



International marriage migration from Thailand to India: The socio-cultural and religious intermediary in the digital era

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ABSTRACT

Background: This qualitative study examines the factors driving the international marriage migration of Thai women to Indian men in the digital age, focusing on how socio-cultural and religious themes are expressed through their YouTube channels and Facebook pages. **Methods** The research uses a desktop methodology to analyze secondary data, including publicly available videos, posts, comments, and interactions from six selected YouTube channels, each boasting over 100,000 views and active user communities relevant to the topic. Data collection occurred from September to November 2024. The study integrates concepts from globalization, Robert Sternberg's Triangle Theory of Love, intercultural communication, identity, and diaspora to dissect these dynamics by content analysis. Key findings include the stages of meeting and falling in love, the adaptation process to new family environments, and content produced on social media addressing themes like food culture, religious practices, cultural values, and child-rearing methods. The audience's reflections on these topics were also analyzed. **Finding:** Although India's population of Thai wives is relatively small, their YouTube and social media platforms have attracted international attention. This visibility can foster greater socio-cultural and religious understanding between India and Thailand, promoting interconnectedness and cooperation in the region. If the Thai embassy and consulates in India were to facilitate a network for these Thai wives, they could effectively champion "Thainess" within the context of "Indianness." As "civilian ambassadors," these women could enhance cultural diplomacy between the two nations, contributing to stronger ties and mutual respect. **Conclusion:** No studies have investigated Thai wives in India functioning as YouTubers. This research underscores the meaningful and authentic socio-cultural and religious perspectives disseminated by these women through digital channels, perspectives largely unacknowledged within the Thai context.

KEYWORDS: digital era; international marriage migration; India; socio-culture and religion; Thailand.

1. Introduction

Globalization has made intercultural dating and marriages widely accepted in Thai society, significantly increasing marriage registrations, particularly in Bangkok. Data from the matchmaking company Bangkok Matching reveals a marked disparity: Thai women marrying foreign men vastly outnumber Thai men marrying foreign women. 11,256 Thai women married foreigners in the past three years, compared to only 1,734 Thai men (Bangkok Matching, 2024). Foreign men seeking Thai wives are often highly educated and

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affluent, while fewer foreign women pursue relationships with Thai men. This trend highlights the popularity of Thai women as partners for foreign men, with cultural and personal preferences likely influencing these marriage patterns. However, there is a lack of statistics on Thai women marrying Indian men despite the increasing interactions between Thai and Indian communities.

Some Thai women marry Indian men and often move to India to live with their husbands. Regardless of their education, many of them are likely to become housewives. However, thanks to the digital era, social media allows these women to share content about their daily lives, stay connected with their families back home, and create new virtual friendships and fan clubs that can provide entertainment in their new environment. This study analyzes the intermediary roles of Thai wives in creating socio-cultural and religious content on YouTube and social media in India while examining the reflections and feedback from their fan communities.

Historically, marriage provided economic security for women and benefits for men, shaping migration patterns. Migrants were often young, newly married, or of marriageable age, leading to gender imbalances and challenges in finding spouses. In the late 19th century, the "international marriage market" emerged, with migration sometimes driven by marriage proposals. Key factors linking marriage and migration included demographics, legal policies, cultural norms, and technological advances. Migration often resulted in more men migrating or women working in cities while men settled in remote areas (Sinke, 1999).

Legal restrictions on marriage shaped migration patterns and relationships. In the 1930s, anti-miscegenation laws in California prevented Punjabi men from marrying white women, while the 1924 Immigration Act banned Asian immigration. Post-WWII war bride legislation increased Asian migration. Legal policies also impacted sending countries, with some expecting husbands to support families and others working independently (Sinke, 1999).

Due to globalization and increased mobility, family-linked migration has become more prominent. This type of migration includes marriage migration among second-generation migrants, international marriages related to tourism, education, or business, and the relocation of entire families. This trend raises several issues, such as uneven development between and within countries, the predominance of female marriage migrants, economic mobility, arranged marriages, and the rise of Internet or mail-order brides. Additionally, it brings challenges related to immigration policies, integration, and the emergence of new citizens.

Female marriage migrants are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, forced marriage, and exploitation, with limited access to support services. East Asia, notably South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, has seen significant increases in marriage migration, primarily marriages between local men and women from other Asian countries. By 2005, dual-national marriages made up 13.6% of marriages in South Korea, 27.4% in Taiwan, and 5.8% in Japan, despite Japan's low foreign resident population (Chung, 2020; Le Bail, 2017, Le Bail, 2023).

Marriage migration has become a common alternative to hiring paid care workers in countries like Taiwan and Singapore, as it provides cost-effective domestic and sexual services. Studies from Taiwan show that practical needs and mutual benefits, such as financial support for children and caregiving for disabled spouses, drive marriages between foreign wives and Taiwanese veterans. This trend highlights the role of marriage migration in meeting caregiving and economic needs (Le Bail, 2023).

Early research on marriage migration in the 1980s focused on the commodification of women and the practices of marriage agents who marketed women to wealthy men using standardized images. Today, the focus has shifted to understanding women's agency within these arrangements. Contemporary research is now more nuanced, examining these marriages' racial and colonial dynamics, including the construction of exotic and erotic imaginations (Le Bail, 2023).

Cultural views on suitability, arrangement, and timing have influenced marriage and migration patterns. Advances in technology and information have made travel more

accessible, changing perceptions of ideal spouses. The expanding international marriage market has particularly affected migration for women with limited economic opportunities. Matchmaking services have developed to meet these changes, with international marriage agencies now providing customized services. Additionally, marriage migration is increasing across various routes, notably in East Asia, where there has been a rise in international marriages due to migration (Sinke, 1999).

Early studies on migrant wives in the 1980s concentrated on the commodification of women and the inequities present in marriages. However, recent research has shifted to women's agency, exploring how they leverage marriage and migration strategies to achieve personal emancipation. This evolution in focus reflects ongoing debates about prostitution and sex work, highlighting that marriage migration intersects with both dynamics.

With globalization and increased mobility, family-linked migration, including marriage migration, has become more prevalent. This includes second-generation migrants bringing partners from their home countries, international marriages linked to tourism or business, and the movement of entire families. Research on transnational marriage among Thais has emerged as a significant study area, highlighting the complexities and motivations behind these unions. Lapanun (2018) conducted an ethnographic study in northeastern villages, like Na Dokmai, focusing on how women establish transnational families that blend Thai and Western values. While some relationships begin in bars or through online platforms, many develop into stable unions grounded in love, obligation, and strong familial ties.

Saisanguan (2021) further explores the demographic profiles of transnational marriage migrants (TMTMs), primarily women who face educational limitations, have often been previously divorced, and typically have children. Economic motivations, chiefly the pursuit of financial stability and improved living conditions, are found to be pivotal in these marriages, which often forge enduring social connections and provide opportunities for upward mobility. The influence of technology on these relationships cannot be understated; platforms like Tinder have transformed dating practices, facilitating cross-border relationships and shifting courtship from traditional face-to-face interactions to online encounters (Khamnoothai et al., 2023). This digital shift is echoed in a mixed-methods study by Hong-ngam et al. (2021) in Udon Thani, which indicates that women in transnational marriages generally earn significantly less than their foreign spouses and frequently have multiple prior marriages. The study identifies a positive correlation between women's age, number of children, and the duration of marriage, while showing that higher education and income levels are associated with shorter marital durations.

Transnational marriages represent a complex interplay of economic strategies, emotional connections, and cultural negotiations. While discussions around these unions continue, they often yield material and emotional benefits. To enhance the well-being of TMTMs and their families, improved support through shared information and collaborative policies is deemed essential (Saisanguan & Sangsingkaew, 2022; Lapanun, 2018; Hong-ngam et al., 2021; Khamnoothai et al., 2023). Key issues include uneven development, the predominance of female marriage migrants, economic mobility, arranged marriages, and the rise of internet/mail-order brides. These factors raise concerns about immigration policies, integration, and identity challenges in countries that receive migrants. Female marriage migrants, in particular, are vulnerable to gender-based violence and may have limited access to support services (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024).

Research on migration and social media has illuminated the complexities of maintaining relationships across distances, highlighting how digital platforms influence gender roles, intimacy, and cultural identity. Acedera and Yeoh (2018) explored the impact of communication technologies on transnational Filipino marriages, coining the term "performative mediated intimacies" to describe how platforms like Facebook foster emotional connections while exposing intimate interactions to public scrutiny, often reinforcing traditional gender norms. Sinsuwan (2018) focused on Thai migrants in Germany, revealing that social media is essential for preserving family ties despite the challenges of cross-border living. An, Lim, and Lee (2020) extended these findings to marriage migrants, showing that robust online networks can alleviate social stigma and

empower marginalized individuals. Jhoti (2021) examined the role of visually oriented platforms such as Instagram in shaping public perceptions of migrants in the UK, demonstrating that selective portrayals significantly affect empathy and inclusion. Le-Phuong, Lams, and De Cock (2022) employed an intersectional lens to study Vietnamese female migrants, noting that gender and social status significantly influenced their engagement with social media, which often limited their advocacy capabilities. Similarly, Prempawee Prakorbsup (2022) analyzed YouTube content created by Thai women abroad. The study identified themes such as preserving cultural identity, showcasing domestic roles, and demonstrating resilience, emphasizing how these women utilize YouTube to navigate life in foreign contexts and connect with viewers who respond with empathy and national pride. Lastly, Hassan, Hussain, and Abid (2024) investigated the use of platforms like WhatsApp by couples in Lahore to sustain intimacy in long-distance relationships. They found that, despite the absence of physical affection, social media remains a vital tool for maintaining emotional closeness and relationship stability. Collectively, these studies underscore the multifaceted role of social media in enhancing connections, advocating for cultural identities, and navigating migration challenges.

According to the above literature review, no study has been conducted on international marriage migration from Thailand to India, and social media presents interconnected transnational socio-cultural and religious perspectives. Although Thailand and India share a long history of ties, contemporary people-to-people understanding between the two nations is often limited. India is recognized as a 'spiritual country,' characterized by its rich religions, diverse beliefs, and various ethnic groups. Additionally, there are relatively few Thai women who marry Indian men and migrate to India. However, some Thai wives have become YouTubers in today's digital age, creating content to connect with Thai people worldwide. This leads to the following research questions as follows. First, what factor(s) contribute to the international marriage migration of Thai women to Indian men in the digital era? Second, what socio-cultural and religious themes are conveyed through their YouTube channels and Facebook pages, and what benefits do these provide?

1.1 Marriage procedures in Thailand for foreigners

Foreigners wishing to marry in Thailand should follow these steps. First, declaration of freedom to marry, both parties must go to their respective embassies in Thailand with their passports and arrival cards to complete a declaration affirming they are single and free to marry. A Thai diplomatic officer will then certify this.

Second, translation of declaration, the declaration must be translated into Thai at a reputable translation office. Third, document authentication, submit the translated and original declarations along with passport copies to the Legalization Division of the Department Of Consular Affairs for authentication, which typically takes two days. It's advisable to allow at least four working days in Bangkok before registration to accommodate the three-day residency requirement and processing time. Fourth, marriage registration, once authenticated, submit the documents to the District Registrar, who will register the marriage and issue a marriage certificate in Thai (Thai Embassy Your Gateway to Thailand, 2024).

1.2 Marriage for foreigners in India

Religious marriage registration, marriage ceremonies are legally recognized in India, but must be registered for immigration and visa purposes. Different religions have specific laws, such as the Hindu Marriage Act. Under the Hindu Marriage Act: the bride must be at least 18, and the groom at least 21 years old, with no prohibited relationships; required documents include an application form, proof of birth, affidavits, photographs, marriage card, priest's certificate, valid visa, no-objection letter, and Gazetted Officer attestation; registration involves document verification and a meeting with the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. The certificate is typically issued on the same day.

Civil marriage registration, couples opting out of religious ceremonies can marry under the Special Marriage Act (1954). Eligibility, both parties must be unmarried (or legally divorced/widowed), mentally sound, of legal age, and not in prohibited relationships. Required documents include an application form, proof of birth and residency, photographs, a no-objection letter, and termination proof of any prior marriage (if applicable). The process consists of applying, waiting 30 days for public objections, conducting the ceremony after resolving any concerns, and receiving the marriage certificate, signed by both parties and three witnesses, after 30 days (Legal Lands, 2024).

2. Methods

The study employed a desktop research methodology, which relies on secondary data gathered without conducting fieldwork (Kipng'etich, 2024). This study employs a qualitative research design integrating content analysis with digital ethnography to explore. The research focuses on content shared on YouTube and Facebook, two widely used platforms among the target population.

Data sources and sampling, the data comprises publicly available videos, posts, comments, and interactions from six selected YouTube channels. These active channels have received over 100,000 views and feature active user communities relevant to the study's topic as follows: Maeban India (13,870,054 views); Super Wife, Roti's Daughter-in-Law (4,088,294 views); India Station by Indian Daughter-in-Law (2,331,212 views); Kashmir Thai & India Story (230,383 views); Kolkata Housewife (538,899 views); India Indie: Gossip with Indian's Daughter-in-Law (151,605 views). Facebook pages created by the same Thai wives serve as additional data sources. Data collection was done from September to November 2024.

A thematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013) was conducted to identify recurring patterns, narratives, and visual representations. Coding categories were developed both deductively, based on existing literature, and inductively, emerging from the data. Related codes were grouped into potential themes and sub-themes to address the research questions. The dataset was analyzed using various theoretical frameworks, including Transnationalism theory (Appadurai, 1996; Glick Schiller et al., 1992), Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (1986), intercultural communication (Gudykunst, 2003), diaspora studies (Cohen, 1997), and adaptation theory (Berry, 1997). These theoretical perspectives provided a comprehensive lens for examining the intersection of social media content, cultural expression, and community interaction within a diasporic context.

The study adopted a virtual ethnographic approach described by Hine (2000), using YouTube channels as primary data sources and Facebook pages as additional data sources. The researcher served as an observer, systematically monitoring each channel and its social media presence. This involved transcribing content and collecting comments from fan communities, following the methods outlined by Boellstorff et al. (2012), while avoiding using the actual names of the YouTubers' channels. Ethical guidelines for conducting internet research were adhered to, including anonymizing usernames and avoiding private or restricted content. Only publicly accessible data was analyzed, and care was taken to ensure the respectful representation of online communities.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Meet and love

Based on data collected from YouTube and Facebook, there are various ways in which Thai women and Indian men connect. Some Thai women are well-educated and can communicate fluently in English, while others may use broken English. These connections often happen through business interactions, encounters at tourist spots, or online platforms. Thai women with limited English skills frequently improve their language abilities as they

spend time getting to know their Indian partners. Typically, these relationships develop gradually over time before leading to marriage.

In India, parents often play a significant role in arranging marriages for their children. They generally prefer arranged marriages because this approach allows them to choose partners who share similar caste, religion, beliefs, language, customs, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Additionally, Indian daughters-in-law are often seen as humble and respectful, adhering to the guidance of their parents-in-law. This way is believed to foster more excellent compatibility than relationships where the couple may not fully understand each other's backgrounds.

Thai women in relationships with Indian men should take the time to observe their partners' sincerity and spend a few years building trust before considering marriage. A significant sign of sincerity is when the men introduce the Thai women to their parents as potential wives. Firstly, Thai women should strive to gain the acceptance of Indian parents by demonstrating genuine love and trust for their sons. If they truly love their partners, they should also express their willingness to love and respect their parents. No one wants to face the possibility of divorce after marriage.

Secondly, love for Indian men should be approached with patience, especially when dealing with their parents' expectations. Thai women should encourage themselves and refrain from putting pressure on Indian men. It can be beneficial to give or send small gifts to the men's parents as a gesture of friendship.

Thirdly, Thai women should maintain their self-respect while respecting their partners' parents. It is crucial to communicate politely and practice good etiquette. Show love and respect for the men's parents as if they were their own (Madam B- pseudo-name).

Marriages between individuals—whether Indian or foreign—who are viewed as incompatible are often discouraged. Indian families may worry that foreign wives might leave their Indian husbands and return to their home countries. However, this viewpoint overlooks the possibility that foreign wives could also experience abandonment. In the end, the success of a marriage relies on the couple's love, empathy, and mutual understanding.

It is relatively uncommon for foreigners to marry into Indian families, which reflects the close-knit and tradition-oriented nature of Indian society. Typically, men from higher varna (social classes) refuse to marry foreigners. However, if we believe that "we're meant to be together," it doesn't matter where we are; we will find each other, fall in love (which may be viewed differently in some cultures), and ultimately get married.

With globalization, Indians and Thais now have more opportunities to meet and interact in person and online, leading to face-to-face encounters. Indian men in relationships with Thai women often work to persuade their parents to accept the match, depending on their determination and effort. Most couples take a few years before deciding to marry. Ultimately, when there is genuine love between Thai women and Indian men, both families will likely agree to the union, allowing the couple to marry while following Thailand and India's appropriate customs and legal international marriage procedures. Although love marriages are much less common than arranged marriages in India, they can certainly happen, as a Thai woman's opinion regarding her love marriage:

Women should strive to please their boyfriends and families, making them unable to imagine life without them. It's essential to believe in the love shared between partners. He must be a determined person who truly loves you and is willing to fight for your relationship. Both partners need to hold hands tightly to overcome any obstacles together.

(Madam B-pseudo-name)

According to the Theory of Love, these Thai and Indian couples share a bond characterized by intimacy, passion, and commitment, known as "Consummate Love." Many couples spend several years in Thailand before officially formalizing their relationship

through legal marriage. Eventually, they often migrate back to India, where most choose to settle with their husbands' families upon their return. The legal marriage procedures in Thailand and India can be pretty complicated. However, Thai wives ultimately gain legal rights within their families in India.

3.2 Adaptation to the new different families and environment

One of the most common issues in family dynamics is the conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. In the case of Thai women marrying into Indian families, particularly those living in extended family arrangements, these wives often face the challenge of learning to navigate a new family environment. In the early years of marriage, some mothers-in-law may struggle to accept their foreign daughters-in-law due to differences in religion, cultural backgrounds, and lifestyles. Additionally, sharing living spaces can lead to conflicts and a lack of privacy, further exacerbating their tension.

Indian husbands often act as mediators between their mothers and wives, particularly when language barriers complicate communication. In many situations, family members living under the same roof collaborate to address concerns and find solutions, with husbands facilitating these discussions. Thai wives and Indian families have to learn, adjust, and adapt to each other. To tackle these challenges, some families have implemented practical solutions, such as assigning separate floors within the same building for each family or purchasing a new house that includes dedicated private spaces for the Thai wife's family. This arrangement helps ensure greater privacy and comfort for everyone involved. Therefore, effectively managing living spaces within extended families is crucial for promoting harmony and creating a happier living environment.

Relationships within extended families can benefit new couples, especially those with children. Grandparents often play a crucial role by assisting with household chores, providing childcare, and offering guidance and advice to the couple. They also serve as a bridge for transmitting religious and socio-cultural values, ensuring cultural continuity across generations, as expressed by one Thai wife:

The husband's mother cleans her bedroom and living room, and I clean my room. The grandparents take care of their grandson. When they are away, I feel very tired. My parents-in-law bought groceries (or household items) for the house. My husband feels warm living with his extended family because we can help each other.

(Madam K-pseudo-name)

In addition, daughters-in-law can gain valuable household management skills from their mothers-in-law while gaining deeper insights into Indian traditions, customs, and culture. If the parents are open-minded, daughters-in-law can share Thai cuisine and culture with them, fostering mutual appreciation. This dynamic is rooted in sharing and caring. Both must approach their relationships with mutual understanding, love, and patience to cultivate a harmonious and happy family. In the worst-case scenario, if mothers-in-law cannot accept their daughters-in-law from different backgrounds and conflicts continue, some couples may need to distance themselves from the extended family and establish their household to ensure a peaceful family life.

3.3 Content producers through YouTube and other social media

According to data from YouTube and Facebook, most Thai women were employed before marriage. However, after marriage, many leave their jobs to become full-time housewives in India. Adjusting to a new environment, unfamiliar surroundings, and being far from their families can be challenging for these women, especially when their husbands are at work, leaving them lonely. To cope with this loneliness, some have turned to YouTube, creating content based on their daily lives.

The experiences of Thai wives share similarities with those of diaspora communities, which consist of individuals who bring their familiar traditions and practices into new and unfamiliar environments, often driven by nostalgia. Somsuk Hinwiman (2014, cited by Prakorbsup and Sangsingkaew, 2022) observed that the number of diaspora communities has significantly increased in the modern era. With the rise of mass media and modern communication technologies, members of these communities now have access to various channels that connect them with their home cultures and communities. As a result, media and communication have become vital tools for sustaining diaspora communities. In particular, media plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of nostalgia and cultural continuity for diaspora groups living abroad.

Platforms such as YouTube and various social media sites represent new forms of media that enable two-way communication. They facilitate quick and interactive exchanges between senders and receivers. Audiences actively seek information, share personal stories, and engage with content, which reshapes communication styles and influences societal culture. Social media significantly impacts behavior, lifestyles, and identity formation. Video platforms like YouTube have gained global popularity due to their effective combination of visuals and sound (Prakobsuk & Sangsingkaew, 2022). Social networking technologies and social media are valuable tools for Thai wives to communicate and learn about new cultures. These technologies enable individuals to connect across different geographic locations and time zones, facilitating various modes of communication (Zaw, 2018).

Statistics from January 2024 reveal that Thailand had 44.2 million YouTube users, which accounts for 61.5% of the country's population. Among these users, 51.6% of female respondents reported watching YouTube content, while 48.4% of male respondents did the same (Kemp, 2024). These figures highlight the platform's popularity, particularly among Thai women.

YouTube and social media provide Thai wives a platform to connect with audiences in Thailand and internationally. Many create long video clips and occasionally host live sessions, allowing direct interaction with their viewers through Q&A segments, often before or after presenting their prepared content. Their videos cover various topics, including Indian traditions, customs, religion, beliefs, social issues, and personal experiences. To enhance their presentations, they often wear multiple colors of sari or traditional Indian attire during their broadcasts.

These platforms allow Thai YouTubers to maintain connections with their families in Thailand while communicating in Thai during each episode. One notable Thai YouTuber, a writer, presents her content in a storytelling format that uses colloquial language and expressive tonal variations. While many of these creators do not work outside the home, their roles as YouTubers have become meaningful aspects of their identities. Moreover, their husbands' families collaborate closely with these Thai YouTube creators, supporting their efforts to achieve professional employment while balancing domestic responsibilities.

In India, Thai wives typically assume the role of housewives, regardless of their educational background. However, there are three notable exceptions. The first is a Thai chef married to an Indian chef. She has successfully continued her career as a prominent Thai chef, earning a high salary and commanding respect from her staff. Despite her marriage, she has managed to maintain her professional life. The second exception is a Thai novelist who continues to write, often incorporating Indian settings into her plots. The third wife has secured a job and is now working from home.

Thai wives are generally expected to handle household chores and possess basic cooking skills. When living with their husbands' parents, they often help their mothers-in-law with tasks related to cooking and cleaning. These domestic responsibilities allow them to learn, practice, and negotiate their roles within the household. Moreover, many Thai wives engage in creative activities, such as documenting their experiences and sharing their lives on platforms like YouTube. The most popular types of content include: food Cultures; religion, ceremonies, festivals, and cultural values; places and states in India and Thailand;

expressions of love in Indian families; ways of nourishing the kid(s); and Indian costumes and products.

Food cultures, from markets and shops to the table. Most Thai wives create content based on their daily routines and special occasions. This content typically falls into two categories: 1) purchasing raw materials and cooking at home; 2) buying street food, fruits, snacks, drinks, and sweets from stalls, shops, and restaurants.

The Thai wives, particularly those living with their mothers-in-law or in extended families, receive training from senior women on skillfully preparing Indian cuisine. They learn about various spices, their uses in cooking, and traditional preparation methods. Additionally, they carefully use the appropriate utensils for each ingredient and dish, ensuring their cooking remains authentic.

These women showcase Indian cooking techniques with the skill of professional chefs, introducing Indian cuisine to Thai audiences while emphasizing its nutritional value. Their expertise is often shaped by years living in India and their experiences as wives. In addition, they frequently use Hindi names for dishes and ingredients during their cooking demonstrations, adding cultural depth to their presentations. This approach inspires those unfamiliar with Indian cuisine to explore, taste, and even try cooking it themselves, as evidenced by the enthusiastic comments they receive.

"Wow, that looks so delicious! I need to find some Sesbania flowers to try making this too!"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0QuCoTuC5g>).

"I really love this kind of food! I've already tried making several dishes. Thank you!"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0MgKuzt20Q>).

In families without vegetarian restrictions, Thai wives often showcase their culinary skills by preparing non-vegetarian dishes from Thai and Western cuisines for themselves and their guests. These meals highlight their proficiency in cooking, supporting the findings of Prakorbsup and Sangsingkaew (2022), which emphasize that cooking is both a skill and a form of communication. This practice reflects their efforts to maintain "Thainess" while living abroad, blending cultural traits, and embracing their housewife roles. In addition, it allows them to satisfy their nostalgia by preparing and enjoying familiar Thai flavors.

These women adapt their cooking by using vegetarian ingredients for family members who follow a vegetarian diet, ensuring inclusivity. During the cooking process, they often introduce the Thai names of the dishes, creating opportunities for cultural learning. This dynamic enriches the intercultural exchange for both Thai and non-Thai audiences. It is further enhanced by fresh perspectives shared through live performances on YouTube and other social media platforms.

Some Thai wives create meals that showcase Indian cuisine or a fusion of Thai and Indian styles, carefully presenting the dishes for each meal. Family members often enhance the dining experience by demonstrating how to enjoy each dish. During meals, Indian husbands and children frequently speak some Thai with their Thai wives and mothers, fostering a harmonious blend of cultures.

Expressions of appreciation for these dishes shared on platforms like YouTube enhance the perceived value of the cuisine and instill a sense of pride in Thai wives. The warm and intimate atmosphere highlights close-knit family dynamics, creating a passionate connection that resonates deeply with viewers. Preparing Indian and Thai dishes for family members highlights the traditional role of wives in Indian culture, showcasing care and devotion through cooking. This cultural exchange enriches family life and provides valuable insights into the blending of different traditions. Thai wives who serve as chefs in their families embody the saying, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." While this sentiment is not typically seen among urban working women in Thailand, it is a vital aspect of Thai wives' identity in India.

Buying street food, fruits, snacks, drinks, and sweets from stalls, shops, and restaurants. Some Thai wives showcase the products available in local markets within their areas and across other states, sharing their experiences from visits to these markets. They also highlight shops in major cities like New Delhi that offer Thai products. These women demonstrate how to source ingredients for both Indian and Thai cuisine, highlighting local merchants who sell fresh and cooked goods, including street food, drinks, fruits, snacks, and sweets.

They provide insights into how these products are presented, prepared, cooked, packaged, and consumed, offering a comprehensive view of the local market culture. This approach aligns with Prakorbsup and Sangsingkaew's (2022) findings, emphasizing authenticity and simplicity. Street food from various states and dishes and snacks from renowned locations are featured through tastings and often brought back as souvenirs.

Thai wives who have lived in India for an extended period with traditional Indian families have learned about, experienced, and mastered Indian cooking, including using spices with Hindi names. They can share their knowledge and experiences with Thai audiences by either preparing these Indian dishes themselves or purchasing them to showcase the authentic flavors and techniques. However, those living in large cities share the high cost of living, especially when Thai wives need to purchase Thai products if they want to cook Thai food that they cannot miss, as stated by Sahker (2016) as follows.

Being in a foreign country can be exciting, especially when trying new foods and discovering the culture behind them. However, it doesn't take long before we miss the familiar flavors of the foods we know and love. Food uniquely comforts us, and craving our favorite treats can often intensify feelings of homesickness.

In major cities, the cost of Thai items can be up to three times higher than in other areas. Dining at restaurants or five-star hotels tends to be particularly expensive. The high rental prices in cities like New Delhi and Mumbai contribute to these increased costs, which are ultimately passed on to consumers. Furthermore, service charges can further inflate prices, a reality that many Thai wives and their families encounter when dining at upscale establishments or luxury hotels.

Religion, ceremonies, festivals, and cultural values; many Thai women marry Indian Hindus, resulting in their families visiting Hindu temples or shrines nearby. They follow proper rituals, starting from the entrance, purchasing flowers, and removing their shoes. Upon reaching the inner sanctum, where the deities are enshrined, visitors must touch the ground and their foreheads before entering the shrine to show respect. Husbands or mothers-in-law make offerings and introduce their wives to the gods and goddesses names, explaining each deity's significance to them and the audience.

Thai wives in extended families have more opportunities to learn and participate in Hindu religious rites and rituals than those in nuclear families. Furthermore, Thai wives use their YouTube and social media channels to showcase annual colorful and meaningful religious and cultural festivals. They explain the preparations, processes, and meanings behind each religio-cultural celebration, making them clear and accessible to Thai audiences. This effective intercultural communication connects Thai wives with global audiences through Indian content. It offers a vibrant way to learn about and engage with others' religious and cultural practices and festivals.

One example is a Muslim wife who sometimes greets people with the Islamic phrase "*Salam Alaikum*," even though she has not converted to Islam yet. She needs time to study the religion before making that decision. So far, she has not shared any religious content on her YouTube or social media channels, except for the Dargah big mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Besides, many Thai wives engage with the Thai consulate or embassy, providing them opportunities to participate in national events such as Thailand's National Day. They share activities from these celebrations, including various Thai dishes, on their YouTube channels. This lets Thai and international audiences learn about and experience these festivities virtually. Notably, Thai wives in saris represent their dual identities as Thais living in India

while showcasing Thai culture and cuisine through their channels. This practice highlights Thai cultural identity and fosters intercultural communication, involving interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and showcasing variations in knowledge systems, symbolic behaviors, cultural norms, and traditional practices (Zaw, 2018).

Places and states in India and Thailand, some Thai wives showcase their hometowns, such as Manali and Kashmir, as tourist destinations, highlighting the unique beauty of the scenic landscapes throughout different seasons. Their YouTube channels significantly promote these locations to a global audience, particularly Thai viewers, inspiring them to explore and visit these picturesque regions. Many Thai wives have the opportunity to travel to various destinations and States with their husbands and families. Some of these places are unfamiliar not only to them but also to their audiences. As a result, this theme has become a popular focus in their content, allowing viewers to explore and share their experiences virtually.

Their presentations often start by detailing how to reach the destination. For locations within the same city, they explain the purpose of their visit, including travel details. For destinations in different States, they cover transportation options, objectives, activities, accommodations, dining choices—highlighting street food specialties—and popular attractions. They also showcase souvenirs, particularly local snacks, often bought for relatives.

These highly informative presentations turn ordinary places into intriguing destinations, making popular tourist spots more appealing. Furthermore, Thai wives often highlight lesser-known locations that may be unfamiliar to many viewers, providing detailed explanations that captivate their audience and inspire exploration. Some even offer package tours to these featured locations, promoting them through their content to earn income.

When Thai wives return to their hometowns in Thailand, alone or with their families, they often share content showcasing their homes, the places they visit, and their interactions with Thai relatives. This creates a sense of intimacy and relatability for Thai and non-Thai viewers and fan clubs. Additionally, some Thai wives fulfill orders for authentic Indian products placed by their Thai fan base. After returning to Thailand, they ship these products to their customers or fan clubs via postal service.

Expressions of love in Indian families, one Thai wife created a vlog to share her experiences of how Indians express love and care within families and society as follows. A wife should stay close to her husband while he is eating to serve and care for him, regardless of whether she has eaten. The husband is happy with his wife serving nearby. Some Indian wives eat half a portion of their husbands' food. This expresses their love.

Wives participate in certain rituals and festivals by performing body cleansing, chanting, and fasting to promote their family members' health, wealth, and prosperity. Wives are discouraged from blaming their husbands, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, as husbands are regarded as equivalent to gods. In some families, wives eat either with their husbands or after them, but not before.

Wives are cooks, do housework, and care for the house, their husbands' parents, and children. In modern days, the new generation of couples work together and share their household chores. Seniors are considered infallible and cannot be criticized, regardless of their actions. Even if they repeat their mistakes, they remain beyond reproach. Wives care for their husbands' parents, especially their mothers-in-law, during illness as if they were their mothers (Madam Y-pseudo-name). However, traditional Indian love in families should be learned by Thai wives and negotiated with their husbands in the proper conditions of each family.

Ways of nourishing the kid(s), some couples have children, which keeps mothers busy and helps alleviate feelings of loneliness. Having grandparents in the same household can also support couples caring for their grandchildren. For many Thai mothers, their children are a central part of their daily lives, whether dropping them off at school or participating

in various school events. This involvement includes outings with family members and indoor and outdoor activities with relatives. Children of Indian-Thai heritage often learn Thai from their mothers; some can communicate in Thai, Hindi, and English. The content is also presented when they return to visit Thai relatives in Thailand with their mothers or families.

Indian costumes and products, Thai wives in India often wear traditional Indian attire, such as saris and salwar kameez, both at home and in public. Their content frequently includes showcasing various styles of saris, where to purchase them, tips on how to drape them, and advice on selecting accessories to complement the outfits. On YouTube, they sometimes provide information about different sets of bangles or bracelets, including their prices. Furthermore, they explain critical cultural symbols, such as the significance of the bindi on the forehead and henna designs on the body, offering more profound insights into Indian traditions.

During special occasions such as Diwali and wedding ceremonies, Thai wives who have learned traditional customs from their relatives or elders often discuss the significance of the attire worn during these events on their channels. A Thai woman in Kashmir showcases authentic silk Pashmina shawls, colorful hand-embroidered Kashmiri bags, and papier-mache handicrafts. She takes orders from her fans, effectively demonstrating intercultural communication by presenting these traditional and popular local products to an international audience. This provides her with an additional source of income and promotes Kashmiri craftsmanship to a global market, fostering inclusivity and cultural appreciation.

3.4 Reflections from audiences

Reflections from Thai and non-Thai audiences vary depending on the content of each episode. While some viewers find the material relatable, others may not. Occasionally, viewers provide feedback or highlight aspects lacking in the Thai wives' YouTube channels. Some viewers share similar experiences to those depicted in the Thai wives' content. Additionally, some remind the Thai wives to learn and adapt to the differing viewpoints between Thai and Indian cultures.

Many appreciate the natural style of these Thai wives, which aligns with the findings of Prakobsup and Sangsingkaew (2022), emphasizing straightforwardness, naturalness, and simplicity. Both long-time and new followers from various provinces in Thailand and abroad often engage with the YouTubers, introducing themselves and contributing to a growing sense of community. In addition, Thai wives show genuine care for their followers' questions, frequently addressing them in vlogs or videos. This interactive approach fosters deeper connections and meaningful engagement.

Moreover, the family members of the Thai wives who are YouTubers follow each episode, maintaining strong connections and communication through this social media platform. There are not many Thai women who marry Indian men, mainly due to the traditional mindset of Indian families. These families often prefer daughters-in-law from the same nationality, caste, religion, and cultural background. As a result, couples may face significant challenges in overcoming these attitudes. Indian families may worry that a foreign daughter-in-law could leave their son if cultural differences lead to conflicts. However, some couples, whether they meet in person in Thailand or online, successfully navigate these challenges due to their deep love for each other. The cases of Thai wives and Indian husbands correlate with the study of Sinke (1999), which suggests that some key factors linking marriage and migration include legal policies, cultural norms, and technological advances. Migration often resulted in more women working in cities. Their loves have been developed personally without matchmaking services, which were described differently by Sinke 1999 and Le Ball 2020. After marriage, these women often migrate to India. International marriage migration from Thailand to India is considered a transnational experience. Many working Thai wives transition into roles as homemakers, daughters-in-law within their husbands' extended families, and mothers. Living with the

parents of Indian husbands requires time, patience, and a willingness to adapt. When children enter the picture, grandparents naturally assume a cherished role in Indian culture. They provide wisdom, guidance, and unconditional love as the family's foundation. Grandparents play a vital part in preserving traditions, sharing family stories, and instilling a sense of pride in cultural heritage. They significantly influence their grandchildren's upbringing and emotional development (Kashyap, 2023). The role of grandparents also highlights a unique aspect of love, as described by a Thai wife. She pointed out that grandparents (the elderly) should not be blamed for their actions or perspectives. This observation aligns with a study by Gray et al. (2019), which found that maternal grandmothers are often viewed as "guides" and are less frequently regarded as "non-significant" compared to paternal grandmothers. In contrast, paternal grandfathers are less commonly seen as caregivers but are more often recognized for their influence than maternal grandparents.

Living away from their homeland and relatives often leads individuals to experience nostalgia and a longing for their Thai culture. This is consistent with Smeeke and Jetten's (2019) findings, who note that nostalgia is more likely to be triggered by a separation from one's homeland regarding distance and time. At the same time, these individuals must adapt to Indian customs and fulfill new roles and expectations within their cultural environment.

As part of the diaspora, Thai wives living in India navigate a complex multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious society. They blend 'Indianness' and 'Thainess' elements daily, creating a hybrid culture within their families. This fusion is expressed through their language, cuisine, and social etiquette, showcasing the dynamic interplay of their mixed identities. This phenomenon aligns with Hannerz's (2012) concept of cultural hybridity, which demonstrates how transnationalism manifests in various aspects of daily life, such as cuisine, language, music, and art. For example, Thai wives in nuclear families often blend local Thai cuisine, particularly Isan food, with their husbands' Indian or Western food preferences. When they gather, they prepare and share local dishes while conversing in their native Isan dialect, with these moments frequently documented and shared on YouTube. Conversely, Thai wives also showcase Indian cooking techniques and recipes, linking the local to the global and highlighting the dynamic interplay between their hybrid identities.

YouTube and social media have become essential platforms for Thai wives to showcase their hybrid identities globally. Many have created content to share their unique experiences and cultural insights. As cultural intermediaries, these YouTubers offer personal perspectives on Indian socio-cultural traditions, religions, customs, festivals, and travel destinations. This is consistent with earlier studies by Acedera and Yeoh (2018), Sinsuwan (2018), An, Lim, and Lee (2020), Jhoti (2021), and Le-Phuong, Lams, and De Cock (2022) regarding migration and social media.

Their content fosters cross-cultural understanding and connects their audiences to their Thai and Indian heritages, engaging audiences in Thailand and beyond. This aligns with Werbner's (2018) discussion of hybrid identities, which emerge as individuals navigate multiple cultural affiliations and draw on diverse influences to construct flexible, multifaceted identities that transcend fixed categories. Each creator has a unique identity and style that attracts a specific fan base.

In addition to promoting cultural exchange, many YouTubers monetize their channels through membership offerings. YouTube's channel membership feature allows creators to offer exclusive perks at different price points, which helps foster a sense of community among subscribers. For instance, a channel featuring a Thai wife living in India might offer membership options such as "Love" for 50 Baht per month, "Lovely" for 100 Baht per month, and "Most Love" for 600 Baht per month (<https://www.youtube.com/@MaebaanIndia>). Furthermore, YouTube Premium subscriptions are available at various tiers, starting at 159 Baht monthly for individual plans. This pricing structure provides a reference for creators when setting their membership rates.

Several channels showcase and sell authentic local products, such as saris and Pashmina shawls, from their respective states upon request. When delivering these items, they utilize both postal services to reach destination countries and sometimes opt for personal delivery to Thailand. Additionally, some individuals offer package tours in their current locations, using their local expertise to provide personalized travel experiences. This entrepreneurial approach not only diversifies their income but also enhances cultural understanding among participants.

A few Thai wives who earn an income demonstrate financial independence by using their money for leisure activities, supporting their children, and providing family entertainment. As Gole, Founder of NerdyBird Financial Wellness (2023), states, "Money is a means for her(a woman) to achieve that financial freedom, to get to all the things that are important to her in life." In addition, Thai wives can send money to support their parents in Thailand, expressing gratitude for their upbringing. This practice aligns with Sunanta and Angeles' (2009) study, which highlights that Thai society places significant responsibilities on women, including caring for their families and fulfilling duties of filial piety.

Thai wives in India utilize YouTube as a dynamic platform to share cultural insights, maintain connections with their homeland, and pursue professional opportunities. Their unique content and entrepreneurial efforts foster cross-cultural understanding and build a strong sense of community. These content creators establish a sense of familiarity and connection by engaging directly with viewers through vlogs, comments, and other social media platforms. Viewers interested in India or specific topics often reach out with questions, which Thai wives address promptly or incorporate into future content. This meaningful interaction strengthens their bond with followers and enhances audience engagement.

Most families actively support these YouTube endeavors, encouraging Thai wives to create content about their daily lives. Beyond personal expression, these activities yield indirect benefits, such as increased recognition through YouTube and social media. This exposure enables them to promote local tour packages, market popular regional products to Thai audiences, and develop entrepreneurial ventures. For example, a Thai woman, wearing a beautiful sari, addressed the audience through a live video. She interacted with the viewers about her stunning sari and informed her fan club that,

I have carefully selected each item in this collection based on my followers' requests for good quality at affordable prices. Some high-end items are also available, so be sure to check the page for those. Please send me a message and let me know the item you want. Please note that since this is a pre-order, it may take up to 21 days to receive your product.
(Mrs. P-pseudo-name)

Additionally, a growing viewer base and ad revenue offer an extra source of income, contributing to financial stability and empowering these women in their roles as cultural intermediaries and creators. In the era of globalization and digital connectivity, platforms allow people to share and showcase their identities through unique content. This fosters a better understanding, mutual respect, and openness to learning about different cultures and societies. Audiences may find inspiration from various Thai wives on YouTube, which can spark interest by trying Indian recipes, wearing traditional Indian attire, or visiting beautiful destinations in India. At the same time, Thai wives in India represent 'Thainess' within the context of 'Indianness,' bridging cultures and highlighting the richness of their blended identities. Despite the small number of Thai wives in India, their YouTube and other social media pages have gained international recognition. This exposure can help promote socio-cultural and religious understanding between India and Thailand, fostering genuine interconnectedness and cooperation for coexistence in the region. Furthermore, this study's findings align with some results from Prempawee Prakorbsup's research (2022), including food as a communication tool, preserving Thainess abroad, emphasizing domestic and housewife roles, and showcasing resilience and life skills.

4. Conclusions

Indian husbands and their Thai wives often meet through 'destiny' rather than through traditional arranged marriages organized by their families. Challenges often arise in the early stages of these relationships due to resistance from the husbands' families. However, over time, the commitment of both the husbands and their Thai wives usually leads to acceptance.

Their mothers-in-law or older relatives often guide Thai women who marry into Indian families in their extended families as they transform into traditional Indian housewives. Many of these women become full-time homemakers without pursuing professional careers, requiring them to adapt to their new families and environments. This adjustment often inspires them to become content creators on platforms like YouTube and other social media.

For these women, being a YouTuber is a secondary role that connects them to their homeland and fosters intercultural communication between India, Thailand, and a global audience. Their contents found in this research are: meet and love; adaptation to the new different families and environment; content producers through youtube and other social media; food cultures; religion, ceremonies, festivals, and cultural values; places and states in India and Thailand; expressions of love in Indian families; ways of nourishing the kid(s); Indian costumes and products; and reflections from audiences.

Additionally, the hybrid cultures within their families are reflected in their language, cuisine, and etiquette, showcasing a blend of "Thainess" and "Indianness." The feedback from their followers has been overwhelmingly positive, creating a strong sense of familiarity and connection. If the Thai embassy and consulates in India were to organize these Thai wives into a network, they could promote "Thainess" within the framework of "Indianness." As "civilian ambassadors," they could significantly enhance cultural diplomacy between the two nations.

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

Not available.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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