

# ELEMENTS OF SOFT POWER THROUGH THAI FOOD SHOPS IN THE EYES OF YOUNG CHINESE TOURISTS INFLUENCED BY SOCIAL MEDIA

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## ABSTRACT

Today, social media influence on the choice of food shops and restaurants is highly effective and efficient, affecting the popularity and customer base. In the context of soft power and the popularity of Thai food shops, young Chinese consumers have been outstanding in making their decisions about food shops based on social media trends. Thai foods from select shops are featured as clips on TikTok, as well as on platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu. This research explores the elements of the soft power of popular Thai food through in-depth interviews with young Chinese tourists to Thailand. It was found that Chinese tourists who followed social media trends to visit food shops recommended by other Chinese. Chinese tourists are highly influenced by social media trends when choosing food shops to visit, both domestically and internationally. Popular travel and food bloggers share their dining experiences and recommendations, which their followers often trust and follow. Strong community features where users share their experiences and recommendations, creating a word-of-mouth effect.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, Social Media, Thai Food, Chinese Tourists

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