

RANKING CULTURAL WISDOM AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THAILAND: U-CULTURE THAILAND RANKING

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Abstract

This research aimed to develop an intelligent system for ranking the cultural wisdom and artistic heritage of universities in Thailand under the initiative “U-Culture Thailand Ranking.” The study emphasized synthesizing cultural wisdom data related to the core missions of universities, as well as defining key components, indicators, weightings, and explicit evaluation criteria. A qualitative research design was employed in combination with expert and stakeholder validation, alongside the development of an online application following the System Development Life Cycle (SDLC).

The findings revealed that cultural wisdom in Thai universities encompasses five major dimensions: (1) cultural infrastructure, (2) curricula and cultural integration, (3) cultural research and innovation, (4) management and budgeting, and (5) community engagement and social recognition. The developed indicators demonstrated content validity, appropriateness, and practical applicability. As an innovation, the indicators enhance transparency, accuracy, and multi-stakeholder participation, thereby contributing to sustainable promotion of cultural wisdom, strengthening of soft power, and elevating the role of Thai universities on the international stage.

Keywords: university ranking, cultural wisdom, intelligent system, U-Culture Thailand Ranking

Background

Thailand’s cultural wisdom and artistic heritage represent a valuable legacy, shaped by a long history and diverse social and geographical contexts. This encompasses art, traditions, language, performance, and ways of life that reflect the nation’s unique identity and serve as a foundation for societal development (UNESCO, 2019). The preservation and transmission of cultural wisdom play a crucial role in sustaining Thai society and inspire the creation of future cultural innovations (Phonphit, 2020). Higher education institutions, as academic organizations with missions to generate knowledge and provide societal services, also bear significant responsibilities as leaders in cultural preservation and development through teaching, research, innovation, and community engagement (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2022). Universities thus play a pivotal role in fostering understanding and instilling the values of cultural wisdom, ensuring their sustainable presence in society.

The conservation and promotion of cultural wisdom within universities not only fulfill educational missions but also align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, which emphasize the preservation of cultural heritage and the enhancement of community participation in cultural dimensions (United Nations, 2015; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The development of the U-Culture Thailand Ranking system is therefore considered a mechanism to support the SDGs by systematically assessing and enhancing the quality of cultural wisdom and artistic heritage in Thai universities.

At the international level, the promotion and preservation of local culture are directly linked to the SDGs, especially SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and human settlements),

which focus on conserving the world's cultural and natural heritage while fostering community participation in cultural matters (United Nations, 2015; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Therefore, it is vitally important to create tools or innovations that make managing and assessing cultural wisdom easier.

The development of an online application for assessing and ranking universities' cultural wisdom is a cutting-edge technology that improves the effectiveness of data synthesis, analysis, and collection while boosting evaluation process transparency and credibility. Additionally, by using algorithms and intelligent systems, human-related restrictions are lessened, guaranteeing that the ranking process is precise, adaptable, and constantly changing to reflect social shifts. (Wang & Wu, 2021).

Consequently, the creation of the U-Culture Thailand Ranking acts as a crucial tool for bolstering Thailand's soft power and promoting sustainable development in line with international standards, in addition to being an academic tool for comparing the cultural performance of Thai universities. with the SDG framework.

Research Problems and Innovation Development Challenges

1. The absence of defined methods for assessing creative heritage and cultural wisdom. Currently, Thai universities do not have clear criteria or indicators for evaluating and comparing cultural wisdom and artistic heritage, making it difficult to systematically determine competencies and improve quality.

2. Fragmented and unstructured cultural data management. Cultural and artistic information in universities is often scattered across multiple units, lacking mechanisms for effective collection, analysis, and synthesis.

3. Limitations in transparency and credibility of evaluations. Traditional evaluation methods may be biased by individuals or committees and lack systems for verification, reducing confidence among stakeholders.

4. Use of technology not aligned with new contexts. Cultural assessments have not fully utilized digital technologies, limiting online data access, big data analysis, and rapid dissemination of evaluation results.

5. Challenges in creating motivation and constructive competition. Universities lack mechanisms for benchmarking cultural achievements against other institutions, which could stimulate continuous development.

6. Need for alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 11 (cultural heritage preservation), which have not yet been systematically integrated into evaluation frameworks. (Tayossyingyong, Bangbon, Naude, Zhang, Siribensanont, & Suwanchotnate, 2025).

The absence of a standardized, transparent, and digitally enabled ranking and evaluation system for cultural wisdom and artistic heritage represents a critical problem that necessitates the development of the U-Culture Thailand Ranking. This innovation aims to establish a high-quality, credible university cultural management system that supports sustainable development.

Table1. Summary of Research Problems and Innovation Development Challenges in Cultural Wisdom and Artistic Heritage

No.	Problem	Details
1	Lack of standardized evaluation system	Thai universities lack clear criteria or indicators, making it difficult to determine competencies and systematically enhance quality.
2	Fragmented cultural data management	Cultural and artistic information is often scattered across multiple units, lacking mechanisms for effective collection, analysis, and synthesis.
3	Limitations in transparency and credibility	Traditional evaluations may be biased, lack verification systems, and fail to build stakeholder confidence.
4	Technology not aligned with new contexts	Evaluations have not fully adopted digital solutions, limiting support for big data analysis, online access, and rapid result dissemination.
5	Challenges in fostering motivation and constructive competition	Universities lack mechanisms for benchmarking cultural achievements against other institutions.
6	Need to align with SDGs	SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 11 (cultural heritage preservation) have not yet been systematically integrated into the evaluation system.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics and key issues of cultural wisdom and artistic heritage related to the missions of universities in Thailand?
2. What are the appropriate components, indicators, weighting scores, and evaluation criteria for ranking the cultural wisdom and artistic heritage of universities in Thailand?

Research Objectives

1. To synthesize information on cultural wisdom and artistic heritage within the missions of universities in Thailand.
2. To identify appropriate components, indicators, weighting scores, and evaluation criteria for assessing the cultural wisdom and artistic heritage of universities in Thailand.

Research Methodology and Procedures

The development of the application for ranking the cultural wisdom and artistic heritage of universities in Thailand: *U-Culture Thailand Ranking* was conducted through the following steps:

Step 1: Synthesis of cultural wisdom and artistic heritage Information.

This step involved studying information related to Thai higher education institutions through document analysis, textbooks, relevant research, and expert interviews. The purpose was to classify and analyze the missions of universities with a particular focus on cultural wisdom and artistic heritage, and to establish a conceptual framework for the evaluation. Cultural wisdom specialists and administrators from Thai universities' cultural affairs offices were important informants. Structured interviews with open-ended questions.

Step 2: identifying the evaluation criteria, weighted scores, indications, and components.

This step defines the components, indicators, weighted scores, and evaluation criteria for ranking the creative heritage and cultural wisdom of Thai universities, followed by an appropriateness assessment. Key informants include Thai university cultural administrators, university administrators, cultural experts with recognized cultural wisdom, stakeholders in cultural wisdom, and representatives from universities and higher education institutions in all regions of the country.

Step 3: Stakeholder consultation is used for critique and revision.

The draft components, indicators, weighting scores, and evaluation criteria were reviewed by connoisseurship, and the suggestions will be used as a guideline for future improvements.

Research Conceptual Framework

The goal of this study is to create an intelligent system for evaluating the creative and cultural heritage of Thai institutions using mixed-methods research to use the obtained data to create a transparent, fair, and standardized ranking application.

The research framework is as follows:

- Input.** 1) Information on creative history and cultural wisdom within the main goals of universities. 2) Scholarly data from studies, records, and pertinent databases, and 3) Opinions from experts and stakeholders.
- Process.** 1) Synthesizing information on cultural wisdom and artistic heritage. 2) Defining components, indicators, weighting scores, and evaluation criteria. And 3) Designing and developing the intelligent online application system.
- Output.** 1) Components and evaluation criteria for university cultural wisdom and artistic heritage. 2) An intelligent system capable of ranking universities based on their cultural heritage potential. And 3) An online application “U-Culture Thailand Ranking”.
- Outcome.** 1) Establishment of a ranking system that reflects the value and role of Thai universities in cultural wisdom and artistic heritage. 2) Encouragement for universities to develop and sustainably promote cultural heritage. And 3) Policy support and informed decision-making for relevant agencies.

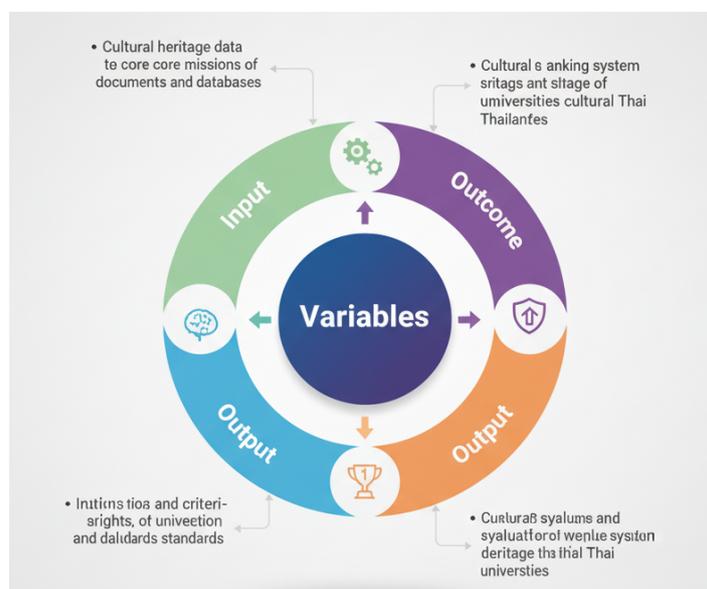


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

Research Findings

1. Synthesis of Cultural Wisdom and Artistic Heritage Information within the Missions of Universities in Thailand. Based on the review of documents, textbooks, related research, and interviews with cultural experts as well as administrators of cultural affairs offices in Thai universities, the following key findings were obtained:

1.1 Infrastructure: Most universities possess buildings and facilities for cultural activities such as art galleries, museums, exhibition halls, and outdoor activity spaces. The readiness and scale of facilities affect the ability to organize cultural events and projects. Universities with complete and standardized infrastructure are able to conduct diverse and continuous cultural activities.

1.2 Curricula and Courses: Curricula and courses related to cultural heritage vary among institutions. For example, some universities offer Thai traditional music, local traditions, or international arts. The number of students enrolled in cultural courses influences the success of cultural activities and the transmission of wisdom.

1.3 Cultural Wisdom Units: Faculty are frequently found in universities, organizations, divisions, or groups that promote cultural pursuits. These departments in the university that promotes cultural activities within the university and cooperates with external communities.

1.4 Objectives, Budgets and Strategy: Most recognized and nationally recognized universities have some of the objectives related to arts and culture identified in their strategies, including the promotion of cultural research. Although staff resources and budget allocations are generally aligned with the strategic objectives, some universities still need to improve their effectiveness.

1.5 Community Engagement: Communities engage with universities both domestically and internationally through cultural exchange programs and exhibitions, promoting cultural diversity and preserving local wisdom.

In summary, the integration of infrastructure, curriculum, cultural units, methods, and community engagement all contribute to strengthening the cultural wisdom of Thai universities. These components serve as key foundational data for guiding the development of evaluation measures and the creation of the U-Culture Thailand Ranking application. The results emphasize that infrastructure preparedness, teamwork, and efficient resource allocation are necessary for success in cultural wisdom.

2. Development of Components, Indicators, Weighting, and Evaluation Criteria for Cultural Wisdom and Artistic Heritage of Universities in Thailand.

From documentary reviews and in-depth interviews with cultural experts, higher education administrators, and community representatives, the following results were obtained

2.1 Conceptual Framework for Indicator Development. Indicators were designed under the concept of *Cultural-Based University Development*, referencing international standards such as *UI GreenMetric*, *QS Stars Rating*, and the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). The framework connects three dimensions. Management & Infrastructure, Teaching, Learning & Research, Community & Cultural Engagement.

2.2 Initial Set of Indicators. Through content analysis and expert opinions, five main indicator categories were developed

2.2.1 Cultural Infrastructure. Number and quality of cultural facilities; accessibility to cultural learning resources.

2.2.2 Curricula and Integration. Number of curricula/courses integrating arts and culture; proportion of students involved in cultural curricula and activities.

2.2.3 Cultural Research and Innovation. Number of cultural research outputs published; creation of cultural innovations applied in practice.

2.2.4 Management and Budgeting. Presence of a university cultural strategic plan; proportion of budget allocated to cultural activities.

2.2.5 Community Participation and Social Recognition. Frequency and continuity of community engagement activities; community satisfaction and participation levels.

2.3 Indicator Validation. Using the Delphi Technique with experts, the validation results showed all indicators had a content validity index (IOC) between 0.80–1.00, indicating high relevance and consistency. The developed indicators were clear, measurable, and practical (SMART indicators). In conclusion, the development of components, indicators, weighting, and evaluation criteria provides Thai universities with a concrete cultural assessment framework. The resulting indicators can serve as the foundation for *U-Culture Thailand Ranking*, reflecting university potential both nationally and internationally. The findings confirm that the developed indicators are highly feasible for practical use in both assessment and ranking of universities.

Discussion

The research on “Developing an Intelligent System for Ranking the Cultural Wisdom and Artistic Heritage of Universities in Thailand: U-Culture Thailand Ranking” highlights the crucial role of cultural wisdom and artistic heritage rankings in supporting both cultural preservation and the strategic development of Thai universities. The key points of discussion are as follows:

1. **Ranking as a Policy and Strategic Mechanism.** The establishment of the U-Culture Thailand Ranking system raises universities’ awareness of their cultural roles alongside their missions of producing graduates and conducting research. This finding aligns with Altbach and de Wit (2017), who noted that university rankings can serve as policy drivers and shape institutional development across academic and cultural dimensions. However, Hazelkorn (2015) emphasized that global rankings tend to focus primarily on academic aspects. Thus, the creation of cultural indicators represents an innovative and contextually significant contribution for Thailand.

2. **Application of Intelligent Systems and Digital Innovation.** The integration of AI and Big Data Analytics into the U-Culture Thailand Ranking ensures transparent, verifiable, and real-time data processing. This is consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who argued that intelligent technologies in culture and education enhance accuracy and reduce evaluator bias. Nevertheless, unlike many international studies that rely mainly on quantitative data, U-Culture Thailand Ranking emphasizes qualitative values and cultural context.

3. **Stakeholder Participation and Engagement.** Findings indicate that inclusive assessments involving students, local communities, and the private sector help reflect the true value of cultural wisdom and sustain cultural activities. UNESCO (2016) supports this perspective, showing that community participation is a critical factor in promoting cultural continuity.

4. **Practical Challenges and Limitations.** Even if indicators are developed and applied systematically, there are still regional contextual differences and disparities in the infrastructure and data preparedness of universities. Marginson (2018) also noted that creating global ranking standards is hampered by contextual variations and unequal resource allocation.

5. **Implications for Policy and Society.** Beyond rankings and assessments, the U-Culture Thailand rankings serve as an important tool to strengthen Thailand’s soft power. The integration of intelligent systems and cultural indicators enables universities to develop cultural activities, promote continuous cultural development, and link it to creative economy and cultural tourism policies. Furthermore, the U-Culture Thailand rankings have the potential to drive the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

The rankings serve as a tool for policymakers to manage cultural knowledge and resources sustainably, as well as foster collaboration between educational institutions, local communities, and other organizations to preserve the nation’s cultural heritage. (United Nations, 2015).



Figure 2. Framework for the Analysis of Study Results: U-Culture Thailand Ranking and Improvement of Cultural Knowledge in Thai Universities

The discussion highlights that *U-Culture Thailand Ranking* is a valuable invention that achieves the objectives of Thai universities in promoting cultural wisdom sustainably. The assessment system has established five basic dimensions: (1) preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge, (2) academic publications and cultural advancement, (3) student participation and engagement, (4) community and local integration, and (5) national/international recognition and reputation.

Although, if developed into an intelligent online platform, it will enhance the evaluation process by using empirical data and multi-stakeholder participation, ensuring that the ranking system is reliable, accurate, and appropriate for the Thai environment.

Recommendations

1. Policy Recommendations

1.1 University Level: Universities should establish specialized agencies or information centers on culture, arts, and wisdom to collect data and link it to the U-Culture Thailand ranking system.

1.2 National Level: The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) should promote the use of the U-Culture Thailand ranking as a national benchmark to enhance the image and reputation of Thai universities internationally.

1.3 Development Policy Level: This ranking should be integrated with Thailand's Soft Power policy to promote the creative economy and cultural tourism.

1.4 International Level: Develop collaboration with international and ASEAN university networks to ensure that Thailand's U-Culture ranking is comparable and aligned with global rankings.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

2.1 Create artificial intelligence (AI) models that can learn from and assess data from social media to represent societal views.

2.2 Incorporate metrics pertaining to the cultural economy, including earnings from cultural events or goods.

2.3 Examine the effects of utilizing the U-Culture Ranking system on social sustainability and the improvement of educational quality.

Summary of Research Findings. The study entitled “Development of an Intelligent System for Ranking Cultural Wisdom and Artistic Heritage of Universities in Thailand: U-Culture Thailand Ranking” showed that although Thai universities have great potential in terms of knowledge, the arts,

and culture, they do not yet have a standardized ranking system that can accurately represent social and communal values.

The developed indicator framework consists of five main dimensions: Preservation and transmission of wisdom, Academic and cultural innovation outputs, Student activities and engagement, Community and local linkages, National and international image and recognition. The developed intelligent U-Culture Thailand Ranking system can process and rank data efficiently, demonstrating accuracy, reliability, and high user satisfaction. Establishing the U-Culture Thailand Ranking is not only an innovation in assessment but also a crucial tool for revitalizing, creating, and driving cultural value in Thailand's higher education system toward sustainable and meaningful progress.

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