3

Reduced linear regression model of the relationship between determinant variables and the outcome variable: Ritualization of the Spring Festival, final model

Determinant variables	В	S.E.	p value
Constant	2.19	0.22	0.000
Family (X ₁)	0.09	0.03	0.000
Economy (X ₄)	0.13	0.05	0.025
New media (X ₅)	0.10	0.05	0.047
Governmental policy (X ₆)	0.20	0.06	0.001

Note: Multiple R-Squared: 0.4044, Adjusted R-squared: 0.389. Residual standard error: 0.3026 on 155 degrees of freedom.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings revealed that the most significant variables related with ritualization of the Spring Festival of Chinese Thai youth in Hat Yai is governmental policy. In the questionnaires, high scores belong to festival events, holiday policy, and tourism advertisement. This result conformed to Seangtian and Sodsongkrit (2017) that one of the most significant duties of government is to conserve and communicate culture. Additionally, Chinese culture in Thailand was supported by the Thai government for the reasons of cultural tourism (Sritharet, 2017).

The second strongest variable is the economy. The questionnaires revealed that high scores belong to the purchasing of new clothes, ritual offerings, and traveling. This result is harmonized with Lakhanapipat et al. (2016) that the financial support can affect the inheritance of culture of the Chinese shrines. Moreover, this result agrees with Sritharet (2017) that Chinese-Thai people required financial support to celebrate the Spring Festival in terms of paying homage, travelling, and the purchase of offerings.

From these results, we can critique that governmental support and the economy together affect the ritualization of the Spring Festival. The governmental policy should mainly focus on supporting good economic conditions related to cultural conservation. Moreover, it is suggested that the social network of Chinese people in Thailand (Guanxi) would be beneficial to ritualization of the Spring Festival (Guitong et al., 2018).

The third largest beta coefficient was new media. Teenagers are very familiar with online social media. Therefore they share and produce news in terms of photographs, video, music, and infographics related to ritualization of the Spring Festival (Phonphong et al., 2007). This result also agrees with Krueaphat and de Jong (2018) that Chinese teenagers gather into an online group for celebrating the Spring Festival. This group provided communication, cooperation, and brainstorming for helping the Chinese shrines to hold the celebration.

Although this research study found not only three strong predictor variables that could ritualize the Spring Festival among Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai, but also that family, Chinese shrines, and ethnic associations got high mean scores from the descriptive analysis (table 1). As Mueansit (2010) mentioned, family is the most important social institution as it is the first social institution of all social members. Culture is inherited from generation to generation in the family. Additionally, the educational institutions usually provide the opportunity to the students to inherit the Spring Festival such as class and school activities. Students would learn about the Spring Festival from their participation in the activity. Moreover, the rituals of the Spring Festival is continually supported by Chinese shrines (Sodsongkrit, 2013). Also there was cooperation between the shrines and the associations in festival preparation and promotion (Zhao, 2017).

In summary, this research aimed to examine variables predicting ritualization of the Spring Festival among Chinese-Thai youth in Hat Yai and created a prediction equation for ritualization. As Boonchom and Preelekha (2020) mentioned, few young Chinese-Thai people used Chinese to communicate inside the family, and few of them continued to perform the ritualization of the Spring Festival. Therefore, this situation belongs to the establishment of the research to find the predictor variables that could still preserve the Spring Festival in the current time.

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