

The Commodification of the Sacred: Thai Amulets in Contemporary Consumer Culture

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Abstract: This study explores the transformation of Thai amulets from sacred artifacts into lifestyle products, focusing on four key objectives: (1) examining the evolution of amulet designs influenced by trends, fashion, and consumer preferences; (2) analyzing marketing strategies, including branding, storytelling, and digital distribution; (3) understanding shifting consumer behaviors and expectations within broader cultural changes; and (4) evaluating government perspectives and policies balancing commodification and cultural preservation. A mixed-method approach integrates existential phenomenology and constructivist grounded theory to provide a nuanced understanding of this transformation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 25 participants, including designers, marketers, officials, and consumers; participant observation at amulet markets and on digital platforms like Facebook and TikTok; and document analysis of promotional materials and policies. The findings reveal significant evolution in amulet designs, incorporating minimalist aesthetics, luxury materials, and global fashion influences while retaining traditional motifs. Marketing strategies emphasize storytelling, celebrity endorsements, and social media engagement to reframe amulets as symbols of identity, cultural pride, and spiritual protection. Consumer behavior reflects a shift toward valuing amulets for aesthetic and status-related attributes, alongside spiritual meanings. Government agencies play a dual role in promoting amulets as cultural and economic assets while

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addressing concerns about preserving their sacredness. This research highlights the interplay between tradition, modernity, and market forces, offering insights into the commodification of cultural artifacts. Thai amulets exemplify how cultural heritage adapts to contemporary consumer demands while maintaining spiritual and cultural significance.

Keywords: Thai amulets, cultural commodification, consumer behavior, marketing strategies, heritage preservation

Introduction: What are Thai amulets?

In contemporary Thailand, a Theravada Buddhist country in Southeast Asia, a profound transformation is taking place at the intersection of spirituality and consumer culture. Traditional Buddhist amulets, long venerated as sacred objects imbued with spiritual power and protective qualities, are undergoing a significant metamorphosis. Once deeply personal symbols of faith, Thai amulets have transitioned into fashionable lifestyle products, blending traditional spiritual functions with modern consumer demands (Turner 2022). This shift reflects broader patterns of cultural adaptation in a globalized world, where spiritual artifacts are increasingly commodified to align with modern values and aesthetics.

Amulets, or *phra kruang*, have traditionally served as physical manifestations of Buddhist teachings and supernatural protection. Their consecration by monks imbued them with spiritual significance, deeply rooted in Thai cultural and religious heritage. For centuries, their use was personal and ritualistic, symbolizing an individual's spiritual connection and identity (Charoensuk 2021). However, in recent decades, amulets have been recontextualized as consumer products. High-end brands and social media influencers increasingly position these objects as cultural commodities, integrating them into fashion, luxury goods, and everyday accessories (Kitiarsa 2020; Traisurat 2022).

This reimagining of amulets reflects the tension between tradition and modernity. On one hand, their sacred origins remain central to their cultural identity; on the other, their evolution into marketable items raises critical questions about authenticity, cultural appropriation, and the commodification of spirituality. The increasing prevalence of limited-edition amulets, celebrity endorsements, and online marketplaces has not only reshaped how amulets are consumed but also redefined their cultural significance within Thai society (Pongkittisakul 2023; Somboon 2023).

In addition to consumer and cultural perspectives, the role of government agencies in shaping and responding to this transformation is significant. Thai authorities, such as the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA) and the Office of National Buddhism (ONAB), have expressed mixed views on the commercialization of Buddhist amulets. On one hand, these agencies acknowledge the economic potential of the amulet trade as a means to promote cultural tourism and sustain local craftsmanship. On the other

hand, concerns persist regarding the commodification of sacred symbols, the dilution of spiritual meaning, and the ethical implications of mass production and cross-border marketing practices. Recent studies highlight how the Thai amulet industry has become increasingly globalized, with both domestic and international actors influencing its transformation and regulation (Naepimai and Chaisingkananont 2023; Fan 2023).

In some cases, government agencies have implemented guidelines to ensure that amulet production adheres to Buddhist principles and maintains cultural integrity. However, these efforts face challenges in balancing the preservation of sacred traditions with the realities of a rapidly expanding consumer-driven market. This dual role highlights the complexity of managing cultural artifacts in a globalized economy. The government's involvement also raises broader questions about the interplay between regulation, cultural commodification, and consumer freedom.

Picture 1. Amulets (phra kruang) in traditional way



Source: authors.

Thai amulets hold a significant position in Thai society, reflecting a blend of spiritual beliefs, cultural heritage, and modern consumer trends. Traditionally, these sacred objects were venerated for their spiritual powers, protection, and connection to Buddhist teachings. However, in contemporary Thailand, amulets have transformed into multifaceted commodities that impact both social and economic domains.

Undoubtedly, Thai amulets have its own social importance. Firstly, they contain Thai cultural identity and continuity. Amulets serve as symbols of Thai cultural and religious heritage, linking individuals to their spiritual roots and traditions. Their sacredness, often reinforced through blessings by revered monks, reinforces a sense of community and shared cultural identity. Secondly, they embody status and identity expression. In modern society, amulets have become lifestyle products and symbols of status. High-end or limited-edition amulets are often associated with wealth and social standing, especially among younger, urban consumers. Lastly, they carry the values of spiritual connection in a globalized world. Thai Amulets provide a means for individuals to maintain their spiritual practices amidst the pressures of modern life. For many, owning an amulet is a way to negotiate the balance between tradition and contemporary values.

In economic importance, Thai amulets strongly reflect tourism and cultural commodification. The amulet industry is a vital component of cultural tourism in Thailand. Markets like Tha Prachan and online platforms such as Facebook and TikTok attract domestic and international buyers, boosting the local economy. In addition, they reveal Thai craftsmanship and employment. Amulet production sustains local artisans and businesses. The integration of traditional craftsmanship with modern design trends has created a niche market that fosters economic opportunities in rural and urban areas. Furthermore, Thai amulets promote digital market expansion. Social media and e-commerce platforms have expanded the reach of the amulet market, creating new consumer segments and revenue streams. Marketing strategies such as storytelling and influencer endorsements have increased the appeal of amulets as both sacred and fashionable items. Lastly, Thai amulets vividly reflect government support and regulation. The Thai government recognizes the economic potential of the amulet market as a cultural asset. Agencies promote amulets through tourism campaigns while balancing the preservation of their spiritual value with market demands. At present, the production and commercialization of Thai amulets are facing certain challenges and adjustments. While amulets contribute to cultural and economic sustainability, their commodification raises concerns about the erosion of their sacred significance. Striking a balance between cultural preservation and economic development is crucial to maintaining their dual role as sacred artifacts and marketable commodities. On the other hand, Thai amulets exemplify the intersection of spirituality, culture, and commerce, illustrating how traditional practices adapt to contemporary consumer needs while retaining their core cultural significance.

Thai amulets hold profound socio-economic value in contemporary Thailand,

blending spiritual heritage with modern consumer culture. Socially, amulets serve as symbols of cultural identity and spiritual continuity, linking individuals to Buddhist teachings and shared traditions. In modern contexts, they have evolved into lifestyle products, reflecting status and personal identity, particularly among younger, urban demographics. Economically, the amulet market drives cultural tourism, sustains local artisans, and generates significant revenue through digital platforms like Facebook and TikTok. Government agencies recognize their potential as cultural and economic assets, promoting amulets in tourism campaigns while attempting to preserve their sacred essence. However, the commodification of these sacred objects poses challenges, such as concerns over authenticity and the erosion of spiritual values. Balancing cultural preservation with market demands is vital to maintaining the dual role of Thai amulets as sacred artifacts and economic commodities, reflecting their enduring significance in a globalized society.

This study is based on field research and logical analysis methods to achieve the following main research objectives: (1) to investigate the evolution of Thai amulet designs, influenced by contemporary trends, fashion, and consumer preferences; (2) to analyze marketing strategies employed in transforming amulets from religious artifacts into lifestyle products, with a focus on branding, storytelling, and digital distribution; (3) to examine consumer behaviors and expectations regarding amulets, reflecting broader shifts in cultural values and societal norms; and (4) to evaluate the perspectives and regulatory frameworks of government agencies, examining in balancing commodification with cultural preservation.

Research methodology and theories

This study employs a mixed-method approach integrating existential phenomenology and constructivist grounded theory, merging the richness of lived experiences with the systematic development of theory from data. Existential phenomenology emphasizes the subjective, embodied experiences of individuals and seeks to understand how they interpret and construct meaning in their lifeworld (van Manen 1997; Spiegelberg 1975). Constructivist grounded theory complements this by emphasizing the collaborative construction of knowledge between researchers and participants, using systematic and categorization to generate theory grounded in empirical data (Charmaz 2006), to provide a nuanced understanding of the commercialization of Thai amulets. The combined methodologies allow for an exploration of individual lived experiences and the collective social processes shaping the transformation of amulets from sacred artifacts to lifestyle commodities.

Existential phenomenology was used to investigate the lived experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes of individuals engaging with Thai amulets, including designers, marketers, and consumers. This approach emphasizes

understanding how amulets are experienced as cultural and spiritual objects within contemporary life (van Manen 2016). By focusing on the subjective perspectives of participants, this methodology captures the tensions between the sacred and the commodified, revealing how individuals negotiate these dualities in their interactions with amulets.

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2014) was applied to uncover the underlying social and cultural processes driving the commercialization of amulets. This approach facilitates the generation of theoretical insights grounded in empirical data, allowing for an understanding of how stakeholders collectively construct new meanings and practices related to amulets. The iterative process of coding and categorization enabled the identification of key themes and patterns within the data, such as the strategies used by marketers to position amulets as fashion items and the role of social media in shaping consumer trends.

The data collection methods were carefully designed to align with the research objectives and methodological frameworks, including: in-depth interviews (the study conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 25 participants carefully selected to represent diverse perspectives within the amulet economy. The interview process was designed to elicit rich, nuanced insights into their experiences, motivations, and interpretations related to amulet production, marketing, and consumption. Questions explored participants' experiences with amulet design, marketing strategies, consumer motivations, and perspectives on cultural preservation); participant observation (the participant observation component of this study was designed to capture the dynamic interactions and cultural practices surrounding Thai amulets in both physical and digital spaces. By immersing in contexts where amulet commodification is most visible, the research provides a rich, multi-layered understanding of consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and the negotiation of sacred and commercial identities) and physical observations at Amulet Markets (observations were conducted at prominent amulet markets in Bangkok, including the well-known Tha Prachan Market, and in other cities such as Chiang Mai and Nakhon Pathom. These markets are central hubs for amulet transactions and are frequented by a diverse demographic, including devout Buddhists, collectors, tourists, and resellers).

This study has three focus areas, including customer behavior, marketing techniques, and cultural practices. The research studied how consumers interacted with merchants and artisans, including bargaining practices, inquiries about amulet authenticity, and discussions of spiritual significance. Furthermore, the research also pointed to patterns in demographic preferences, such as younger buyers gravitating toward modern or "trendy" amulet designs and older consumers seeking traditional or historically significant amulets. On marketing techniques, the authors observed how merchants displayed amulets, from elaborate glass cases emphasizing exclusivity to mass-market layouts for lower-priced items and documented promotional tactics, including storytelling about the amulet's origin, connections to revered monks, or the

sacred rituals involved in its blessing. On cultural practices, the authors recorded rituals performed at the markets, such as blessing ceremonies or spiritual consultations, to understand the interplay between commerce and sacred practices.

Observations in digital spaces includes social media platforms such are Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These were monitored for their significant role in shaping contemporary consumer culture around Thai amulets. These platforms host a vibrant ecosystem of sellers, influencers, and consumer communities. Focus areas of this channel including presentation of amulets, marketing strategies, and consumer engagement. In the first focus point - presentation of amulets, the authors (1) analyzed how amulets are photographed, edited, and captioned to emphasize their sacredness, uniqueness, or financial value, and (2) noted the use of hashtags, emojis, and cultural references to target specific demographics, such as collectors or international buyers. On marketing strategies, the author studied the role of live-stream sales, which combine real-time interaction with potential buyers and dramatic storytelling about the amulet's history or spiritual power as well as documented the use of influencers and celebrities who endorse amulets, often tying them to themes of luck, wealth, or protection. On consumer engagement, the authors (1) observed how consumers interact with posts, including likes, comments, and shares (this provided insights into the narratives or features that resonate most with different audiences). (2) tracked discussions in online communities or groups dedicated to amulet trading, where debates about authenticity, spiritual efficacy, and market trends are common.

Analytical themes emerging from the observations were focused on the following issues: sacred vs. commercial narratives in physical markets, merchants often emphasize the sacred origins and spiritual value of amulets, while in digital spaces, marketing leans toward their collectible and aesthetic appeal. Also, digital platforms have transformed the way amulets are marketed, creating new consumer segments and expanding the commodification process beyond traditional boundaries. Cultural adaptation and consumer preferences refers to the younger consumers who engage with amulets as both spiritual objects and cultural artifacts, often repurposing their meaning to align with contemporary lifestyles.³

This detailed observation framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the commodification of Thai amulets as both a localized and global phenomenon. Would you like to integrate this with the findings from interviews or explore specific patterns further, such as generational differences in consumer behavior.

The document analysis in this study explored the representation, marketing, and regulation of Thai amulets through a review of promotional materials, social

³ As a participant observer, the researcher remained mindful of ethical boundaries, ensuring that observations in physical and digital spaces did not disrupt sacred practices or invade participants' privacy. Reflexive journaling was employed to document the researcher's positionality and biases, particularly in interpreting behaviors and practices that might appear commodified but hold deep cultural significance for participants.

media posts, and government policies. Promotional materials and advertisements, both traditional and digital, emphasize sacred narratives, such as blessings by revered monks and miraculous stories, while leveraging modern marketing techniques like influencer endorsements and live-stream sales to appeal to diverse audiences. Social media platforms play a critical role in expanding the reach of amulet commerce, fostering real-time engagement and creating vibrant online communities for collectors and consumers. Simultaneously, government policies focus on regulating counterfeit amulets, promoting them as cultural heritage, and positioning them as economic assets in tourism campaigns. This analysis highlights the dual nature of Thai amulets as sacred objects and commercial products, reflecting a balance between preserving their spiritual significance and embracing their commodification in contemporary consumer culture.

Data Analysis of this research includes two following tasks: (a) phenomenological analysis: the authors employed a thematic approach to analyze interview transcripts and observational notes, focusing on participants' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions. Themes such as authenticity, cultural identity, and consumerism were identified and interpreted, and (b) grounded theory analysis: the authors used open, axial, and selective coding to iteratively analyze data and construct theoretical models. Categories such as design evolution, marketing narratives, and consumer behavior patterns were developed, linking individual actions to broader social processes.

During the study, the authors applied the triangulation methodology in collecting and checking data. Cross-referenced data collection was used, including the combination of interviews, observations, and documents analysis. We conducted semi-structured interviews with monks who bless amulets, artisans involved in crafting them, merchants selling amulets, collectors, and everyday users. The interviews explored perspectives on the amulets' sacredness, value, and commercialization (Kvale 1996). Participant and non-participant observations were made at amulet markets, temple fairs, and blessing ceremonies. This provided insight into the rituals, transactions, and interactions surrounding amulets in both sacred and commercial settings (Angrosino 2007). On document analysis, historical records, promotional materials, advertisements, and digital media (e.g., Facebook groups and websites) were analyzed to understand how amulets are represented and marketed over time, reflecting shifts in consumer behavior and cultural values (Bowen 2009).

Preliminary findings, particularly interpretations of sacredness versus commodification, were shared with key participants (e.g., monks, artisans, and collectors) to ensure that the analysis accurately reflects their perspectives (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This collaborative step allowed participants to clarify, challenge, or expand upon the researcher's interpretations, ensuring that the findings are credible and grounded in the lived realities of those engaged in the amulet economy.

Research Findings

This study identifies a significant transformation in the design of Thai amulets, revealing how traditional sacred motifs have been adapted to meet the expectations of modern consumers. Drawing on existential phenomenology, the findings capture the experiences of designers who navigate the balance between spiritual authenticity and market demand.

The main findings show that modern amulet design blends tradition with contemporary style in several ways. Designers are increasingly using sleek, geometric shapes, minimalist forms, and premium materials like gold, platinum, and gemstones to attract younger, urban consumers who value both meaning and fashion. Influenced by global trends and pop culture, some amulets are now released as limited editions or created in collaboration with luxury brands, turning them into status symbols that combine spiritual value with exclusivity. At the same time, traditional symbols such as Buddha images, yantra patterns, and auspicious motifs remain central to their design but are reimagined to fit modern aesthetics, preserving their cultural and spiritual significance while appealing to current tastes.

Picture 2. Amulets (phra kruang) in modern way



Source: authors.

Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, the study contextualizes these changes as part of broader societal trends where spiritual artifacts are redefined as expressions of status and personal identity. Designers emphasized the importance of innovation to maintain relevance while respecting tradition, which they view as crucial in a competitive market.

The study also reveals three key insights about modern amulet design. First, innovation helps preserve tradition by keeping amulets relevant and meaningful for future generations. Second, the changing designs show a shift toward commodification, as these sacred objects are now valued not only for their spiritual importance but

also for their beauty and social appeal. Third, amulets have become lifestyle symbols that express individuality, social status, and a connection to cultural heritage. This evolution highlights how Thai amulet design continues to adapt to modern consumer demands while maintaining its cultural and spiritual essence.

Marketing Strategies Transforming Amulets into Lifestyle Products

The study reveals how marketing strategies have played a central role in repositioning Thai amulets from purely sacred artifacts to lifestyle products that appeal to contemporary consumers. Using phenomenological interviews, marketers shared their experiences in crafting emotionally resonant campaigns that balance the amulets' spiritual heritage with their modern reinterpretation as symbols of personal success and individualism.

The study discovers 3 key marketing strategies, including branding storytelling, celebrity and influencer endorsement. On *brand storytelling*, marketers emphasized the power of storytelling to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Campaigns often highlight the spiritual origins of the amulet, such as its blessing by a revered monk or its connection to ancient rituals, while simultaneously presenting it as a contemporary accessory. This dual narrative allows marketers to appeal to diverse consumer groups: those drawn to cultural heritage and those seeking items that align with modern lifestyles. On *celebrity and influencer endorsements*, collaborations with celebrities and influencers have proven highly effective in elevating the status of amulets. Marketers reported that endorsements by figures known for their spiritual devotion or fashion influence help broaden the appeal of amulets, making them desirable to both traditional and trend-conscious consumers. For example, celebrities incorporating amulets into their public appearances enhance their image as items of both faith and style. On *social media campaigns*, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become essential for engaging younger demographics. Marketers described strategies such as posting visually engaging content—videos of monks blessing amulets, user testimonials, or styling amulets with luxury outfits—to create a sense of connection and exclusivity. Hashtags, live-stream sales, and influencer collaborations are used to amplify reach and foster community among collectors and enthusiasts.

Using constructivist grounded theory, the study identifies a clear shift in how consumers perceive amulets. Once viewed only as sacred objects, amulets are now seen as versatile lifestyle items that blend spirituality with modern living. They have become symbols of personal style, reflecting contemporary aesthetics while staying connected to tradition. They also serve as expressions of cultural pride, representing the meeting point between heritage and innovation for those who value their Thai identity. At the same time, they continue to offer spiritual protection, now paired

with a sense of individuality and social status. This change in perception carries three main implications: first, the growing commodification of culture, as marketing strategies turn spiritual symbols into fashionable products; second, stronger consumer engagement through digital platforms and influencer culture, which have expanded the amulet's reach in global markets; and third, the rise of a hybrid identity, where marketing combines messages of spiritual heritage and modern style, positioning amulets as both sacred and contemporary objects.

This transformation underscores the adaptability of Thai amulets in a competitive consumer landscape, showcasing their potential to bridge cultural tradition with contemporary consumer values. Would you like to further analyze the societal implications of these marketing strategies or their influence on cultural preservation?

Changing Consumer Behaviors and Cultural Reflections

The study highlights major changes in how consumers view and value amulets, reflecting wider cultural shifts in Thai society. Using existential phenomenology, the research uncovers three main motivations behind amulet purchases. First, many people still buy amulets for their spiritual connection, seeing them as sacred items that provide protection and good fortune. These consumers usually prefer traditional designs and seek assurance that their amulets have been blessed by respected monks. Second, some consumers view amulets as symbols of social status, choosing luxury pieces that reflect wealth, exclusivity, and success. Third, younger buyers, especially millennials and Gen Z, are attracted to amulets for their aesthetic and cultural appeal, treating them as stylish accessories that also express a sense of identity and connection to their heritage.

The constructivist grounded theory analysis highlights how consumer expectations have evolved alongside these motivations. Traditional notions of spiritual efficacy are now intertwined with desires for aesthetic beauty and personal expression. This convergence has created a marketplace where amulets are both sacred and commodified.

Government Perspectives and Regulatory Challenges

Government agencies, such as the Department of Religious Affairs and the National Office of Buddhism, play a complex role in navigating the commodification of Thai amulets. Using constructivist grounded theory, the research uncovers two dominant perspectives within the government: (1) *Economic opportunity*: Officials acknowledge the economic potential of the amulet industry, particularly in promoting cultural tourism and local craftsmanship. They view the commercialization of amulets as a means to support rural economies and enhance Thailand's cultural exports. (2)

Cultural and ethical concerns: There is also significant concern about the ethical implications of commodifying sacred objects. Officials worry that mass production and overt marketing could undermine the spiritual integrity of amulets and lead to public skepticism about their authenticity.

Interviews revealed tensions between these perspectives. While some officials advocate for policies that encourage innovation and international marketing, others emphasize stricter regulations to preserve the sanctity of amulets. These conflicting priorities reflect broader debates about balancing economic development with cultural preservation in Thailand.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant transformation of Thai amulets from sacred artifacts into lifestyle products, aligning with contemporary consumer trends and theoretical perspectives on cultural commodification, identity, and modern marketing strategies. As such, the findings are interesting not only from a theoretical perspective, but also for recent and future studies in the field.

The transformation of Thai amulets into lifestyle products reflects Appadurai's (1986) concept of the "social life of things," which explains how objects gain new meanings as they move through cultural and economic systems. By promoting amulets as both sacred and fashionable, marketers have increased their appeal while maintaining their spiritual value. This dual identity supports Cohen's (2022) research on the commodification of religious objects in Southeast Asia, where commercialization helps preserve cultural heritage in competitive markets. In terms of identity and consumption, the study aligns with Belk's (1988) theory that possessions act as extensions of the self. Amulets, now marketed as symbols of personal style and cultural pride, show how consumers use material items to express their identities. Recent studies, such as Thomas and Bromley (2021), also note that modern consumers prefer products that combine function, beauty, and symbolic meaning—all qualities now seen in the marketing of Thai amulets. From a marketing perspective, the use of storytelling, celebrity endorsements, and social media reflects Kotler et al.'s (2021) ideas about emotional engagement and personalized branding. By blending sacred themes with modern aesthetics, marketers have effectively adapted amulets for younger, global audiences. This approach aligns with findings by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022), who emphasize the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions and expanding market influence.

The balance between tradition and modernity in this study supports findings by Suwannachote and Wang (2023), who discuss how cultural artifacts help preserve intangible heritage while adapting to global market trends. This combination of preservation and innovation helps keep amulets relevant both in Thailand and

abroad. The study's insights into social media use also align with Nguyen and Pham's (2022) research on how digital platforms are transforming the sale of religious and spiritual goods in Asia. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram play a major role by using visual and interactive content to increase consumer engagement and drive sales. Additionally, the global adaptation of Thai amulets reflects Robertson's (1995) concept of "glocalization," in which global and local influences merge to create culturally authentic yet widely marketable products. Consistently, recent work by Chiu et al. (2024) demonstrates that blending local cultural elements with international branding strategies such as the co-branding of Chinese motifs with global designs produces products that celebrate cultural identity while enhancing competitiveness in world markets. These findings collectively underscore that culturally mixed co-branding and digital innovation provide pathways for traditional products to maintain their heritage while thriving amid global consumer trends in terms of cultural sustainability, while commodification supports the economic survival of Thai amulets, future studies should examine its long-term effects on their spiritual value and cultural authenticity. Regarding digital marketing innovations, future research could explore how new technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) can enhance storytelling and promote cultural artifacts more effectively. Finally, cross-cultural studies could investigate how Thai amulets are understood in different international contexts and whether their sacred identity is maintained or transformed as they enter global markets.

Conclusions

This study advances the understanding of how cultural artifacts like Thai amulets adapt to contemporary consumer demands while navigating the delicate balance between tradition and modernity. The findings align with both established and emerging theories on cultural commodification, identity, and digital marketing, underscoring the intricate interplay between spirituality, commerce, and globalization. The study shows three recommendations, respectively:

(1) For amulet designers and marketers, balancing tradition and innovation is absolutely significant. The findings reveal that the evolution of amulet designs must balance modern aesthetics with cultural and spiritual authenticity. Designers and marketers are encouraged to collaborate with cultural and religious experts to ensure that modern adaptations respect traditional values. Creating design collections that emphasize this balance, such as limited-edition amulets combining contemporary styles with sacred motifs, can attract both traditional consumers and younger demographics.

(2) For government agencies, strengthening regulations and promoting cultural preservation should be enhanced. The study highlights concern about counterfeit

amulets and the potential erosion of their sacred significance. Government agencies, such as the Department of Religious Affairs and cultural heritage bodies, should develop clearer regulations to protect the authenticity of amulets and prevent over-commercialization. Additionally, initiatives like certification systems and educational campaigns can promote the cultural and spiritual heritage of amulets while fostering their ethical commodification.

(3) For social media platforms and digital marketers, ethical and inclusive marketing strategies should be strengthened. Social media has become a key driver in the commodification of amulets, blending sacredness with lifestyle appeal. Digital marketers should adopt ethical practices by transparently communicating the cultural and spiritual value of amulets, avoiding excessive commercialization. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok can also partner with cultural organizations to feature campaigns that emphasize the heritage and significance of amulets, ensuring that marketing aligns with cultural preservation goals.

These recommendations aim to sustain the relevance and authenticity of Thai amulets while addressing the needs of stakeholders across cultural, economic, and regulatory domains. The study also suggests three theoretical recommendations. Firstly, it is the development of a hybrid framework for cultural commodification. The findings suggest the need for a theoretical framework that integrates cultural commodification and identity construction. This framework could examine how traditional artifacts, like Thai amulets, evolve into dual-purpose objects—preserving sacred and cultural significance while meeting market-driven demands. Future research should explore this duality to theorize how cultural artifacts can adapt without losing their authenticity, offering insights into similar commodification processes globally. Secondly, it is the expansion of grounded theory in sacred-commercial transitions. Based on the study's use of constructivist grounded theory, it is recommended to extend theoretical models to understand the transitions of sacred objects into commercial commodities. This approach could analyze how stakeholder interactions—designers, marketers, consumers, and regulators—shape evolving meanings and values. This theory can contribute to broader discussions in cultural studies and marketing about the commodification of intangible heritage. Lastly, it is the incorporation of existential phenomenology into consumer behavior studies. The use of existential phenomenology highlights the lived experiences and subjective meanings attributed to cultural artifacts. Incorporating this perspective into consumer behavior theories can deepen the understanding of how individuals negotiate identity, status, and spirituality in a commodified cultural landscape. This theoretical contribution bridges the gap between traditional consumer behavior frameworks and the emotional and symbolic connections consumers have with heritage products, and provides a foundation for future research on the commodification of cultural heritage and the evolving relationship between tradition, spirituality, and market forces.

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Комерцијализација светог: Тајландске амајлије у савременој потрошачкој култури

Сажетак: Ово истраживање проучава трансформацију тајландских амајлија од светих артефаката до животних производа, фокусирајући се на четири главна циља: (1) испитивање еволуције дизајна амајлија под утицајем трендова, моде и потрошачких преференција; (2) анализу маркетиншких стратегија, укључујући брендирање, приповедање и дигиталну дистрибуцију; (3) разумевање промена у понашању и очекивањима потрошача у оквиру ширих културних промена; и (4) процену ставова и политика владе које настоје да уравнотеже комодификацију и очување културе. Комбиновани методолошки приступ спаја егзистенцијалну феноменологију и конструктивистичку утемељену теорију како би се добило дубинско разумевање ове трансформације. Подаци су прикупљени кроз детаљне интервјуе са 25 учесника, укључујући дизајнере, маркетиншке стручњаке, званичнике и потрошаче; посматрање на терену у продавницама амајлија и на дигиталним платформама као што су Фејсбук и ТикТок; као и анализу докумената који обухватају промотивне материјале и политике. Резултати показују значајну еволуцију у дизајну амајлија, који сада укључују минималистичку естетику, луксузне материјале и утицаје глобалне моде, а притом задржавају традиционалне мотиве. Маркетиншке стратегије наглашавају приповедање, подршку познатих личности и ангажовање на друштвеним мрежама како би се амајлије представиле као симболи идентитета, културног поноса и духовне заштите. Понашање потрошача показује помак ка вредновању амајлија због њиховог естетског и статусног значаја, поред духовне вредности. Владине институције имају двоструку улогу – промовишу амајлије као културно и економско благо, али истовремено настоје да очувају њихову светост. Ово истраживање истиче међусобно дејство традиције, модерности и тржишних сила, нудећи увид у процес комодификације културних артефаката. Тајландске амајлије представљају пример како се културно наслеђе прилагођава савременим потрошачким захтевима, задржавајући духовни и културни значај.

Кључне речи: тајландске амајлије, културна комодификација, понашање потрошача, маркетиншке стратегије, очување наслеђа