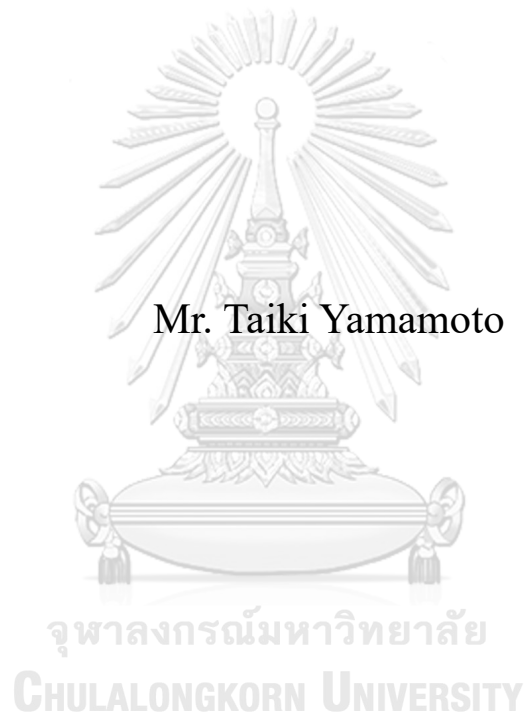


# The Popularity of Thai Y Series in Japan



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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies  
Inter-Department of Southeast Asian Studies  
Graduate School  
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ความนิยมซีรีส์วายไทยในประเทศญี่ปุ่น



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ความนิยมซีรีส์วายไทยในประเทศญี่ปุ่นเป็นปรากฏการณ์ที่น่าจับตาสำหรับการศึกษาเรียนรู้ อิทธิพลสื่อและการ์ตูนเผยแพร่วัฒนธรรมร่วมสมัย งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งสำรวจปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยให้นำหนักกับบทบาทของโซเชียลมีเดียในด้านการสื่อสารเนื้อหาพลังความดึงดูดของเรื่องราว รวมทั้งเสน่ห์ที่น่าดึงดูด วิถีวิจัยประกอบไปด้วยการสำรวจสื่อโซเชียลมีเดียในส่วนที่ว่าด้วยซีรีส์วาย การวิเคราะห์การเล่าเรื่อง การ์ตูนมังงะ และการ์ตูนวิเคราะห์เสน่ห์ที่น่าดึงดูด ข้อค้นพบจากงานวิจัยเผยให้เห็นผลลัพธ์ของซีรีส์วายไทยที่มีต่อสังคมวัฒนธรรมญี่ปุ่นซึ่งต่อยอดมายังของกระบวนการเชื่อมโยงโลกผ่านเครือข่ายความบันเทิงและการแลกเปลี่ยนวัฒนธรรม ผลวิจัยนี้ไม่เพียงแต่จะอธิบายปัจจัยความนิยมของซีรีส์วายไทย แต่ยังช่วยเปิดทางไปสู่การศึกษาเพิ่มเติมในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับการบริโภคสื่อระดับสากล



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The burgeoning popularity of the Thai Y series within Japan presents a captivating case study of cultural diffusion and media influence in the contemporary era. This paper explores the underlying dynamics behind this phenomenon, focusing on the interplay between social media's role in content propagation, the narrative appeal of the series to Japanese audiences, and the unique charm of Thai actors that captivates the same demographic. The research employs a multifaceted approach which incorporates examination of key media platforms, storytelling analysis, interview, and analysis of actors' appeal. The findings reveal insights into the cultural, and social impact of the Thai Y series in Japan, highlighting the broader implications of entertainment globalization and cross-cultural exchanges. This study not only sheds light on the factors driving the series' popularity but also paves the way for future inquiries into the evolving landscape of international media consumption.



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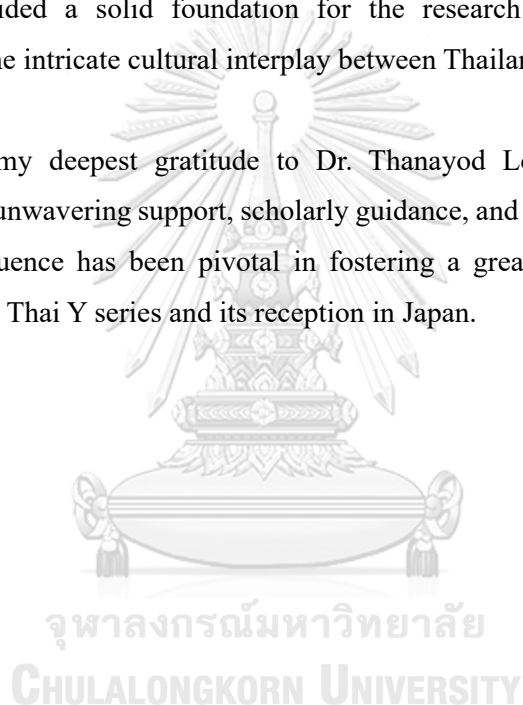
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Dr. Lopattananon and Dr. Thipakorn's commitment to academic rigor and cultural understanding has significantly shaped the narrative and analysis of this study. Their dedication has not only provided a solid foundation for the research but also inspired a broader comprehension of the intricate cultural interplay between Thailand and Japan.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Thanayod Lopattananon and Dr. Saikaew Thipakorn for their unwavering support, scholarly guidance, and significant contributions to this research. Their influence has been pivotal in fostering a greater appreciation of the unique dynamics within the Thai Y series and its reception in Japan.

Taiki Yamamoto



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Rationale

BL or Y series, short for "Boys' Love" "*yaoi*" is a genre of fictional media that focuses on romantic and sexual relationships between male characters. The origin of the BL genre can be traced back to Japan, and its history is closely tied to the development of manga and anime. The roots of BL can be found in "*shōnen-ai*" or "*Tanjōbi*" (literally meaning "birth anniversary") stories that emerged in the 1970s. These stories depicted innocent and platonic relationships between young boys and often had themes of friendship and self-discovery.

The Y in the "Y series" originates from the Japanese word *yaoi* (a popular name for women's manga and novels about homosexuality in men). The word *yaoi* is used with the following meanings. Firstly, it indicates comics and novels with poor narrative (The plot is extremely frivolous because the audience cares about only the relationship between two "beautiful" males). Usually the audience of *yaoi* feel more special to the psychological connections between two men and the sex scenes are rarely drawn.

Also a parody that depicts the homosexual relationship using male characters from existing stories (manga, anime, etc.) is called *yaoi*. According to Fujimoto (2020), the preference for *yaoi* in Japan has often been viewed as "pathological" by those outside the fan community. This perspective persists despite the flourishing of *yaoi* culture, as Japanese society has been slow to accept LGBTQ individuals in reality. This situation underscores the complex relationship between cultural media representations and societal attitudes. Nowadays, Y series is mainly produced in countries such as Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and China (normally works of western countries are not included in the category of Y). According to Azuma (2012) the word BL was also coined in 1991 by a Japanese magazine called *Hakuyashobo* and since then thousands of BL manga, dramas, and novels have been published over 20 years (\**yaoi* is included in the BL categories but it specifically

indicates the frivolous story inside of BL). Internationally recognized as a birthplace of BL, Japan has increasing publications of works while localization is progressing in various countries including Thailand.

The concept of Boys' Love (BL) in Japan is deeply rooted in the nation's literary history, as evidenced by early works that explored same-sex relationships. According to McHarry (2011), "Nishino Saikaku, a Japanese writer during the Edo period, vividly portrays relationships that can only be expressed by two men, doing so more than 300 years ago." Such early literary expressions have provided a foundation for the BL genre.

Additionally, the development of BL culture in Japan has been significantly influenced by the nation's unique approach to pornography. McLelland (2000) notes, "Japanese pornography, distinct from its Western counterparts, covers a wide spectrum of sexual activities, contributing notably to the flourishing of BL culture." The distinct characteristics of Japanese pornography have played a critical role in the evolution of the BL genre.

Japanese yaoi/BL culture's expansion beyond Japan began in the late 1990s and gained momentum in the early 2000s. As Pagliassotti (2008) observes, "The culture started to permeate Europe and the United States from the end of the 1990s to around 2000, and it began to be influxed into East Asia and Southeast Asia shortly thereafter. "In the 1980s, the genre further evolved with the rise of commercial BL manga magazines. According to Aida (2014), the 1990s saw a significant increase in the popularity and diversity of BL content. The genre began to explore more explicit and erotic themes, although the level of sexual content varied depending on the specific work.

Japan, having a longstanding and intricate history with the Boys' Love genre, witnessed its distinct evolution over the years. Concurrently, emerging from Thailand is the 'Thai Y series,' a genre primarily anchored in exploring LGBTQ+ narratives, with an emphasis on male-male relationships.

The Thai Y series, despite its shorter temporal trajectory in comparison to Japanese BL, witnessed a seminal moment with the release of the series *2gether* in 2020. This series, with its 13 episodes, became a fulcrum in propelling the Thai BL genre to global prominence. As corroborated by the Japanese edition of "Time Out"

magazine, "#2gethertheSeries" conspicuously marked its presence in global Twitter trends for 13 continuous weeks in the year 2020.

Additionally, there were significant strides in transnational television production collaborations. For instance, GMMTV, a notable Thai television production company, forged a partnership with Japan's TV Asahi. This partnership facilitated the broadcast of Thai Y series on mainstream Japanese TV channels from around 2021, marking a significant inroad in the diffusion of the Thai Y series narrative in Japan.

Since 2020, an intriguing trend has been evident in the Japanese media landscape – the escalating interest in Thai Y series. Scholarly observations denote that several media outlets, spanning print, digital, and broadcast platforms, have increasingly highlighted these dramas.

According to Maekawa (2020), publications like *Weekly Bunshun* and *Web Newtype* have concurrently shed light on this phenomenon, with the latter particularly emphasizing the distinctiveness of Thai narratives, which seems to resonate across diverse fan bases. Furthermore, *ANAN*, a magazine known for its holistic coverage of lifestyle topics, gave the Thai Y series significant visibility in 2020. This feature fortified the recognition that Thai television dramas are not just ephemeral sensations but perhaps indicative of an evolving viewer preference in Japan.

On account of Thai Y series phenomenon, this research endeavors to explore the increasing popularity of Thai Y series in Japan, tracing its roots to the established Japanese Boys' Love genre. It aims to understand the cultural and social dynamics that have led to the growing appeal of Thai Y series among Japanese audiences. By examining the narrative styles, cultural contexts, and audience reception, the study seeks to uncover why these series have resonated so profoundly with Japanese viewers and to analyze the impact of this transnational exchange on contemporary media consumption patterns.

### **Problem Statement**

In the era of globalization, the rise of the digital domain has served as a bridge, connecting disparate cultures, and reshaping the contours of entertainment consumption. With just a click, audiences can dive into stories from continents away,

relishing in the allure of discovering new narratives that may either echo their experiences or introduce them to novel cultural findings. The Thai Y series, originally produced for Thai audiences, has transcended its local boundaries, carving a niche in the hearts of international viewers, especially in Japan. Such transnational consumption patterns prompt a deep dive into the underlying factors and implications of this phenomenon.

While the Thai Y series might share similarities with Japanese BL content in terms of its central themes around youthful relationships, the nuances of Thai culture, societal views, and character developments offer a different perspective. This naturally raises the question; what elements of the Thai Y series resonate so profoundly with the Japanese audience that they are willing to navigate the cultural differences and embrace these series with fervor? Is it a quest for fresh narratives, or do these series touch upon universal themes that transcend cultural barriers?

### **Hypothesis**

According to preliminary research, three factors are found to be influential contributors to the transnational consumption patterns of the Thai Y series by the Japanese audience, namely, the social media use associated with Thai BL, the allure of Thai BL's narrative structure, and the magnetic appeal of Thai actors.

#### **Social Media Use of Thai BL**

In today's digital age, as identified by Castells in his Network Society theory (2004), networks, particularly those facilitated by social media platforms, play a pivotal role in disseminating content. Thai BL series have strategically harnessed the power of platforms such as Instagram, and YouTube, reaching out to the global audience. Their use of teasers, fan interactions, and live sessions have not only amplified their content visibility but also built a virtual community. For Japanese viewers, who are known for their active online fan culture, this intense online presence of Thai BL content becomes an invitation to engage, share, and discuss. It is assumed that this dynamic interaction on social media platforms bridges the cultural gap and serves as a conduit for the series' popularity.

### **Allure of Thai BL's Narrative for Japanese Audience**

While Japanese BL has its own established tropes and narrative structures rooted in its manga and anime culture, the narrative style of Thai BL presents a refreshing divergence. Thai dramas often infuse a mix of traditional values with modern conflicts, offering a blend of familiarity and novelty. Such narratives may touch upon universal themes of love, acceptance, and societal pressures, but they do so through a distinctly Thai lens. For the Japanese audience, this offers a unique viewing experience, combining the comfort of known thematic elements with the intrigue of unfamiliar cultural contexts.

### **Allure of Thai Actors for Japanese Audience**

The role of actors has been key text in film and television studies. Thai BL actors bring with them not just their acting skills but also their off-screen personas, heavily documented and shared on social media. Their charm, candidness, and accessibility make them relatable figures for international fans. Furthermore, the aesthetic appreciation of these actors, influenced by the blend of Thai beauty standards and their character portrayals, offers a novel visual and emotional experience for the Japanese viewers, differentiating them from their Japanese counterparts.

### **Scope of the Research**

This research explores three case studies, encompassing *2gether*, *TharnType*, and *SOTUS*. It looks into their narrative, use of social media, and the charisma of Thai actors that predominantly draw in Japanese viewers. Focusing on Japanese viewers who are active consumers of Thai Y series, the research also utilizes a sample that reflects diverse age groups and viewing habits to gain a comprehensive perspective.

To understand the role of social media, the research specifically examines the dynamics of two major platforms, namely, YouTube and Instagram. These platforms have been identified as significant in modern media consumption, especially for Japanese audiences engaging with Thai Y series. The focus on YouTube and Instagram allows us to explore how these digital spaces facilitate interaction between

fans and actors. In so doing, the research delves into aspects such as fan comments, actor posts, fan and actor engagement.

The focus of this study on the narrative appeal of Thai Y series is grounded in the observation that these series offer distinct storytelling, specifically, with themes of love, acceptance, growth, and the dynamics of relationships. The abovementioned case studies are selected for their profound exploration of emotional journeys and relationship dynamics, which are pivotal in understanding their appeal to Japanese viewers. Through this analysis, the research uncovers how these narratives, with their specific thematic focuses, have captivated a diverse audience base and contributed to the popularity of Thai Y series in Japan.

The study's attention to the allure of Thai actors extends beyond their physical appearance to their performance and emotional expression. This seeks to understand the more nuanced aspects of their acting, such as emotional delivery and physicality, which might play a significant role in the series' appeal beyond just visual attractiveness. The research will also compare Thai BL series with native Japanese BL content to identify unique aspects that resonate with the Japanese audience.

Finally, use of questionnaire and interview is scheduled for August–November 2023 focusing on the question of the storytelling approach, character development, aesthetic view, social media use, and the depiction of societal issues. It is expected to gain some supplementary data indicative of engagement and attraction these narrative elements hold for Japanese viewers.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology employed in this study is done in a qualitative fashion. It delves into the depth and nuances of the Japanese audience's experiences and perceptions of Thai Y series. It also allows for a richer exploration of viewer interpretations, emotional responses, and the subjective impact of narrative elements. It is particularly suited for capturing the diverse and complex viewer experiences. The chosen methodology can be detailed as in the following.

### **Social Media Dynamics**



Firstly, a significant focus is placed on analyzing the functionalities of Instagram and YouTube posts, particularly in the context of how content related to Thai Y series is shared and interacted by Japanese fans on these platforms. This emphasis is justified by the fact that actors from Thai Y series extensively utilize these two platforms for engagement and promotion. In the analysis, the use of YouTube and Instagram in *SOTUS*, *2gether*, and *TharnType* will be examined, centering on the content posted by actors and the subsequent fan reactions to understand the role of these social media platforms in enhancing the visibility and appeal of Thai Y series.

Secondly, from August to November 2023, qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants from Japanese audience. These interviews are intended to delve into personal viewer experiences and opinions about Thai BL series, ensuring a comprehensive understanding. Special attention is placed on maintaining diversity among the interviewees, including a balance in gender and a variety of age groups (Mixture of group of 10-20s, 30-40s, 50s-60s, Male and Female, various sexuality). The insights gained from these interviews are not only pivotal to the analysis, which focuses on the role of social media, but they also significantly contribute to the discussions on the narrative appeal and actor magnetism.

To do so, the interview pinpoints the specific elements that captivate audiences, with a keen interest in understanding what makes these series particularly engaging and appealing. And the interviews were held around 5 main questions.

#### **Main Questions for the Interviewees**

1. What aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging and appealing?
2. What do you think is driving the popularity of Thai Y series among Japanese viewers?
3. Who are your favorite Thai actors and why?
4. How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas ?
5. Social media seems to play a significant role in the popularity of Thai Y series in Japan.
6. Can you describe how it is influenced your viewing habits?

Thirdly, in August and October 2023, qualitative questionnaires were distributed to 50 members of Thai Y series fan clubs in Japan, aiming to capture a diverse range of perspectives. Out of these, 20 respondents, a mix of men and women ranging from their 20s to 60s and all fans of Thai Y series, completed the questionnaires online.

The questionnaire was designed to delve into their experiences and perceptions of Thai Y series. It began by exploring how they first discovered these series and what motivated them to start watching, seeking to understand the initial touchpoints and social media use and so on. Below is the questionnaire distributed to the fan clubs.

#### Questionnaire distributed to fan clubs

**タイBLファンに対するご質問**

Saisissez votre nom et la taille voulue afin de vous inscrire pour recevoir un

ご年齢/性別 \*

Réponse courte

タイBLのどの点が魅力的でご視聴を始めましたか？

Réponse courte

1. How did you discover Thai Y series, and what prompted you to start watching them
2. What aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging and appealing?
3. Do you think Thai Y series offer a unique cultural perspective compared to other Asian drama series?  
If so, how?
4. Which Thai Y series have been your favorites so far?
5. Have you noticed any specific themes or storylines in Thai Y series that resonate with Japanese audiences?
6. Are there any particular actors or actresses in Thai Y series that have gained popularity or have a strong fan following in Japan?
7. How do you think Thai Y series differ from Japanese drama series in terms of storytelling, production quality, or style?
8. In your opinion, what is the key factor contributing to the growing popularity of Thai Y series among Japanese viewers?
9. How is the impression of the Thai Y series ? (Multiple answers, choosing

words)

10. What kind of word do you use when you describe Thai Y series actors ?  
(Multiple answers, choosing words)

By combining questionnaire feedback with detailed interviews, the study provides a nuanced and multifaceted view of the unique appeal of social media in Thai Y series in Japan.

### **Narrative Appeal**

Firstly, the study delves into *TharnType* as a main case, examining in detail how its narrative aspects – love, acceptance, personal growth, and the dynamics of relationships – resonate with Japanese viewers while using *SOTUS* and *2gether* as supplementary cases. This is expected to uncover the intricate layers of the narrative and how they reflect wider themes prevalent in Thai BL, particularly those that strike a chord with Japanese fans.

Secondly, a comparative analysis is conducted between Thai BL series and native Japanese BL content. This analysis seeks to identify points of convergence and divergence in themes, character arcs, and plot developments. The objective is to understand the unique features of Thai BL narratives that attract Japanese viewers, differentiating them from the narratives found in Japanese BL dramas.

Thirdly, an analysis of the Japanese audience's perceptions of Thai narratives will be conducted based on the data gathered from questionnaires and interviews mentioned above. The focus will be on how storytelling techniques, cultural nuances, and thematic content in Thai BL resonate with the audience in Japan.

### **Allure of Thai Actors**

Firstly, analysis of the physical appeal of Thai actors to Japanese Audiences is conducted using the example of actors from mainly *SOTUS*, along with some examples from *2gether* and *TharnType*. Also analyzing the results from the abovementioned questionnaires and interviews to understand what physical features and aesthetic aspects of Thai actors are particularly appealing to the Japanese audience. The focus will be on exploring the differences and similarities in the

perception of beauty across cultures, and how the aesthetic preferences and cultural backgrounds of Japanese viewers in comparison with Japanese actors as well.

Secondly, the *SOTUS* series will be examined as a main case study to analyze acting styles in terms of emotional intensity, physical interactions, temporal progression, and cultural context while using other two series as examples as well.

Thirdly, analysis fan engagement aspect of Thai actors is conducted by the actual report of participation to Thai BL event *SOTUS*. And this engagement aspect is compared with Japanese BL events to understand deeply the Thai Y actors fan engagement.

### **Literature review**

This section begins with examination of the historical context of fujoshi culture, exploring the origins and cultural implications of these phenomena in Japan. This includes an analysis of gender norms, fan culture evolution. The review then focuses on the role of social media in disseminating and popularizing BL series, particularly through platforms like Instagram and YouTube, and investigates the narrative qualities that make BL series appealing to audiences while existing studies on BL are analyzed, identifying research gaps in the comparative study of Thai and Japanese BL dramas and the reception of Thai BL narratives by Japanese audiences.

### **Fujoshi Research**

Derived from the Japanese characters for "rotten" and "girl". The exploration of the term *fujoshi* and the progression of BL research have intricately intertwined histories that have had significant cultural impacts in Japan and beyond.

The term *fujoshi*, which literally translates to rotten girl, was originally used with a somewhat derogatory connotation. It was aimed at female fans who reveled in yaoi or BL content, marking them as deviant within mainstream culture. However, over time, many fans have reclaimed the term, wearing it as a badge of honor to signal their enthusiastic participation in the BL subculture. According to Thorn (2004), the fujoshi culture has its roots in the underground manga scene of the 1970s, particularly within doujinshi circles—amateur manga groups—that began producing content reimagining popular male characters in romantic or erotic relationships.

These transformative works laid the groundwork for what would eventually be termed *yaoi*. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the genre had gained enough traction that the term BL began to be commonly used to describe commercial works within this genre. This development is well-documented in the works of scholars like Nagaike (2009), who explores the nuances of fujoshi culture and its transition from underground circles to mainstream recognition.

Kaneda (2006) categorizes discussions on *yaoi* into two main categories: "Psychological Yaoi Theory" and "Gender-based Yaoi Theory". In the early stages of *yaoi* discourse in Japan, the focus was on understanding the reasons and backgrounds behind individual women's attraction to *yaoi*. Central to this discussion were the "Psychological Yaoi Theories" presented in the works by Ueno (1989). Their findings underscore the complex interplay of emotional, psychological, and societal factors influencing women's consumption of BL content.

This period coincides with the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, and the amendment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act for men and women in 1985 in Japan. These events brought attention to women's issues. In the 1980s, gender theories started to emerge in Japan. Reflecting these societal changes, discussions on *yaoi* explored the relationship between women who consume male homosexual fiction and the society surrounding them. It was argued that women, being oppressed in a male-dominated society, find a form of healing in works dealing with boy love, and *yaoi* parody works.

According to Kaneda (2006), around the 1990s, particularly influenced by the 1989 serial kidnapping and murder case of young girls and the subsequent bashing of *otaku* culture related to it, *yaoi* was discussed within the framework of a social issue that needed to be addressed.

Ueno (1989) posits that in "*bishounen manga*" (manga featuring beautiful young boys), which tells stories of boys loving boys, by depicting love between boys, girls can detach "sexuality" from their own femininity, allowing them to enjoy narratives about sexuality. Further, the protagonists in *bishounen* manga are often portrayed with extremely feminine qualities. This is because the existence of the *bishounen* is neither male nor female for girls, but rather represents a third gender, an "idealized self-image." They will be applied their theories to our exploration as below.

Firstly, Kaneda (2007)'s categorization into "Psychological Yaoi Theory" and "Gender-based Yaoi Theory" and the subsequent works by Nakajima and Ueno focus on understanding why individual women are attracted to *yaoi*. Their findings provide insights into the psychological motivations and backgrounds of female audiences. This is relevant to our research on the popularity of Thai BL in Japan as it offers a basis to understand the psychological appeal of Thai BL series among Japanese women, highlighting the emotional and societal factors that drive their interest in this genre.

Secondly, Ueno (1989)'s analysis of "*bishounen* manga" illustrates how stories of boys loving boys allow girls to detach "sexuality" from their own femininity, offering a unique narrative experience. The portrayal of protagonists with feminine qualities, representing a third gender or an "idealized self-image," sheds light on the gender dynamics in BL narratives. This is pertinent to the research on Thai BL popularity in Japan as it helps explain the broader appeal of these narratives to Japanese female audiences. It provides a framework to understand how Thai BL series resonate with the desires and preferences of Japanese women.

### **Theory about Social Media**

The rise of social media platforms has undeniably reshaped various industries, not least of which is the world of screen productions. From cinema releases to episodic television, the digital space now plays a pivotal role in determining a production's trajectory, be it in terms of popularity, revenue, or critical acclaim.

Nakamura's research (2019) on fan-generated content points out how fan-made trailers, memes, and fan art can significantly bolster a production's presence online. These organic, fan-initiated campaigns can sometimes eclipse official marketing efforts in terms of reach and impact.

Another interesting paradigm is the rise of influencer culture. The study by Tanaka (2020) points out that endorsements or promotions by social media influencers can considerably alter a production's fate, especially in niche genres or markets.

Moreover, Asano (2017) said that the individuals behind TV series, from creators to actors, are increasingly active on social platforms, blurring the lines

between on-screen narratives and off-screen interactions. It is common to find showrunners, writers, and cast members live-tweeting episodes, offering behind-the-scenes insights, or simply engaging with fan reactions. Such direct interaction not only enhances the immediacy of the viewing experience but also fosters a sense of community among fans. It will be applied their theories to our exploration of the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan as below.

Firstly, Nakamura's (2019) research on fan-generated content highlights the significant role of fan-made trailers, memes, and fan art in bolstering a production's online presence. This will be essential in examining how such fan-initiated campaigns contribute to the popularity and online reach of Thai BL series in Japan, potentially even surpassing official marketing efforts.

Secondly, Tanaka's (2020) study on the influence of social media endorsements and promotions by influencers sheds light on how these can alter the reception of niche genres. This will be crucial in understanding the role of influencer culture in shaping the Japanese audience's perception and popularity of Thai BL series.

Lastly, Asano's findings about the active participation of TV series creators and actors on social platforms, and their interactions with fans, will be explored to see how this engagement impacts the popularity and community building around Thai BL series among Japanese fans. This includes examining how these off-screen interactions enhance the viewing experience and foster a deeper connection with the audience especially in chapter 4.

### **Theory of Narrative**

Narrative, in an academic context, is defined as a systematic construction and representation of a sequence of events or experiences, typically presented in a coherent, structured format. It forms the backbone of storytelling across various media, serving to convey themes, characters, and conflicts in a manner that engages and resonates with the audience.

The origins of contemporary narrative styles in television and literature can be traced back to the post-war era, which saw the rise of genres focusing on idealized representations of youth and beauty. According to McLelland (2000), early works

were often marked by their depiction of androgynous characters, appealing to a broad spectrum of audiences with their blend of aesthetic beauty and emotional depth.

Over time, these narratives have evolved to become more intricate and varied, thus attracting a diverse readership. According to Welker (2006) this evolution reflects a shift from simple, idealized stories to more complex and emotionally nuanced relationships. The changing nature of these narratives demonstrates their ability to offer both a sense of nostalgia and a deeper, more relatable exploration of emotional experiences.

Ajima (2004) theorizes that the use of fantasy elements in narratives allows for a 'safe distance' from reality. This enables viewers to explore complex themes of sexuality and emotion in a manner that is both accessible and emotionally engaging, without direct confrontation with societal taboos.

However, as Nagaike (2018) has raised concerns that certain narrative tropes, especially in romantic dramas, might oversimplify or misrepresent real-life experiences. There is an ongoing debate about the authenticity and representation in these narratives, particularly when they are authored by individuals who may not share the same experiences as their characters.

Moreover, there is a tendency in some narratives to lean towards tragic endings, which, according to Ishikawa (2014), can perpetuate problematic stereotypes. Such narratives risk suggesting that non-normative relationships are doomed, potentially undermining the progressive potential of these stories. We will apply their theories to our exploration of the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan as below.

Firstly, McLelland's and Welker's insights into the evolution of narrative styles help understand the appeal of Thai BL series in Japan, with their complex relationships and emotional depth mirroring contemporary audience preferences.

Secondly, Ajima's theory on fantasy elements in narratives sheds light on Thai BL series' approach to exploring complex themes, making them accessible and engaging to Japanese viewers seeking safe emotional exploration.

Lastly, critiques by Nagaike and Ishikawa about narrative oversimplification and tragic tropes in romantic dramas provide a critical lens for understanding Thai BL series' reception in Japan, balancing between representation and stereotype reinforcement.



### **Actor Magnetism**

In the world of film and television, actor magnetism has stood out as a unique phenomenon that often dictates box office successes and television ratings. Delving into the various research articles and scholarly investigations into the topic, it becomes evident that this pull is complex, rooted in psychology, culture, and the industry's intricacies.

Actor magnetism" is an academic concept that captures an actor's intrinsic ability to attract and hold the attention of audiences.

The early cinema era, as outlined by Thompson (1994), demonstrated how silent movie stars, even without spoken dialogue, captivated audiences through their mere presence. This idea of actors' ability to captivate, irrespective of the narrative context, became the first indications of what we now term "actor magnetism."

Building on Thompson's foundational studies, Taylor (2009) analyzed the transition from silent films to talkies and discovered that while dialogues added a new dimension, the core magnetism of the actor remained unchanged. This unspoken allure, as Roberts posits, may be rooted in non-verbal cues, a hypothesis further explored by Lee (2002). Lee's work focused on the intrinsic charm actors exude, tying it to evolutionary psychology and suggesting that our attraction to certain actors may be connected to primal instincts.

Moving away from the biological perspective, cultural implications of actor magnetism have been extensively discussed. D'Souza (2007)'s ethnographic study on Bollywood's influence in South Asia highlighted that actors become icons, not just for their on-screen roles but for what they represent in the socio-cultural landscape. They embody aspirational qualities, dreams, and sometimes even political ideals.

However, the film industry's commercial aspect cannot be separated from actor magnetism. Martin (2010) investigated Hollywood's star-driven economy, suggesting that magnetism is not just inherent but also meticulously crafted. Agencies, PR campaigns, and strategic role choices all contribute to cultivating an actor's appeal. Martin's argument is corroborated by Zhang (2014)'s study of China's film industry, suggesting that the "manufacturing" of actor magnetism is a global phenomenon.

The age of digital media has added another layer to this. Patel (2018) explored the role of social media in amplifying actor magnetism. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok allow actors to showcase their personalities beyond the roles they play, further blurring the lines between the actor as an individual and their on-screen personas. This constant engagement, as Patel emphasizes, strengthens the magnetic pull, making actors omnipresent in their audiences' lives.

Furthermore, the audience's role in actor magnetism is undeniable. Watkins (2019) provides a counter-narrative, suggesting that magnetism is not just top-down but also a bottom-up phenomenon. Fans create fanfictions, art, and various tributes, actively participating in the actor's narrative and, in turn, influencing their magnetism. It will be applied their theories to our exploration of the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan as below.

In analyzing the popularity of Thai Y series in Japan, firstly, Roberts (1992) and Lee (2002)'s studies on actor magnetism are pivotal. They provide insight into why Thai actors, through their non-verbal cues and intrinsic charm, captivate Japanese audiences, influencing the series' popularity. Secondly, D'Souza (2007)'s research on cultural implications in Bollywood is applied to understand how Thai actors embody cultural and aspirational qualities, resonating deeply with Japanese viewers and contributing to the socio-cultural impact of Thai Y series in Japan.

### **Japanese Fandom Culture**

As highlighted in Kinsella (2000)'s research, the evolution of this culture was significantly influenced by print media. Fanzines and *dōjinshi*, self-published works, played a vital role in cultivating a fan culture that was not just consumer-centric but also participatory. These mediums provided fans with opportunities to actively engage with and contribute to their beloved media, setting a trend that continues to evolve.

The phenomenon of 'oshi-katsu' (supporting one's favorite idols or characters), a defining aspect of modern Japanese fandom culture, is explored in various studies on Japanese idol culture. It represents an intense dedication to favorite media figures or characters, as seen in the reception of Thai Y series in Japan. Fans demonstrate more than passive consumption, actively participating in fan events, creating fan art, and being part of online communities.

This unique dimension of Japanese fan culture also extends to their engagement with international media, like the Thai Y series. The intensity and commitment of Japanese fans are further amplified in such scenarios. Galbraith (2019) describes this as 'media mix' in "Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination in Japan," where fans consume a media product across various platforms, including television, movies, merchandise, and events, creating a comprehensive and multi-layered experience. Moreover, Japanese fandom culture is characterized by its blend of traditional and modern elements. As Steinberg (2012) points out, the integration of new technologies and traditional fan practices creates a unique fan culture dynamic. This hybridity is particularly visible in the way fans of Thai Y series engage with the content, merging online fan activities with traditional practices like fanzine creation and group viewings.

However, the distinctiveness of Japanese fandom also raises critical questions about fan practices and their implications. As Ito (2014) suggests, the blurring lines between fan passion and obsessive behavior in Japanese fandom can sometimes lead to challenging social and cultural issues.

### **Relevant Studies**

BL, as a genre, has been the subject of academic research since the 1990s. Early research primarily revolved around textual analyses of BL manga and its portrayal of relationships, gender dynamics, and sexuality. Over time, as BL content diversified across media—including novels, films, and TV dramas—research methodologies and foci evolved correspondingly.

There is been a continuous debate among scholars regarding the significance of BL in challenging traditional gender norms. Some argue that BL provides an avenue for women to explore relationships and sexuality beyond the constraints of patriarchy. Others, however, question whether BL, being a product of a patriarchal society, can truly subvert its norms.

The realm of Gender Studies often encounters psychoanalytic insights that argue the motivations of "*fujoshi*" are to some extent "pathological." Scholars like MarcM (2015) contend that the allure of BL manga lies in escapism from reality and the evasion of gender performance as women. These scholars frequently claimed that

fujoshi harbor dissatisfaction with their sexual identity and are enamored with masculinity.

Nagaike (2007), analyzed Arab characters in BL manga. She argued that while addressing racial issues depicted within BL manga and post-colonialism in Japanese society at large, BL serves as a medium to easily decipher the codes of gender. Her study explored how BL manga tackles and represents broader socio-political issues through its narrative and character portrayals offers insights into the genre's multifaceted role in Japanese culture. Nagaike's work offers valuable insights into how the genre can challenge and redefine societal norms, making it an important reference for understanding the evolving dynamics of BL series in both Japanese and broader Asian contexts.

In recent years, the globalization of BL content, especially through Thai and Chinese adaptations, has expanded the scope of research. Scholars are now investigating cross-cultural receptions, adaptations, and the broader socio-economic implications of the BL industry in different countries.

Prominent scholars have made significant contributions to the understanding of Thai BL series and their implications. For instance, Hinata (2023), underscores the undeniable influence that social media has played in the proliferation of the Thai BL culture. Such an observation offers a contemporary lens through which one can understand the rapid global spread of Thai BL series . Hinata's work underscores the importance of digital media as a catalyst for cultural exchange, demonstrating how these platforms enable fans across different geographies to access, share, and engage with Thai BL.

Pongsapitaksanti (2023) provides an in-depth examination of the Thai BL drama fanbase. The study uncovers specific traits that set this audience apart, such as their intense engagement with the content across various digital platforms, a strong sense of community among fans, and a unique blend of cultural appreciation and fandom activities. Furthermore, the study reveals how fans actively contribute to the genre's growth through fan fiction, participation in fan events, underlining their crucial role in the evolving landscape of Thai BL drama. By revealing the role of fans in contributing to the genre's growth through activities like fan fiction and event

participation, Pongsapitaksanti's research provides a valuable perspective on the dynamic interaction between Thai BL dramas and their audience.

Further exploring the historical background, Ishikawa (2023) delves into the complex journey that led to the cultural spread of Thai BL. The research traces the origins of Thai BL back to its Japanese influences, examining how it initially absorbed and then transformed these influences into a unique genre that resonated deeply with Thai audiences. Ishikawa's paper also discusses the subsequent re-importation of Thai BL into Japan, highlighting the intriguing cycle of cultural exchange and adaptation between the two countries.

Prasannam (2019) explores the yaoi phenomenon in Thailand, particularly during the 2010s, focusing on the industry's involvement with yaoi fandom. It draws on Paul Booth's study of fan/industry interaction and examines the role of GMMTV Company Limited in expanding the yaoi industry in Thailand. The article also discusses fan/industry interactions, including practices like "shipping" yaoi couples through Official Promotional Videos (OPVs) and television shows, and how GMMTV uses fan nostalgia to create memory-driven activities.

Prasannam and Chan (2023) examine how BL narratives are incorporated into Thai literature and media, and their impact on broader cultural and gender norms. The issue could also discuss the commercialization of BL content and its implications for media representation and literacy.

Baudinette (2023) explores the cultural, social, and economic factors that have influenced the popularity and development of BL media in Thailand. The work delves into how these series not only entertain but also address complex issues of gender, sexuality, and identity, offering insights into the ways Thai society perceives and interacts with these themes.

Welker (2022) examines the role of Boys Love media in shaping queer narratives in Asia. It discusses the impact of these stories on understanding and accepting queer identities, highlighting the evolution of BL media in response to changing societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ themes.

The existing body of research on BL series, as shown through the works of scholars such as Nagaike, Hori, Hinata, Pongsapitaksanti, Ishikawa, Prasannam and Welker provides a wealth of knowledge on the genre's development, fan culture, and

global influence. However, there remains a notable gap in comprehensive, systematic research specifically addressing the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan. This research aims to fill these gaps by the following.

Firstly, this research aims to offer a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the Thai BL phenomenon in Japan. By synthesizing various academic perspectives, the study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the genre's impact and appeal in the Japanese context, which has been largely unaddressed in existing literature.

Secondly, a significant focus of this study is to investigate how Thai BL narratives are perceived by Japanese audiences. This area has been underexplored in previous research, and understanding this aspect is crucial for grasping the cultural dynamics and preferences that drive the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan.

Additionally, the research delves deep into the narrative structures and themes of Thai BL series. While there is a substantial body of work on BL narratives, few have specifically examined the intricate storytelling and thematic nuances of Thai BL series, especially in comparison to their Japanese counterparts.

Moreover, this study offers a comparative analysis between Thai BL series and Japanese BL productions. This comparison is aimed at highlighting the unique characteristics and cultural influences that shape each genre, providing new insights into the evolution and adaptation of BL narratives across different cultural landscapes.

## Chapter 2

### Social Media Contributions

Based on the existence of various platforms, this research particularly focuses on the significant usage of Instagram and YouTube. The reason is that these platforms have emerged as central to the way Thai Y series are consumed and celebrated, transcending traditional media boundaries. The second reason stems from the fact that many respondents, as indicated in subsequent interviews and questionnaire results, mentioned that Instagram and YouTube were key gateways to discovering and engaging with Thai Y series.

#### **Content analysis of Instagram**

Content analysis of Instagram leads to the discovery of some unique post types that have shown significant impact. They consist of the following.

1. Behind-the-Scenes Glimpses' give fans an intimate look at the production process, deepening their connection to the series.
2. Interactive Q&A Sessions' provide a direct line of communication between fans and the series' cast and crew, fostering a sense of community and loyalty.
3. Virtual Meet-and-Greets bridges the physical gap between fans and actors, enhancing the personal connection with the series.
4. Teasers and Trailers build anticipation and maintain viewers' interest.
5. Celebratory Posts mark milestones and achievements, creating a shared sense of accomplishment and belonging among the fan community.

The following provides detailed analysis regarding these five post types.

Figure 1 Instagram content analysis

### ① Behind-the-Scenes Glimpse type of post



Firstly, a notable feature of Instagram use in the Thai Y series context is the sharing of behind-the-scenes photos. An illustrative example is on the left, where Win shares a candid photo of himself on a film set. He's seen in his costume, clearly immersed in the production environment. This behind-the-scenes glimpse offers fans a valuable insight into his dedication and the hard work that goes into the series. The caption accompanying the photo, "Long hours on set, but the passion keeps me going," further reinforces his commitment. Below this post, numerous comments from Japanese fans can be found, expressing their admiration and appreciation for his work

"Your dedication truly shines through, Win! We love seeing the behind-the-scenes moments. Keep up the amazing work! ❤️🎬" 「Win、情熱がすごく伝わってくるよ！舞台裏の様子を見るのが好き！❤️🎬」

"Win, you look fantastic even during those long hours! Your passion is inspiring. Can't wait to see the final product!" 「長時間の撮影でも素敵だね完成した作品が楽しみ！」

"Thank you for sharing these moments with us, Win. Your hard work does not go unnoticed" 「共有してくれてありがとう」

"Support you all the way, Win! Your talent and commitment to your craft are unmatched. Can't wait to see the magic you're creating on set!" 「努力はちゃんと見てるぞ」

"Your fans are always here, cheering you on!" 「いつも応援してるからね」

The responses of Japanese fans to Thai Y actors Instagram posts can be categorized into several themes, reflecting different aspects of their engagement and appreciation. Here's an analysis of these categories.



**Passion and Dedication Recognition:** Fans express admiration for actor's passion and dedication to his work. Comments like "Your dedication truly shines through, Win!" and "Thank you for sharing these moments with us, Win. Your hard work does not go unnoticed..." highlight the appreciation of his commitment and hard work.

**Aesthetic Appreciation:** Fans comment on actor's physical appearance and the visual appeal of his posts.

**Anticipation for Future Work:** Fans express excitement about actor's upcoming projects.

**Support and Encouragement:** This category includes messages that provide moral support and encouragement. Comments such as "We're here to support you all the way, Win!"

**Connection and Closeness:** Fans express feelings of connection and closeness with actors through his posts.

## ② : Interactive Q&A Session



Instagram, with its live feature as shown in the photo on the left, is a popular platform for interactive content like Q&A sessions. This is a typical example of a Q&A session from a Thai Y series actor, with Krist from the *SOTUS* GMMTV series serving as our illustrative case.

**Introduction:** began by introducing himself, sharing details about his career and past works. He provided fans with insights into his background. The following is a typical contents and flow of a Q&A

session

**Favorite Roles:** discussed his favorite roles among those he has portrayed, emphasizing the characters that left a lasting impression on him. He shared his thoughts and experiences related to those roles.

**Questions About Co-Stars:** Fans asked several questions about his co-stars, leading to share anecdotes and memorable moments from working with them.

**Acting Advice:** offered advice on acting in response to questions. He provided tips and discussed his approach to acting, offering guidance to aspiring young actors and actresses.

**Upcoming Projects:** Fans inquired about upcoming projects, and he hinted at his future plans and upcoming works.

**Hobbies and Interests:** shared his hobbies, skills, and personal interests, providing an opportunity for fans to discover common interests with him.

**Gratitude Towards Fans:** Lastly, expressed his gratitude to the fans, thanking them for their support and loyalty.

### ③ **Virtual or Offline Meet-and-Greet Announcement**

In Thai BL, it is common to use Instagram for announcing virtual meetings and explaining the reservation process as picture in left. This approach effectively engages fans and streamlines their participation in these online events. The flow of a "Virtual Meet-and-Greet Announcement" involving a Thai Y series actor typically unfolds as follows. Here it is took the example of Krist and Singto onnline live announcement on instagram which the author participated in May 2020.

**Announcement Teaser:** The actor or their official social media account releases a teaser post or announcement, hinting at an upcoming virtual meet-and-greet event.

This teaser generates excitement and curiosity among fans.

**Event Details:** Shortly after the teaser, the actor provides specific event details. This includes the date and time of the virtual meet-and-greet, the platform or application to be used (e.g., Zoom, Instagram Live, or a dedicated event website), and any participation requirements or guidelines.

**Ticket Information:** If the event requires tickets or registration, the actor or their team shares information on how fans can secure their spots. This may involve ticket pricing, purchase links, or registration forms.

**Event Theme or Focus:** Sometimes, the virtual meet-and-greet may have a theme or focus. For example, it could be centered around celebrating a special milestone in the *SOTUS*'s actor's career, discussing a particular project, or simply providing fans with an opportunity for personal interaction.

**Fan Questions Submission:** In some cases, fans may be invited to submit questions in advance that they would like to ask the actor during the event. This adds an interactive element to the meet-and-greet.

**Virtual Meet-and-Greet:** On the scheduled date and time, the actor and fans gather virtually through the designated platform. The actor may engage with fans, answer questions, share anecdotes, and create memorable moments during the event. Fans have the opportunity to interact directly with the actor and express their admiration.

**Fan Interaction:** Fans can use chat features, raise questions, or engage in conversations with the actor during the virtual meet-and-greet. It is a chance for fans to connect on a more personal level.

**Event Conclusion and Acknowledgment:** After the virtual meet-and-greet concludes, the actor often expresses gratitude to fans for their participation and support. They

may share highlights or memorable moments from the event on their social media accounts.

#### ④ **Teasers and Trailers**

It is also common to post teaser images of new projects, creating excitement and anticipation among fans. A teaser could offer brief, enticing glimpses of the main characters' first encounter, setting an emotional and romantic undertone, without giving away key plot details. It is crafted to ignite viewers' interest and discussion.

A trailer, in contrast, might provide a more extensive look into the story, showcasing the development of the characters' relationship and highlighting both tender and challenging moments. This longer preview would typically be shared on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, where fans can easily access, share, and create a buzz around it.

#### ⑤ **Celebratory post**

When a series reaches a significant milestone, such as the anniversary of its release or a high number of views, celebratory posts become a way to connect with and thank the audience. This might involve sharing a special illustration or a video montage of the series' most heartwarming scenes, accompanied by a message expressing gratitude to the fans for their unwavering support. These posts keep the audience engaged and build a sense of community, especially important for series that have developed a strong and dedicated fan following.

### **Content analysis of YouTube**

YouTube serves as a crucial platform for Thai Y series, enhancing viewer engagement through various content types. Firstly, full episodes are uploaded, providing easy access for international fans and expanding the show's reach. Secondly, behind-the-scenes content offers a peek into the production process, deepening fans' connection with the series. Thirdly, fan interaction videos, such as Q&As or reaction compilations, are shared, fostering a sense of community and engagement. Lastly, promotional clips and teasers are used effectively to build anticipation for upcoming episodes or new seasons, keeping viewers hooked and

excited. These diverse uses of YouTube help Thai Y series maintain a strong, interactive presence online.

### ① Full Episode Uploads:

Many Thai Y series use YouTube to upload full episodes. This not only increases accessibility for international audiences but also allows for a wider reach beyond traditional television viewership. It is common for these episodes to come with subtitles in multiple languages, catering to a global fanbase.

The practice of Thai Y series uploading their full episodes on YouTube not only enhances accessibility for international viewers but also expands their reach beyond traditional TV audiences. It is common for these episodes to feature subtitles in multiple languages, serving a global fan base. Particularly, providing Japanese subtitles is crucial for catering to the Japanese audience, a market with a strong interest in Asian dramas and pop culture. Offering Japanese subtitles can significantly enhance the viewing experience for Japanese fans.

Les vidéos non disponibles ont été masquées

- 1 [Eng Sub] Sotus S The Series | EP.1 [1/4]  
GMMTV OFFICIAL • 10 M de vues • il y a 5 ans
- 2 [Eng Sub] Sotus S The Series | EP.1 [2/4]  
GMMTV OFFICIAL • 6,4 M de vues • il y a 5 ans
- 3 [Eng Sub] Sotus S The Series | EP.1 [3/4]  
GMMTV OFFICIAL • 4,9 M de vues • il y a 5 ans
- 4 [Eng Sub] Sotus S The Series | EP.1 [4/4]  
GMMTV OFFICIAL • 4,8 M de vues • il y a 5 ans
- 5 [Eng Sub] Sotus S The Series | EP.2 [1/4]  
GMMTV OFFICIAL • 5 M de vues • il y a 5 ans

GMMTV *SOTUS* official page of YouTube

Moreover, developing customized content and special features for Japanese viewers

could foster deeper engagement. These are the example from Japanese audience's comments.

"I'm deeply moved by every episode of Sotus." (*SOTUS* の各エピソードに深く感動しました。)

"The chemistry between the lead actors is amazing!" (主演俳優たちの相性が素晴らしいです！)

"I love how the series portrays friendship and love." (友情と愛の描き方が秀逸。)

"*SOTUS* has become my all-time favorite Thai drama." (*SOTUS* は私の一番好きなタイドラマになりました。)

"The storyline is both heartwarming and inspiring." (心頭るしストーリーがいい)


"Watching *SOTUS* is the highlight of my week!" (*SOTUS* を見るのが毎週楽しみです！)

"The characters are so well-developed and relatable." (キャラクターがと共感できる。)

"I appreciate the cultural aspects shown in the series." (タイの大学とかの文化背景がおもしろ)

## ②Behind-the-Scenes Content

YouTube channels associated with Thai Y series often feature exclusive behind-the-scenes content. This might include interviews with the cast, bloopers, or making-of documentaries that offer fans a deeper look into the production process and the actors' experiences.



GMMTV REACT เพราะเราคู่กัน 2gether The Series EP.1

GMMTV OFFICIAL  
17 M d'abonnés

S'abonner

👍 130 k

Partager

GMMTV *2gether* behind the scene

For example, as in the picture above, in the GMMTV REACT feature titled "เพราะเราคู่กัน *2gether* The Series EP.1 Behind the scene," GMMTV's actors gather to share and discuss various behind-the-scenes stories related to the first episode of *2gether*. This special segment offers fans an exclusive look into the making of the popular series, with actors delving into anecdotes, challenges, and memorable moments they experienced during the filming. It is an opportunity for viewers to see a different side of the production, understanding the effort and camaraderie that goes into creating a successful TV show.

**③ Fan Interaction Videos:**

Interactive content such as Q&A sessions with the cast, live streams, and fan event recordings are also prevalent on YouTube. These videos allow fans to feel more connected with the series and its actors, enhancing fan engagement and loyalty.

**④ Promotional Clips and Teasers:**

Pre-release teasers for a Thai drama series like *TharnType* are meticulously crafted to captivate and intrigue the audience. These short videos, often lasting no more than 30 to 60 seconds, are a blend of art and strategy, designed to spark curiosity without revealing too much of the upcoming plot. They usually focus on highlighting key elements that define the tone and direction of the new season.



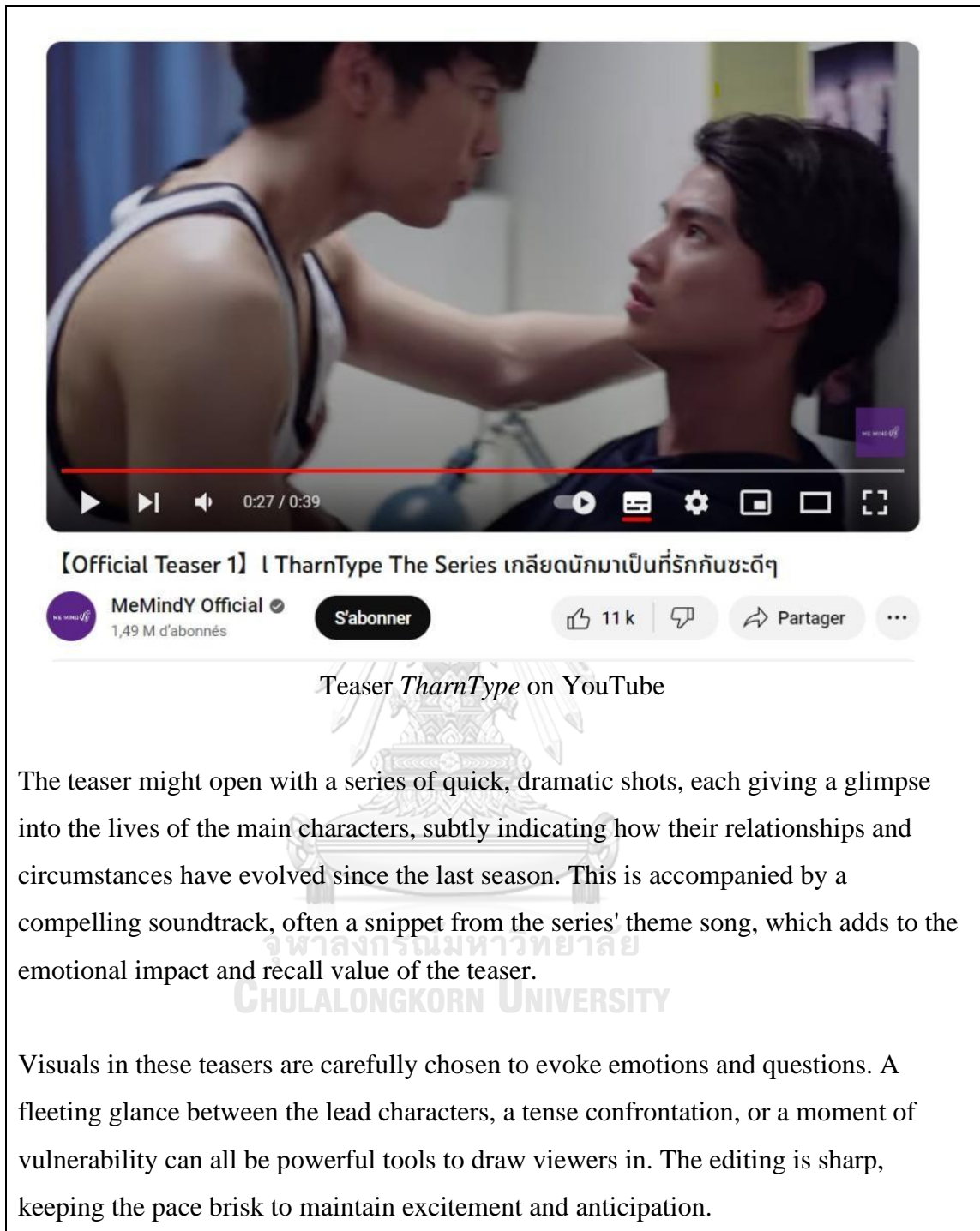


Figure 2 YouTube content analysis

The analysis of YouTube and Instagram content related to Thai Y series, reveals several key characteristics that define this interaction. These elements contribute significantly to the popularity and reach of these series among Japanese audiences from those factors.



Firstly, accessibility and active engagement. The social media platforms used by Thai Y series are characterized by their accessibility, allowing Japanese fans to engage actively and comfortably. The accessibility of social media platforms used by Thai Y series, as highlighted by Tanaka (2020), plays a crucial role in their popularity. Tanaka emphasizes how social media endorsements by both series creators and actors contribute to creating an accessible and engaging online environment. This aligns with the observation that YouTube and Instagram enable Japanese fans to actively and comfortably engage with the series.

The ease of interaction on these platforms, as per Tanaka's findings, not only fosters a welcoming environment but also bridges the gap between creators and viewers. This has been instrumental in converting casual viewers into active participants, who share their thoughts and feelings about the series.

Secondly, comprehensive online experience. Thai Y series utilize a digital-first approach, encompassing everything from teasers and full episode uploads to Q&A sessions, all hosted online. This comprehensive online experience ensures that fans can engage with the series at every stage – from pre-release anticipation built by teasers, to post-release discussions. This seamless online journey caters to the modern viewer's preference for digital consumption, enhancing the overall fan experience.

Nakamura's (2019) research on fan-generated content is particularly relevant in understanding the comprehensive online experience offered by Thai Y series. Nakamura's study sheds light on how such content, created and shared by fans, forms an integral part of the series' digital ecosystem.

Thirdly, the aspect of community building is pivotal. Interactive segments such as Q&A sessions and virtual meet-ups have been key in knitting a close-knit community among Japanese enthusiasts of Thai Y series. These platforms offer a shared space for fans, facilitating connections not just with the series and its stars but amongst themselves as well. The creation of this communal bond and shared enthusiasm is essential in nurturing and growing the fan community.

Fourthly, the role of cultural resonance and inclusivity is significant. The content, especially behind-the-scenes features and celebratory updates, often highlights elements that align culturally with Japanese audiences. This includes

showcasing Thai cultural facets that find similarities in Japanese life, or introducing universal themes that bridge cultural divides. Such culturally resonant and inclusive content enhances relatability and broadens the series' appeal.

Fifthly, numerous Japanese fans have expressed admiration for Win's commitment, often highlighting not just his acting skills but also his dedication and resilience in his career. This consistent acknowledgment of Win's professional ethos is striking, mirroring a key Japanese cultural value: the high regard for hard work and diligence.

### Case Studies – Instagram and YouTube use of *2gether*

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of Instagram and YouTube in engaging audiences, one can look at GMMTV's *2gether* as a prime example. This Thai Y series effectively uses platforms like YouTube and Instagram to connect with a global audience, showcasing a blend of full episode uploads, behind-the-scenes content, interactive fan sessions, and promotional teasers. *2gether* exemplifies how social media can be strategically used to enhance viewer engagement and broaden the series' appeal, especially among international fans.

#### ① Pre-Airing:

Figure 3 Japanese teaser of *2gether*

In this phase, social media platforms are used to generate buzz and anticipation. As picture in the left teasers and trailers are released on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, offering glimpses of the storyline and characters as picture in the left. This content is designed to intrigue potential viewers and build excitement among existing fans. Additionally, announcements and countdown posts keep the audience informed and engaged. *2gether* specifically created teasers targeted at the Japanese audience, complete with Japanese subtitles, as seen in photos. These special teasers were designed to heighten excitement among Japanese viewers.



## ② During Airing:

While the series is airing, *2gether* full episodes are uploaded to YouTube, catering to an international audience and ensuring wider accessibility. Behind-the-scenes content and interactive Q&A sessions are frequently shared on Instagram and other platforms, deepening the viewers' connection with the series and its characters. These interactions foster a sense of community among fans and keep the conversation around the series active and dynamic.

Instagram, became hubs for real-time discussions, analyses, and debates. Hashtags related to episodes, character arcs, or pivotal moments trended globally, facilitating discussions that transcended geographical boundaries. Interactive elements, like polls, quizzes, and challenges related to *2gether*, became commonplace as picture on the right. These not only kept the fandom engaged between episodes but also fostered a sense of community. For instance, dance challenges using the series' OST or cosplay contests allowed fans to showcase their creativity and passion, blurring the lines between the series and its real-world impact.

## ③ Post-Airing

After the series has concluded, the focus shifts to sustaining interest and keeping the fanbase engaged. Especially noteworthy is that fan engagement tends to intensify post-airing, a distinctive characteristic of Thai Y series.

One of the most vivid manifestations of this active engagement was the creation and consumption of fan-generated content especially for Japanese audience. Instagram and YouTube teemed with fan fiction, art, and videos, expanding the *2gether* universe in myriad directions. These fan-made narratives allowed viewers to explore alternate storylines, delve deeper into character backstories, or even re-imagine characters in entirely different universes. The characters of Tine and Sarawat, while rooted in the series, took on new lives in these fan-created stories, reflecting the depth of engagement and emotional investment the series inspired.

Another pivotal facet of fan engagement was the feedback loop. Creators, actors, and production teams actively sought and responded to fan feedback though

YouTube. This reciprocity, where fans felt heard and valued, further deepened their connection to *2gether*.

### **Questionnaire and Interview Analysis**

It will be delved into understanding the Japanese fans personal experience of Thai BL through social media, drawing insights from questionnaires and interviews. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive view of the unique ways in which social media platforms facilitate and enrich the engagement of Japanese audiences with Thai BL.

As abovementioned in methodology overview, in August and October 2023, questionnaires were distributed to 50 members of Thai Y series fan clubs in Japan, aiming to capture a diverse range of perspectives. This question encompasses various topics, but here it is focused specifically on the aspects related to social media. The full results of the questionnaire will be displayed at the end of the document. Below is an excerpt from the questionnaire.

Also, mentioned in the methodology overview as well but from August to November 2023, qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants from Japanese audience. These interviews are intended to delve into personal viewer experiences and opinions about Thai BL series, ensuring a comprehensive understanding. Special attention is placed on maintaining diversity among the interviewees, including a balance in gender and a variety of age groups (Mixture of group of 10-20s, 30-40s, 50s-60s, Male and Female, various sexuality). Two examples are provided here for reference. The result of the interviews of 10 people displayed at the end of the document page

Below is sumamry of questionnaire related to social media use.

**1.How did you discover Thai Y series, and what prompted you to start watching them?**

From youtube's recommendation (15)

Friends recommendation (2)

Intagram and twitter trends (2)

**2.What aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging and appealing?**

Actors visual (15)

Unique and slow storyline (8)

**9. In your opinion, what is the key factor contributing to the growing popularity of Thai Y series among Japanese viewers?**

Social media use (15)

Active uploading on youtube and Japanese subtitle (easy to watch) (10)

Below is a summary of the interview responses related to the use of social media in engagement with Thai Y series.

Interviewee A: "I discovered these series through social media platforms. The online communities offer a great place to share thoughts and get recommendations, enhancing my experience."

Interviewee B: "Instagram has been a huge part of my engagement with Thai Y series. Following actors and fan communities keeps me involved and enhances my overall experience."

Interviewee C: "Platforms like YouTube has been instrumental in guiding my viewing choices. They offer great resources for finding new series and joining fan discussions."

Interviewee D: "Discovering new shows via social media has really enhanced how I watch them. It is fantastic to talk about and share views with others who also enjoy these series."

Interviewee E: "SNS has definitely added a new dimension of enjoyment to watching these shows."

Interviewee F: "Tools like Instagram are essential for me !

Upon conducting questionnaire and qualitative interviews with Japanese viewers, it is unearthed a significant trend. Many participants cited YouTube's recommendation system or Instagram trends as their initial gateway into the world of Thai BL. These findings suggest a symbiotic relationship between viewers' consumption patterns and YouTube's algorithmic inclinations. The platform, sensing the rising global interest in Thai BL content, further propagated its reach, bringing it to the forefront of many Japanese viewers' screens.

Furthermore, the role of YouTube became evident as the interviewees frequently mentioned how online discussions, fan art, and shared clips on platforms such as Instagram amplified their engagement with the content. These platforms not only provided a space for fans to discuss and dissect episodes but also acted as echo chambers, reinforcing the popularity of Thai BL dramas in the Japanese context.

While the intrinsic appeal of Thai BL dramas cannot be discounted, the influence of YouTube and Instagram algorithms, especially YouTube's recommendation system, plays a pivotal role in its widespread acclaim in Japan. Future studies might consider delving deeper into the algorithmic intricacies of these platforms and their potential impact on cross-cultural media consumption.

### **Instagram and YouTube use in depth**

Here, we specifically explore why the use of YouTube and Instagram has contributed to the popularity of Thai BL among Japanese audiences. Below is a summary of the differences in YouTube and Instagram usage between Thai BL and Japanese BL. Unlike many Japanese BL series, which have often been geared towards domestic audiences with traditional media channels as primary outlets, tapped into the pulse of the global digital audience, from its inception, the Thai Y series showcased a clear intent to cater to an international viewer demographic. This was exemplified by its early inclusion of subtitles on digital platforms such as YouTube, broadening its accessibility.

<b>Aspect of Comparison</b>	<b>Thai Y series</b>	<b>Japanese BL</b>

Aspect of Comparison	Thai Y series	Japanese BL
Target Audience	Global digital	Domestic (Japanese)
Accessibility	Subtitles on YouTube, link from intstagram, teaser on Instagram	Traditional media (TV). YouTube channel available but only teaser, not full episode uploads
Digital Engagement	Active in Instagram (before, during and after air)	Less active in Instagram especially after the air finished
Main cast interactions	Regular online interactoin with fans on instagram or YouTube	Less prevalent interactions with fans
Community building	Strong community building through YouTube and Instagram	Smaller community, less sense of community
Differntiation	Unique digital engagement strategies by YouTube and Instagram	More traditoinal promotion methods (TV)

Table 1 Comparison of social media use of Thai Y and Japanese Y

The series regularly churned out tailored content for platforms like Instagram, from behind-the-scenes clips to actor interviews. This continuous stream of content not only kept fans engaged but also instigated a plethora of user-generated content, magnifying the series' online presence.

Contrarily, the Japanese BL industry, despite its rich content, has been more reticent in its adoption of dynamic digital engagement strategies. As Nakao (2018) suggested, rooted deeply in the world of print media, Japanese BL narratives have been comparatively slower to capitalize on the real-time, interactive nature of platforms like Instagram. This has resulted in more sporadic and controlled digital engagement, differing starkly from the flood of interactions associated with Thai Y series.

Another pivotal factor distinguishing Thai Y sereis digital engagement success in Japan is the tangible accessibility of its main cast. Their regular online interactions,

ranging from candid livestreams to interactive Q&A sessions, fostered a sense of intimacy with fans by Instagram or YouTube. Such engagements are less prevalent among actors in the Japanese BL industry, where the culture often leans toward maintaining an air of mystique around celebrities.

The distinct success of Thai Y series in digital engagement within Japan is also significantly influenced by the cultural predisposition of Japanese audiences toward seeking close connections with celebrities, a tendency particularly observable in the realm of J-pop and idol culture. In Japan, there is a longstanding tradition of cultivating intimate relationships between fans and idols, characterized by dedicated fan clubs, fan meetings, and various events that allow for personal interaction. This culture of closeness and personal engagement has shaped the expectations of Japanese audiences, who often seek similar levels of interaction and accessibility with celebrities across different entertainment sectors.

However, it is also essential to acknowledge the challenges that come with this digital strategy. The constant exposure to public scrutiny and the pressure to maintain a curated online image can have negative impacts on actors and production teams, as discussed by Lee and Park (2019) in their examination of social media's influence on the entertainment industry.

The Thai Y series Instagram and YouTube strategy went beyond mere content dissemination. They initiated conversations with Japanese audience, challenged fans with creative prompts, and celebrated fan-generated content. This feedback loop, where fans felt seen and acknowledged, differentiated *2gether* from many BL narratives across Asia. It wasn't just about watching a series. It was about being part of a dynamic, global community.

## **Conclusion**

Firstly, the interactive use of YouTube and Instagram in Thai BL series is particularly appealing to Japanese fans seeking fan engagement traditionally. These platforms offer a dynamic way to connect with the content and creators, enhancing the overall fan experience.

As seen in the YouTube and Instagram use, the series cultivated a dynamic ecosystem where feedback wasn't just welcomed but actively solicited. This ushered



in a new era of audience-content reciprocity, wherein fans, elevated from mere passive consumers to stakeholders, found themselves influencing narrative trajectories and character arcs. This paradigm fostered a heightened sense of belonging among fans, making them more invested in the series' outcome.

In Japan, the evolution of social media has dramatically transformed the traditional lifecycle of television series, a change particularly evident in the reception of Thai Y series. This transformation can be linked back to the roots of Japanese fan culture, where the rise of shōjo manga marked the beginning of communal fan engagement. Similarly, the ongoing digital engagement with Thai Y series on platforms like Instagram and YouTube reflects this historical emphasis on collective participation and shared enthusiasm.

Kinsella (2000) further elucidates this dynamic, highlighting the role of participatory media, like fanzines and dōjinshi, in evolving fan culture. This tradition of active engagement and contribution is mirrored in the way Japanese fans continue to interact with Thai Y series beyond their broadcast, keeping the series alive in public consciousness.

The phenomenon of 'oshi-katsu,' a term prevalent in Japanese idol culture, mirrors the zealous support seen in the Japanese fanbase for Thai Y series. This concept involves engaging with media content across diverse platforms, a behavior detailed by Okabe. In the case of Thai Y series, fans actively immerse themselves, going beyond just watching the shows. They participate in social media discussions, create fan art, and become part of online fan communities.

Furthermore, the accessibility of Thai BL series to Japanese audiences is significantly enhanced by the provision of Japanese language teasers and comprehensive Japanese subtitles on platforms like YouTube. This approach meets the Japanese audience's desire for deeper interaction with the content. Japanese fans, renowned for their penchant for active involvement, utilize social media platforms as a primary tool to provide feedback on the series. This interactive dynamic enables Japanese viewers to potentially influence the series' production aspects, including future episodes or seasons. Such a participatory approach aligns well with Japanese cultural preferences for engagement and meaningful exchanges.

## Chapter 3

### Thai Y Series Plot: Love, Acceptance and Growth as Core Themes in Thai BL

#### Through Japanese Eyes: Understanding Thai BL Narratives

In analyzing the appeal of Thai Y series to Japanese audiences, this research delves deeper into understanding by interview and questionnaire results. Our methodology overview, as previously outlined, includes a questionnaire designed to gather insights. One pertinent question from this questionnaire is, "How is the impression of the Thai Y series?" where respondents can provide multiple answers, choosing words that best describe their perception. This inquiry aims to capture the essence of what makes these series resonate with Japanese viewers and will help in forming a nuanced understanding of the cultural and emotional connection they establish.

#### 1 新鮮 (shinsen) – Fresh 14votes

Japanese fans often describe Thai Y series as fresh, indicating a sense of novelty and departure from the familiar patterns of Y series from other countries. This term suggests that Thai Y series bring something new, different, and refreshing to the table.

#### 2 独特 (dokutoku) – Unique 8 votes

This word emphasizes the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Thai Y series compared to Y series from other countries. It highlights the cultural perspectives, storytelling techniques, or other elements that set Thai Y series apart.

#### 3 惹かれる (hikareru) – Captivating 7 votes

This word specifically highlights the captivating nature of Thai Y series, drawing Japanese fans in and keeping them engaged. It might be used to differentiate the level of captivation compared to Y series from other countries.

4 "ドラマチック" (**doramachikku**) 7 votes

borrowed from the English word "dramatic" and is used in the Japanese language to describe something that is intense, emotional, or characterized by significant changes and developments. It is commonly used to express a sense of excitement, tension, or a sudden shift in a situation that captures people's attention and evokes strong feelings.

6 感動的 (**kandō-teki**) – Touching 6 votes

translates to "touching" or "moving" in English. It means that Thai Y has the power to deeply move or touch people emotionally. This could refer to a story, a film, a performance, an experience, or any situation that elicits a strong emotional response, such as empathy, compassion, inspiration, or even tears of joy or sadness.

7 刺激的 (**shigeki-teki**) – Exciting 6 votes

It is used to describe something that provokes a reaction, often a strong or intense one, in a person's mind or emotions. This term can be used in various contexts to refer to experiences, situations, or things that elicit excitement, interest, or a heightened sense of awareness.

8 魅力的 (**miryoku-teki**) – Charming 6 votes

describe Thai Y that possesses qualities or characteristics that draw people in, captivate their attention, and make them find it appealing or alluring. This term can be applied to various aspects such as a person's appearance, personality, behavior, or even objects, ideas.

9 迫真演技 (**hakushin engi**) - Convincing acting 6 votes

When someone's acting is described as 迫真演技, it means they have effectively immersed themselves in the role and their performance is so convincing that it draws the audience into the Thai Y's story and makes them believe in the reality of the character. This term is typically used in a positive manner to praise an actor's skill in bringing a character to life in a believable and emotionally engaging way.

In the interviews, several respondents mentioned the freshness of Thai Y series. Here are excerpts from their responses highlighting this aspect:

Interviewee A (Female, 23 years old):

“Thai Y series offer a unique blend of realism and emotional depth in storytelling, which is very different from what I’ve experienced in other dramas. The way they handle complex character dynamics and emotional conflicts really resonates with me.”

Interviewee B (Male, 35 years old):

“The bold exploration of LGBTQ+ themes in Thai Y series is really significant..”

Interviewee C (Female, 29 years old):

“I love the mix of romance, comedy, and the stunning scenery of Thailand in Thai Y series. They offer more than just love stories; it is about the culture, humor, and setting, which adds so much to the overall experience.”

Interviewee D (Male, 41 years old):

“The integration of cultural nuances which is very unique for us and societal issues into the narratives of Thai Y series is fascinating.”

Interviewee E (Female, 54 years old):

“I’m drawn to the fresh themes of unconditional love and enduring friendships in Thai Y series. These stories often challenge societal norms and present love stories that are both heartfelt and inspiring.”

These excerpts reflect the respondents' perceptions of the freshness of Thai Y series in terms of their unique storytelling, cultural authenticity, and bold exploration of themes not commonly seen in Japanese media.

The qualitative questionnaire and qualitative interviews in terminologies utilized by Japanese audience when assessing Thai Y series in comparison to Y series from other global regions have garnered academic interest, especially with the recurring use of descriptors like "fresh" and "unique."

This perception could possibly stem from the way these series weave emotional depth into their love stories. In contrast to many Japanese BL series, which might not delve deeply into societal issues, it is speculated that Thai Y series often incorporate universal themes more prominently. This approach of thoroughly exploring universal themes might be less common in Japanese BL series, thereby making the Thai approach feel refreshingly direct. It is hypothesized that the Thai Y series' focus on the complexities of emotions and character growth, especially in the context of broader societal themes, could be a key aspect that distinguishes them and appeals to the Japanese audience. The next section will further explore the unique characteristics of Thai Y series by comparing them with Japanese BL series.

### **Comparison with Japanese BL**

When comparing the Thai Y series *TharnType* to Japanese BL narratives, it is essential to articulate the distinct narrative qualities and emotional textures that each offers. *Given*, a Japanese BL series, is an excellent case study for its portrayal of relationships against a musical backdrop, exploring themes of love, loss, and self-discovery.

To deepen the comparative analysis, it is essential to consider a broader range of Japanese BL series. *Vanishing My First Love* explores the bittersweet aspects of young love and growth. *Beautiful Love* examines the complexities of mature relationships, highlighting emotional vulnerability. *Cherry Magic! Thirty Years of Virginity Can Make You a Wizard?!* blends magical realism with themes of self-acceptance and love.

These series, along with *Given*, demonstrate the variety and depth in Japanese BL, showcasing different storytelling methods and character arcs. Against this backdrop, the Thai Y series *TharnType* presents a stark contrast.

Thai Y like *TharnType* is notable for its direct engagement with universal themes, particularly in its intense portrayal of emotions and relationships. This approach contrasts with the subtler, more restrained narratives typical in Japanese BL series. The raw and vivid emotional expression in *TharnType* offers something different to the Japanese audience: a narrative teeming with volatility and a candid display of feelings, which may be less prevalent in Japanese BL. This direct and

unreserved approach to universal themes might be what sets Thai BL apart for Japanese, making it a unique and compelling addition to the genre

Moreover, The appeal of Thai Y series to the Japanese audience largely stems from their direct engagement with universal themes, approached through both cultural and narrative lenses. Unlike Japanese BL series, which often stay within the bounds of cultural familiarity, Thai Y series bring to the fore the rich tapestry of Thai customs, traditions, and daily life. This not only provides Japanese viewers with a novel cultural experience but also a new perspective on universal themes like love and acceptance.

In summary, the 'freshness' perceived by the Japanese audience in Thai Y series can be attributed to this blend of cultural novelty, narrative distinctiveness, and the series' forthright approach to universal themes, offering an enriching escape from the familiar contours of Japanese BL

## **Love**

In order to examine the abovementioned Thai Y's direct approach to universal themes and the distinct Thai approach, in the upcoming discussion, we will delve into the core themes of love, acceptance, and growth as portrayed in Thai BL series, using *TharnType* as our primary example while also drawing from other BL series. Our analysis will explore how these elements are intricately woven into the narratives, highlighting their significance in the genre. Additionally, it will be examined how these themes resonate with Japanese audiences, offering insights into the cultural reception and impact of Thai BL in Japan.

The series follows the romantic relationship between its two main characters, Tharn and Type. Type is a college freshman who is openly homophobic due to a traumatic incident in his past involving a gay man. He is determined to avoid gay people at all costs and has a strong aversion to them. On the other hand, Tharn is a good-looking and openly gay senior student who is comfortable with his sexuality.

Fate brings Type and Tharn together when they become roommates in their college dormitory. Type is initially shocked and uncomfortable to discover that his roommate is gay, and he resents Tharn's presence. However, as they spend more time

together, Type begins to see a different side of Tharn, one that is caring and considerate. This sparks a gradual change in Type's feelings, as he starts to question his own prejudices. As the series progresses, Type and Tharn's relationship becomes more complex. They navigate the challenges of Type's homophobic past and Tharn's commitment to being true to himself. They face obstacles, including Type's internal struggles, the judgment of their peers, and external threats to their relationship.

In the case of Tharn and Type, the beauty of the series lies not just in the depiction of love between the characters, Tharn and Type, but in the way it captures the flows, trials and the vulnerabilities and strengths that come with truly loving someone.

In the details, the love between Tharn and Type is revolved in the contrast background. Tharn is an openly gay, confident in himself and unapologetic in his expression of love. His love is intense, passionate, and direct. On the other hand, Type's initial approach to love is guarded and hesitant, stemming from a traumatic past experience that has left him with a deep-seated prejudice against gay. This dichotomy sets the stage for a profound exploration of love.



Figure 4 Tharn (Left) and Type (Right)

The series does not just offer a fairytale romance; it delves deep into the challenges of love. Type's initial reluctance to accept his feelings, and Tharn's persistent efforts to break down his walls, are reminiscent of the real-world challenges that many relationships face. It captures the nuances of trust, the importance of understanding, and the lengths to which one would go to protect their loved one.

When Type says, "I can't be with someone like him(Ep3)," it is not just a reflection of his internal battle with his feelings but also an expression of the societal prejudices he feels inside. Tharn's response, often characterized by patience and understanding, underscores the transformative power of love.

Another poignant theme is the idea of love as a journey of self-discovery in Thai Y series. As the narrative unfolds, both characters embark on a journey of introspection. Type's journey is particularly striking. His evolution from a person who harbored strong prejudices to someone who learns to love unconditionally is a testament to love's redemptive power. This transformation is not immediate or easy; it is a gradual process, shaped by moments of doubt, understanding, pain, and ultimately, acceptance. Through Type, the series conveys a powerful message: love has the power to heal, to transform, and to liberate.

Continuing from the theme of love as a journey of self-discovery in *TharnType*, similar narratives can be seen in other Thai BL series such as *2gether* and *SOTUS*.

In *2gether*, it is witnessed the character development of Tine and Sarawat. Tine, initially using Sarawat to ward off a persistent admirer, embarks on a journey where he discovers his true feelings.

*SOTUS*, featuring the characters of Arthit and Kongpob, also exemplifies this theme. Initially, Arthit is rigid adherence to university traditions and his role as a senior puts him at odds with the more open-minded and challenging Kongpob. As their relationship evolves, both characters learn from each other, leading to personal growth and a deeper understanding of themselves.

Conversely, Tharn's portrayal offers a glimpse into the vulnerabilities that often accompany love. Despite his outward confidence, there are moments of profound vulnerability — moments where he grapples with the fear of rejection, the pain of unrequited love, and the challenges of loving someone who battles internal demons. His journey underscores that love is not just about finding happiness; it is also about confronting pain, overcoming challenges, and growing stronger together.



## Acceptance

Through the relationship of *TharnType*, the audience witnesses a journey of understanding that transcends traditional storylines and dives deep into the heart of personal biases, societal norms, and the transformative power of human connection.

Acceptance, in academic discourse, refers to the cognitive and emotional acknowledgment of the validity or legitimacy of an individual's feelings, thoughts, experiences, and individuality. According to Kawagishi (1972), acceptance is an essential component of the therapeutic relationship, where it is often termed as "unconditional positive regard." Acceptance involves recognizing and valuing differences, whether they relate to one's self or others, without judgment or attempts to change or deny those differences.

In the plot of Thai Y series like *TharnType*, acceptance plays an important role. It is not only integral to the characters' personal journeys toward self-realization and self-acceptance but also tackle various social issues related to tolerance, diversity, and the evolving perceptions of non-traditional relationships and identities in contemporary societies.

Type's prejudice toward sexual minority is immediately challenged when he started to live with Tharn, an openly gay student, as his roommate. From the outset, Type's biases are evident. His hostile attitude towards Tharn is not just an individual disdain but is reflective of larger societal prejudices that many harbor, often rooted in misinformation, past experiences, or societal conditioning.

Yet, the conflict does not play the central role to the plot; it is more about the resolution. The series meticulously charts Type's progression from prejudice to understanding. This evolution is not instantaneous. Instead, the narrative presents a layered journey, marked by moments of confusion, introspection, confrontation, and eventual acceptance. For instance, a pivotal moment in the series is when Type revisits his traumatic past, coming to a heart-wrenching realization that his disdain for an entire community based on the actions of one individual is misplaced. These are phrases related to acceptance in Tharn and Type.

"Love is not about gender, but about the heart." (Ep2)
--

"Being different does not mean you're wrong." (Ep4)

"You don't have to understand me, just accept me." (Ep4)

"I love you, not your past." (Ep5)

"It is not about being gay or straight; it is about being true to yourself."

"Acceptance starts from within." (Ep6)

"We all deserve love, no matter where we come from or who we love. (Ep7)

*"Love is not about gender; it is about the heart."* The meaning of this phrase is the principle that love is an emotion felt from the heart, transcending superficial boundaries such as gender. This perspective promotes acceptance, emphasizing that love should be judged based on genuine emotional connection and not from gender.

*"The most important thing is how we feel about each other."* This phrase underlines the importance of mutual feelings and emotions in a relationship, rather than societal perceptions or opinions. Again, the message is clear: it is the internal dynamics of the relationship, based on trust, understanding, and mutual respect, that matter the most. This stance encourages couples to accept their feelings without the influence of external judgements. (Ueno 1989, Thompson 1994, Nakamura 2008, Pagliassotti 2008, Steinberg 2012, Fyeahperaya 2018, Patel 2018, Nakamura 2019, Nakamura 2019, Prasannam 2019, Watkins 2019, Nakao 2020, Tanaka 2020, Tanaka 2020, Perawat 2020 December, Ōtsuka 2022, Tanaka 2022, Welker.J. 2022, 5ch.net. 2023, Pongsapitaksanti 2023, Prasannam 2023, Prasannam 2023, TharnType2. 2023)

*"Being different does not mean you're wrong."* A reminder that deviation from the 'norm' or mainstream is not synonymous with being erroneous or unworthy. Every individual is unique, and this diversity should be celebrated rather than ostracized. By accepting individual differences, we foster a society that thrives on understanding and coexistence.

*"Acceptance starts from understanding."* This phrase encapsulates the essence of acceptance: understanding. Before we can truly accept someone or something, we need to understand it. The narrative encourages audience to spend time to understand and empathize, as it is through this process that genuine acceptance blossoms.

Their interactions, often intense, sometimes tender, reflect the series' broader theme: acceptance is not just about passive tolerance; it is about active understanding and empathy.

Another dimension the series touches upon is the cultural acceptance. Thai society, like many others, grapples with accepting sexual minorities rights. By setting the story in Thailand especially in Thai universities, Thai Y offers audience, especially international ones, a glimpse into the cultural nuances of acceptance in the Thai context. This cultural specificity does not alienate but rather universalizes the narrative, making it relatable to audiences globally.

In *SOTUS* the story unfolds in a Thai university where the seniority system and traditional values are deeply ingrained. The series tackles the theme of acceptance not just in terms of sexual orientation, but also in challenging the rigid norms of this system.

Similarly, *2gether* explores acceptance in a university setting, but with a focus on the personal acceptance journey of its characters.

### **Personal Growth**

Set against the vibrant landscape of contemporary Thai society, the series manages to weave a rich expression of emotions, challenges, and evolutions.

Type's personal trajectory offers an illustrative example. In the beginning, as mentioned above he is stuck with prejudices, against LGBTQ individuals, a shadow of his traumatic past. These prejudices manifest in various forms, be it his discomfort, his anger, or even his offhanded comments against gay people.

On the other hand, Tharn's journey showcases a different facet of personal growth. As an openly gay, Tharn navigates a world that often misunderstands his identity. His challenges, though different from Type's, are equally profound. He grapples with external judgments but more importantly, with his internal conflicts. The societal stereotypes often deeply influence his self-perception, leading him to moments of self-doubt. However, as the series progresses, Tharn learns the significance of being oneself. His relationship with Type, going with its ups and downs, serves as a mirror, reflecting both his vulnerabilities and his strengths.

Through *Tharn*, the series deftly underscores that personal growth is as much about understanding oneself as it is about understanding others.

In *SOTUS*, Arthit, initially portrayed as a strict and traditional senior, undergoes significant personal growth. His interactions with Kongpob challenge his preconceived notions and compel him to confront his own prejudices and fears.

Similarly, in *2gether*, Sarawat's character presents a journey of personal growth, albeit in a different context. Sarawat, who initially appears aloof and guarded, gradually opens up about his feelings and vulnerabilities.

The dynamics of their relationship also serve as a catalyst for their individual growth. The initial episodes are rife with miscommunications and misunderstandings. Tharn's poignant expression, "*Why won't you just talk to me?*", encapsulates their initial relational struggles. Yet, as the storyline advances, there is a palpable shift. Their conversations evolve from mere exchanges of words to deep, meaningful dialogues. This transition, subtle yet profound, is emblematic of their personal growth. They learn the art of listening, the significance of patience, and the essence of understanding, both in love and in life.

While Thai Y series like *TharnType*, *SOTUS*, and *2gether* have made significant strides in portraying complex character development and relationship dynamics, they have not been immune to criticism, particularly from the Thai LGBTQ+ community. Fans have raised concerns about how these series represent LGBTQ+ individuals and relationships. This topic has gained attention in academic circles as well, with scholars like Prasannam exploring these issues in depth.

Prasannam (2019) sheds light on the representation of LGBTQ+ characters in Thai Y series, scrutinizing whether these portrayals are reflective of the actual experiences and complexities of the LGBTQ+ community in Thailand. His work critically examines if these series perpetuate stereotypes or if they succeed in offering more nuanced and realistic depictions. Furthermore, Prasannam's analysis delves into the impact of such representations on both the LGBTQ+ community and the general audience.

The concerns raised by fans and explored in scholarly works like Prasannam's highlight a crucial aspect of the Thai Y series – the balancing act between providing entertainment and responsibly representing a marginalized community. While the

personal growth of characters like Type, Tharn, Arthit, and Sarawat in these series is commendable, the broader question of accurate and sensitive LGBTQ+ representation remains a topic of ongoing debate and analysis.

### **Dynamics of Relationship**

At the heart of 'Tharn and Type' lies the intricate and evolving relationship between the titular characters. Their journey from hostility to understanding, and eventually to love, serves as a canvas on which various elements of relationship dynamics are painted. Initially, the relationship is marred by prejudice and misunderstanding. Type's homophobic attitude towards Tharn creates a tense environment. This tension sets the stage for a transformative journey for both characters.

The dynamics of their relationship are characterized by moments of passion and intimacy. These moments are not only integral to their romantic connection but also serve as a testament to their mutual trust and understanding. This aspect of their relationship echoes intimacy, passion, and commitment are key components of love.

*SOTUS*, the relationship dynamics between Arthit and Kongpob evolve from initial misunderstandings and a rigid senior-junior hierarchy to a deeper connection fostered by empathy, open communication, and a mutual understanding of vulnerabilities.

Similarly, in *2gether*, the dynamics of the relationship between Tine and Sarawat are initially marked by miscommunications and misconceptions. As the series progresses, these dynamics shift as both characters learn to articulate their true feelings and address their past issues.

### **Implication of Thai Y Narrative to Japanese**

The earlier analysis indicates that the appeal of Thai Y narratives for Japanese audiences stems from their exploration of unique cultural contexts and social themes. These series provide a fresh perspective by delving into Thai cultural settings and addressing broader social issues, offering a distinct contrast to typical Japanese narratives. This cultural and social resonance not only entertains but also fosters a deeper mutual understanding between Thai and Japanese cultures, marking a significant shift in their cultural relationship.

Firstly, in the analysis of the Thai BL series *2gether*, *TharnType*, and *SOTUS*, it was discovered that these series introduce Japanese viewers to the distinctive cultural settings of Thailand, like the life inside Thai universities, which diverge significantly from their Japanese counterparts. This divergence is not just in the physical settings but extends to the methods of storytelling and character development, which are imbued with Thai cultural nuances. Such a departure from the familiar Japanese context provides an enriching experience, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in a different cultural milieu. The freshness of these settings and their approach to portraying relationships and societal interactions add a novel dimension to the viewing experience.

Also narratives about love, growth, acceptance and dynamics of relationship is delivered with Thai storytelling approach, emphasizing intense emotional experiences and rooted in the specific cultural context of Thailand, resonates strongly with Japanese viewers, differentiating these series from more conventional narratives.

This cultural exchange facilitated by the popularity of Thai Y series in Japan suggests a shift from the traditional narrative where Japanese culture predominantly influenced Thailand. This dynamic is now evolving into a more reciprocal exchange, potentially accelerating cultural interactions between Thailand and Japan. The growing interest in Thai narratives among Japanese audiences could catalyze a deeper mutual appreciation and understanding of each other's cultures. This shift from a one-way cultural influence to a more balanced intercultural dialogue signifies a significant change in the cultural relationship between the two nations. It opens up possibilities for more collaborative projects and cultural exchanges, fostering a richer and more diverse media landscape.

Secondly, beyond their innovative storytelling and unique cultural backdrop, Thai Y series address broader social issues, particularly those concerning the LGBTQ+ community, which often remain less explored in Japanese BL narratives. This aspect adds depth to the Thai Y series, as they don't just revolve around universal themes like love, acceptance, and growth in relationships, but also incorporate critical social dimensions. This unique blend of entertainment and social enlightenment meets a growing demand among Japanese audiences for narratives that resonate with their understanding of broader social issues and gender dynamics.

The portrayal of LGBTQ+ themes in Thai Y series resonates with Japanese audiences, particularly women who identify with the Fujoshi subculture—fans who enjoy manga and novels featuring romantic relationships between men. This engagement can be understood through the lens of works such as Galbraith (2011) which examines how these women navigate their social realities through fantasy play, often seeking out narratives that offer alternative views on gender dynamics and social issues.

The sensitivity to gender-related themes in Thai Y series reflects a desire for more inclusive and progressive narratives and indicates a potential shift in the cultural zeitgeist. Through the consumption of such media, Japanese audiences—particularly Fujoshi—find a platform to explore and empathize with a range of experiences and perspectives, which can influence their views and attitudes towards gender equality and social justice.

Engagement with Thai Y series by Japanese audiences, especially those identifying as Fujoshi, could thus be seen as part of a larger movement towards greater gender parity and social awareness. McLelland(2000) provides a deeper understanding of how such media engagement might influence societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues and contribute to ongoing dialogues around gender and sexuality in Japan.

Finally, the growing popularity of Thai Y series in Japan signifies more than just an appreciation for foreign narratives; it reflects a deeper cultural and social resonance. This resonance is particularly strong among audiences who value a high-context understanding of different cultures and societal issues. Such interest has the potential to influence the future of media production, leading to further development and innovation in the genre. A notable manifestation of this cultural exchange is the planned remake of the Japanese BL series "Ossan's Love" by GMMTV in Thailand, set for 2024. This upcoming project underscores the potential for cross-cultural media adaptations to add unique social value and highlights the evolving nature of global media dynamics, where audiences are increasingly drawn to stories that offer both relatability and fresh cultural insights.



## Chapter 4

### Thai Actors

In the upcoming discussion, our primary focus will be on the series *SOTUS*, with supplementary insights drawn from *2gether* and *TharnType*. It is aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the actors' appearances, their distinctive acting styles, and their interactions with fans have played a crucial role in captivating the Japanese audience.

This title encapsulates the essence of analyzing the aesthetic and physical interactions in Thai acting, with a specific focus on actors from the series *SOTUS* while also considering actors from other Thai Y series for a more comprehensive analysis.

#### Physical Aesthetics of Thai actors

Singto Prachaya Ruangroj and Krist Perawat Sangpotirat, who play the main roles in *SOTUS*, have become emblematic of Thai Y series aesthetic standards in Japan. Their visages are not just reflections of beauty ideals, but they offer a visual narrative that complements the series' plot and character dynamics.



Figure 5 Shingto(left) and Kris (right)

Krist, with his chiseled features, sharp jawline, and contemplative eyes, imparts a gravitas that aligns with his character's role as a disciplined senior in the university setting of the series. His presence carries a sense of authority and maturity, visually distinguishing him as someone who upholds traditions and takes his responsibilities seriously. Conversely, Shingto, with his softer, youthful features, full of exuberance and a hint of mischief, visually encapsulates the essence of a freshman, eager yet unsure, rebellious yet seeking validation.

Furthermore, their aesthetics resonate beyond just the Thai cultural context. There is an inherent universality in their portrayals that seems to strike a chord, especially with Japanese audiences. While Krist's look might embody certain Thai masculine ideals, with a slightly tan complexion symbolizing outdoor activity and assertiveness, Singt's paler, youthful glow aligns more with East Asian beauty standards, reflecting innocence and purity. This duality offers Japanese viewers a familiar yet diverse aesthetic palette, making the series relatable yet novel.

Similarly, in *TharnType*, the actors Mew Suppasit and Gulf Kanawut bring a unique blend of Thai and universal appeal. In *2gether*, Sarawat's portrayal by Bright Vachirawit, with his sharp features and charismatic presence, caters to a broader aesthetic appeal, combining both Thai and international masculine ideals.

It is also worth noting the subtle ways in which *SOTUS* challenges traditional masculine aesthetic norms. Both actors, while adhering to certain standards of male beauty, also display a range of emotions that defy rigid stereotypes. Their vulnerabilities, insecurities, and moments of tenderness, often underscored by close-ups that focus on their expressive eyes or the slightest of facial movements, offer a more nuanced representation of modern masculinity.

To understand this phenomenon, it is essential to consider the theoretical frameworks surrounding masculinity and aesthetics in East Asian culture. Louie (2012) provides a foundational understanding of these concepts. Louie's work discusses how traditional ideals of masculinity in East Asian culture are often characterized by specific aesthetic standards and behavioral expectations.

In *SOTUS* both lead actors demonstrate a range of emotions that defy rigid masculine stereotypes commonly seen in media. Their portrayal goes beyond the superficial aspects of male beauty, delving into vulnerabilities, insecurities, and moments of tenderness. This nuanced representation aligns with Louie's observations on the evolving nature of masculinity ideals, where modern media is increasingly showcasing more complex and multifaceted male characters.

Similarly, *TharnType* and *2gether* feature characters that embody a mix of traditional and contemporary masculine traits. Mew Suppasit and Gulf Kanawut from *TharnType*, and Bright Vachirawit from *2gether*, through their characters, navigate a spectrum of emotions and situations that challenge conventional masculine norms. This representation resonates with a growing trend in East Asian popular culture, where there is a gradual shift towards more diversified and realistic portrayals of men.

### **Thai actors through Japanese lenses**

To analyze the allure of Thai actors for Japanese audience, it is extracted and display the results from the interviews and questionnaire responses mentioned in the methodology overview, specifically exerted question and answers related to the visual aspects of Thai actors.

What kind of word do you use when you describe Thai Y series actors?

#### **1 イケメン (ikemen) – handsome**

Ikemen (イケメン): Ikemen is a term used to describe handsome men or good-looking guys. Japanese fans may refer to Thai BL actors as ikemen if they find them attractive.

- Attractive with different eyes and nose from Japanese.
- Not only they have a nice face, but they are also well built and muscular.
- Facial features not found in either Japan or Korea

#### **2 かわいい (kawaii) – Cute**

This is a widely used Japanese word that means "cute" or "adorable." Fans may describe Thai BL actors they admire as "kawaii."

- The gestures are cute. I like it because it is easier to understand the cute gestures than the

Japanese do.

-Not only is their face cute, but so speaking Thai is cute too.

### 3 惹かれる (**hikareru**) – **Captivating** 7 votes

This word conveys a sense of being captivating or charming. Fans may use it to highlight an actor's appeal. Engaging (魅力的): If an actor's performances are emotionally engaging or captivating, fans may use this word to describe them.

- Many of the actors seem a little sad and shadowy, which I find attractive.
- Fan service is abundant and easy to interact with. The gestures are cute and attractive.

### 4 **Charismatic** (カリスマ的): 7 votes

If an actor has a strong presence and a compelling personality, fans might describe them as charismatic.

- Star quality is higher than that of Japanese actors.
- The star quality is very approachable and feels like a real star.

### 5 **Adorable Couple** (可愛いカップル): 7 votes

Japanese BL fans may use this phrase to refer to their favorite Thai BL actor pairs or on-screen couples. OTP (One True Pairing): Fans who have a favorite Thai BL actor pairing may refer to them as their "OTP," indicating their preferred romantic pairing.

- I would be tempted to recommend them as a couple because they are very complete as a couple.
- happy that they appear as the same couple not only in dramas but also in variety shows and other YouTube channels.

Results of the interview are as follows.

**Bright Vachirawit (from *2gether*):** Interviewee C praised Bright for his undeniable charm and versatility. He is noted for his ability to seamlessly transition between intense and lighter moments, which makes him a captivating presence in the series.

**Win Metawin (from *2gether*):** Interviewee D highlighted Win's subtle and nuanced performances and perfect visual. His ability to express complex emotions and

thoughts with minimalistic expressions sets him apart, bringing an exceptional depth to his characters.

**Mew Suppasit (from *TharnType*):** As mentioned by Interviewee B, Mew's acting depth and emotional range are highly captivating. His performances go beyond mere acting to embody the character, creating a lasting impression on the audience.

**Gulf Kanawut (from *TharnType*):** Interviewee A emphasized Gulf's cute face and nuanced portrayal of emotions and his natural charisma on-screen. His ability to bring depth and realism to his characters resonates strongly with viewers.

The results from the interviews and questionnaire responses provide an analysis of Japanese fans' perceptions of Thai actors' visual appeal in BL series.

Firstly, Thai actors are frequently referred to as "ikemen," a term used in Japan to describe handsome men. This indicates that Japanese fans find their attractiveness distinct, often noting features like unique eye and nose shapes that differ from typical Japanese or Korean looks. Additionally, their well-built and muscular physiques add to their charm, offering a blend of aesthetics not commonly found in East Asian actors.

The term "kawaii," meaning cute or adorable, is also used to describe Thai actors. This goes beyond just their facial features; their gestures and the way they speak Thai are perceived as endearing. It suggests that Japanese fans appreciate not only their physical appearance but also their expressive mannerisms and cultural uniqueness.

Captivating or charming qualities, expressed as "hikareru," are also a significant appeal. Fans are drawn to actors who possess a slightly sad or shadowy demeanor, finding depth and attractiveness in their emotional range. This, coupled with abundant fan service and approachability, enhances their appeal.

Furthermore, Thai actors are described as having a charismatic presence, often surpassing the star quality of Japanese actors. This charisma is not just about their

on-screen performance; it is about their real-life persona being approachable and authentic, making them feel like true stars to the fans.

Lastly, the concept of 'adorable couples' or OTP (One True Pairing) is a crucial element in fan engagement. Fans are not only drawn to individual actors but are also captivated by the dynamics between actor pairs or on-screen couples. This fascination aligns with the concept of 'shipping,' where fans support or 'ship' a romantic pairing, whether canonical or not. The chemistry between these pairs, along with the completeness of their relationships, as portrayed in dramas, variety shows, and YouTube channels, is highly appreciated by fans. According to Welker (2022), Kujing's theory further elaborates on this phenomenon, suggesting that such pairings offer fans a narrative completeness and emotional investment that goes beyond individual character appeal. This deep connection to the actor pairs and their on-screen relationships underscores the unique bond fans form with these 'adorable couples,' making them a significant aspect of fan culture and engagement. This suggests a pronounced appreciation for features distinct from those commonly found in the Japanese population.

### **Comparison with Japanese actors**

Comparatively, traditional Japanese BL actors tend to exhibit features that are deeply ingrained in the native cultural perceptions of beauty. Defined by finer, sharper features and a leaner body images, they resonate with Japan's age-old aesthetic preferences. However, the gentle masculinity exuded by Thai actors like those in "Sotus" introduces a novelty.

Culturally, Japanese audiences have long been exposed to a vast spectrum of male beauty, from the ethereal appearances of Bishōnen in manga to the rugged looks of certain J-pop idols. The Thai BL actors introduce a midpoint in this spectrum, merging both ends, and thus offering a refreshing visage that is not commonly seen in Japanese media. Their facial structures, while chiseled, have a softness to them, resonating with the Bishōnen aesthetics, yet adding a layer of novel masculinity.

Moreover, the cultural and sociological aspect of this allure shouldn't be overlooked. Japan, with its conservative values, often places societal constraints on expressions of masculinity and femininity. The fluidity exhibited by Thai BL actors

might be perceived as a breath of fresh air, liberating from the rigid boundaries. This allows Japanese viewers to engage in a fantasy, a departure from the norm, where traditional gender aesthetics are muddled, and new forms of beauty are appreciated.

<b>Japanese BL Actors:</b>
1. <b>Facial Structure:</b> Japanese actors generally have finer, more delicate facial features. The structure leans towards a softer, more androgynous appearance.
2. <b>Eyes:</b> They often possess almond-shaped eyes, with the presence of a single eyelid (monolid) or a less prominent double eyelid.
3. <b>Nose:</b> Typically, noses are smaller with flatter bridges.
4. <b>Lips:</b> Lips tend to be thinner to moderately full, complementing the overall delicate facial aesthetic.
5. <b>Skin Tone:</b> The skin tone ranges from fair to pale, with actors often maintaining this tone to align with traditional Japanese standards of beauty.
6. <b>Build:</b> Japanese BL actors lean towards a slender build, often not overly muscular. This maintains the Bishōnen or "pretty boy" aesthetic.
7. <b>Hair:</b> Hair styles are diverse, but there is a noticeable trend of softer, fluffier hairstyles, often dyed in various shades, including unconventional colors.
8. <b>Height:</b> On average, Japanese actors in BL might be a bit shorter compared to their Thai counterparts.

Table 2 Characteristics of Japanese BL actors

<b>Thai BL Actors (Taking reference from series like <i>SOTUS</i>):</b>
1. <b>Facial Structure:</b> Thai actors, while having softer features, tend to have a more pronounced jawline and cheekbones, giving a mix of masculine and feminine aesthetics.
2. <b>Eyes:</b> They usually have larger, rounder eyes, often with a prominent double eyelid which gives depth and dimension.
3. <b>Nose:</b> Thai actors typically possess a more defined nose with a slightly prominent bridge.
4. <b>Lips:</b> Their lips are usually fuller, giving their face a balanced, robust appearance.

5. <b>Skin Tone:</b> A broader range of skin tones is embraced, from fair to tan. Tanned skin, in particular, is often associated with athleticism and outdoor activities, adding to the 'rugged' charm.
6. <b>Build:</b> They tend to have a more athletic build. While not excessively muscular, there is a visible tonality that hints at physical fitness.
7. <b>Hair:</b> While diverse, there is a slight inclination towards sharper, cleaner haircuts. The use of hair dye is common but usually sticks to natural shades.
8. <b>Height:</b> Thai BL actors are often taller, which complements their athletic build.

Table 3 Characteristics of Thai BL actors

The table above summarizes a comparison of the characteristics between Thai actors and Japanese actors. It is essential to recognize that these distinctions are general observations based on prevalent trends in BL series from both countries. Individual actors may not necessarily fit these comparisons. Yet, these distinctions provide information into the aesthetic values and portrayals of male beauty within the BL genre across both cultures

### Acting Styles

Moving forward, it is delved into an analysis of mainly *SOTUS* with other two Thai BL series, exploring their unique storytelling elements and contrasting them with Japanese BL narratives. Our focus will be on the emotional intensity, physical interactions, temporal progression, and cultural context of these series

### Magnitude of Emotional Intensity

Thai BL series, such as *SOTUS* and *TharnType*, often embrace a more overt expression of emotion. This is characterized by dramatic scenes where feelings are not just implied but intensely displayed. Thai actors are known for embodying the full emotional range of their characters, from fiery confrontations to moments of profound vulnerability. This vivid portrayal of emotions aligns with a cultural context that is more accepting of overt emotional expression, which is often seen in Southeast Asian narratives.



In contrast, Japanese BL narratives tend to employ a more subdued approach to emotional expression. Emotional intensity is present but layered, requiring the audience to engage in a more interpretative manner. This is reflective of a cultural preference within East Asian storytelling for subtlety and implication. Japanese BL series often utilize silence and nuanced actions to convey deep emotions, such as a character's lingering glance or the exchange of meaningful objects that symbolize a shift in their relationship.

In *SOTUS*, for instance, the emotional intensity is highlighted in a pivotal scene where Kongpob challenges Arthit's authority. The tension is not just spoken but felt through the actors' performances, close-up shots, and the charged atmosphere. This direct approach to portraying emotion is a hallmark of Thai BL dramas, providing the audience with clear indicators of the characters' feelings and the dramatic stakes of the scene.

By comparing these approaches, it can be appreciated how cultural contexts influence the portrayal of emotions in narrative media. Southeast Asian dramas often depict emotional intensity in a more explicit manner, whereas East Asian narratives, particularly Japanese BL series, tend to express emotions in a more implicit way, offering a different but equally compelling narrative experience.

### **Physical Interaction**

From the onset, the series does not shy away from employing physicality as a storytelling tool. One of the most impactful scenes is during the *SOTUS* orientation, where senior students, including Arthit, exert their authority over the freshmen. The scene where Arthit forcefully snatches Kongpob's ID is particularly striking. It establishes a power dynamic and sets the tone for their initial relationship. The physicality here is not gentle; it is assertive and dominating, mirroring the hierarchy within the student body.

The series also masterfully uses subtler physical interactions to convey the characters' growing affection. Small gestures like Kongpob touching Arthit's arm during conversations or the lingering glances they exchange speak volumes. These moments, although seemingly insignificant, build a foundation for their evolving relationship, showcasing a growing comfort and understanding between them.

Furthermore, *SOTUS* does not rely solely on romantic physical interactions. The camaraderie among the students is often expressed through group huddles, high fives, and playful nudges. These interactions underscore the sense of community and support that develops among the characters, adding another layer of depth to the narrative.

Similarly, *TharnType*, the physical interactions extend beyond the central couple, Tharn and Type. The series illustrates the dynamics of friendship and rivalry among the characters through physical gestures like supportive pats, confrontational shoves, and team sports, reinforcing the bonds and tensions within the group.

### **Temporal progression**

The Thai series *SOTUS* skillfully depicts the evolution of Arthit and Kongpob's relationship, transitioning from initial tension and power imbalances to a more nuanced bond characterized by mutual trust and understanding. The temporal progression in *SOTUS* is integral to the narrative, with the personal growth of the characters paralleling the unfolding timeline of the story. Arthit is transition from a rigid enforcer of tradition to someone more open and questioning aligns with the series' gradual passage of time, as does Kongpob's growth from a brash freshman to a reflective partner. This natural progression underscores the authenticity of their character development.

In contrast, the narrative pacing of Japanese BL dramas, such as *Vanishing My First Love* and *Beautiful Love*, often embraces a different temporal dynamic. *Vanishing love* explores the fleeting nature of young love and the pangs of personal growth, while *Beautiful Love* may delve into the complexities of a more mature relationship, where time plays a significant role in the deepening of emotional connections. These series offer insight into how Japanese BL narratives can span various timeframes, sometimes encapsulating moments that unfold over years or focusing on relationships that develop within a compressed period, as seen in *Seven Days*.

By incorporating *Vanishing My First Love* and *Beautiful Love* into the discussion, the analysis of temporal progression within Japanese BL series becomes more robust and varied. These examples facilitate a broader understanding of the

genre's storytelling techniques, highlighting the diverse ways in which Japanese BL dramas handle the passage of time and its impact on character and relationship development.

### **Cultural context**

The cultural context, while not directly an acting style, inevitably shapes the performances. Thai series, including *SOTUS*, are deeply entrenched in their socio-cultural landscapes, reflecting local customs, traditions, and university life style. This often requires a more assertive portrayal, especially from senior characters. In contrast, Japanese BL often navigates the intricate nuances of societal expectations, workplace hierarchies, and familial obligations, necessitating a more restrained and introspective portrayal from its characters.

To further delve into the cultural aspects that influence Japanese audiences' preferences for Japanese versus Thai BL series, it is analyzed viewer comments collected from a popular BL-focused website, *5channel*. It is compared comments on prominent Japanese and Thai BL series to understand differing audience perceptions and cultural nuances. The Japanese BL series selected for this comparison were *Given* and *Yuri on Ice*, while the Thai BL series included *SOTUS*, *2gether*, and *TharnType*.

#### Comments on Japanese BL

"I love how *Given* portrays the subtlety of emotions. The characters don't just say what they feel; it is more about what's unspoken. It feels very true to the Japanese way of expressing feelings."

"The attention to detail in 'Yuri on Ice' is incredible. From the traditional settings to the everyday life scenarios, it all feels so authentic and close to home."

"The emotional restraint in *Given* is so poignant. It is not about grand gestures but the small, meaningful moments that feel so real and touching."

"I appreciate how 'Yuri on Ice' delves into complex social issues subtly. It is not just about romance but also about navigating personal expectations, which is very relatable."

#### Comments on Thai BL Series

"What I love about *SOTUS* is its bold storytelling. The characters are so expressive, and their emotions are right there on the surface. It is a refreshing change from the more reserved style I'm used to."

"The vibrant settings and cultural diversity in *2gether* are fascinating. It is like exploring a whole new world, different from what I see every day in Japan."

"The chemistry between characters in *TharnType* is electrifying. Thai BL does not shy away from portraying intense relationships, which is quite captivating."

"I'm impressed by the scenic beauty in *2gether*. The landscapes and settings add so much to the story, making it visually stunning and immersive."

"There is a sense of freedom and boldness in *TharnType* that is very different from Japanese BL. It explores themes and relationships in a way that is both daring and refreshing." explores themes and relationships in a way that is both daring and refreshing."

Japanese BL series, deeply rooted in the fabric of Japanese culture, often reflect the subtleties and complexities of Japanese social interactions. The portrayal of relationships in these series is frequently aligned with the unspoken rules and implicit understandings that characterize Japanese society. This cultural resonance is a significant factor in their appeal to Japanese audiences, who find familiarity and depth in these narratives.

On the other hand, Thai BL series offer Japanese audiences a glimpse into a different cultural milieu. The bold and straightforward depiction of romance and conflicts in Thai BL can be seen as a refreshing contrast to the more restrained Japanese narrative style. The vibrant settings, distinct cultural practices, and often more direct expression of emotions in Thai BL series provide a novel and exotic experience for Japanese viewers. This difference in storytelling and character interaction aligns with a broader, more globalized view, appealing to the Japanese audience's curiosity and desire for diverse cultural experiences.

In terms of emotional resonance, the way these series connect with viewers is deeply influenced by cultural expectations and experiences. Based on the comments, Japanese BL series tend to evoke a more introspective and contemplative emotional response, resonating with the audience's personal experiences within the framework

of Japanese society. Thai BL series, by offering a more dramatic and escapist form of entertainment, allow Japanese viewers to experience emotions and scenarios that might be less common in their own cultural context.

### **Dynamics of Actor-Fan Relationships**

For many Japanese audiences, the allure does not just lie in the fictional world, but also in the real-world personas of these actors, their engagements, and the unique dynamics that ensue.

It is analyzed how Thai actors interact with their audience, based on a report of a *SOTUS* event held in Japan in 2022, which the author attended.

The *SOTUS* fan meeting held in December 2022 was a remarkable event that brought together fans of series *SOTUS*. Organized to celebrate the show's success and the enduring love of its fans, the event was a testament to the impact of the series and the strong bond between its cast and the audience.

**Event Highlights:** Venue and Decor: The fan meeting took place in Pacifico Yokohama, which was adorned with decorations featuring iconic moments from the series. The venue's ambiance recreated the *SOTUS* universe, immersing fans in the world they adore.

**Cast Reunion:** The event featured a heartwarming reunion of the *SOTUS* cast, including Krist and Singto, and the supporting actors. Their presence added a special charm to the fan meeting, as fans had the opportunity to see their favorite actors together once again.

**Interactive Sessions:** Fans eagerly participated in interactive sessions with the cast, including Q&A sessions, autograph signings, and photo opportunities. These sessions allowed fans to engage directly with the actors, creating unforgettable memories.

**Special Performances:** The fan meeting included special performances by the cast, including musical renditions and dance routines inspired by the series. The actors' talents were on full display, captivating the audience.

**Surprise Announcements:** The fan meeting included surprise announcements related to the future of *SOTUS*. This generated excitement and anticipation among fans, keeping the *SOTUS* spirit alive.

**Fan Reactions:** The atmosphere at the fan meeting was electric, with Japanese fans expressing their love and admiration for the series and its cast. The passionate fanbase's enthusiasm was palpable, as they cheered, sang along, and shed tears of joy during the event.

**Krist and Singto's Warmth:** The main actors, Krist and Singto, demonstrated remarkable warmth and approachability throughout the event. Their genuine interactions with fans, whether through smiles, handshakes, or heartfelt responses during the Q&A session, reflected their down-to-earth personalities. This approachability greatly enhanced the connection between the actors and the audience.

**Supporting Cast's Enthusiasm:** The supporting actors displayed infectious enthusiasm, actively engaging with fans during autograph sessions and photo opportunities. Their eagerness to connect with the audience was apparent, showcasing their appreciation for the fans' support.

**Personal Touch in Performances:** The special performances by the cast were not only a display of their talents but also offered glimpses into their individual personalities. Whether through unique dance moves or personalized renditions of songs, each actor brought their own flair to the stage, making the performances more intimate and memorable.

**Humor and Playfulness:** The event also highlighted the actors' sense of humor and playfulness. During interactive sessions, they often joked with each other and the fans, creating a light-hearted and joyful atmosphere that was contagious.

**Sensitivity to Fans' Emotions:** Throughout the fan meeting, the actors showed a deep understanding and sensitivity to the fans' emotions. They acknowledged the fans' dedication and expressed gratitude, which resonated deeply with the audience, further strengthening the bond.

Figure 6 Report of event of *SOTUS* in Japan

The *SOTUS* fan meeting in December 2022 provides a clear example of how Thai actors invest significant effort into fan engagement. This event not only celebrated the success of the series but also showcased the depth of interaction between the actors and their fans.

Firstly, the reunion of the cast, including Krist and Singto, along with the supporting actors, was more than just a gathering. It was an opportunity for the actors to reconnect with their fans, reinforcing the bond they have built over time.

Secondly, the special performances, unique dance moves, and personalized song renditions were not just displays of talent but also a way for the actors to share more of their personalities with the fans. Such performances add a personal touch to the event, making it more engaging and intimate.

The actors' humor and playfulness during the interactive sessions contributed to a light-hearted and enjoyable atmosphere, making the event more than just a formal gathering. This approachability and willingness to share fun moments are essential in creating a strong, personal connection with the audience.

Thirdly, the sensitivity of the actors to the fans' emotions, as seen in their acknowledgment and gratitude, played a significant role in deepening the bond between them. Recognizing and appreciating the fans' dedication goes a long way in sustaining fan interest and loyalty.

Lastly, as previously touched upon in the literature review, the concept of 'oshikatsu' – fervently supporting and cheering for favorite idols – is deeply ingrained

in Japanese fan culture. This practice, traditionally associated with fans choosing a favorite member from a J-pop idol group, finds a parallel in the way Japanese fans have embraced Thai BL actors. Mirroring the Japanese tendency to ardently support individual idols, enthusiasts of Thai BL in Japan often focus their admiration on specific actors. This is evident in their collection of merchandise, like uchiwa and photos, and their enthusiastic participation in fan events.

This similarity in fan behavior, particularly in the intensity of support and the custom of focusing on a favorite personality, reveals how Thai BL events and actors have seamlessly integrated into the Japanese entertainment landscape. The way Japanese fans express their support and loyalty to Thai BL series mirrors their traditional oshikatsu practices, demonstrating a significant overlap with local fan culture. This adoption and adaptation of Japanese fan practices by Thai BL enthusiasts underscore the deep resonance and acceptance of Thai BL among Japanese audiences, as explored in studies by scholars Kinsella. This cultural alignment is a key factor in the widespread popularity and success of Thai BL series in Japan.

Comparing the *SOTUS* fan meeting in 2022 with a 2021 event for the popular Japanese BL series *Ossan's Love*, the interactive nature of Thai BL events becomes strikingly apparent.

*Ossan's Love*, while offering typical fan engagement, did not quite match the level of direct interaction seen in the *SOTUS* event. The Thai actors' extraordinary warmth and approachability, their involvement in interactive sessions like Q&A, autograph signings, and their unique performances, underscore how Thai BL events tend to foster a deeper, more personal connection with the audience. This comparison highlights the exceptional interactive and immersive experience Thai BL events offer, setting them apart from their Japanese counterparts.

Aspect of Fan Meetings	Thai BL Actor Fan Meetings	Japanese BL Actor Fan Meetings
Scale of Events	Large-scale, accommodating hundreds to thousands of fan.	Dozens to a few hundred fans (also stadium size but



	Translated into various languages	only in Japanese )
Interactive Activities	Interactive games and ac creating excitement activities mainly	Talk sessions with Q&A sessions
Entertainment	Live performances, dinging and dancing and added excitement	Focus on talk session,
Fan Engagement	Expressing gratitude through speeches and mssages	Interviews by MC mainly
Satisfaction	Often leads to high satisfactoin among international fans, including Japanese fans	Satisfacgtion with hand shakes or special mechandises

Table 4 Comparison of Thai and Japanese Y actors' fan engagement

This transparent and organic approach of Thai Y actor is where Thai actors shine brightly. Their charm is not just confined to their roles in the series but spills over, creating an ambiance of relatability and closeness. In contrast, the Japanese industry, while vast and varied, often has a more measured approach to fan service, with clear delineations between actors' professional and personal lives.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the appeal of Thai actors to the Japanese audience is multifaceted, marked by a blend of distinctive visual aesthetics, fresh acting styles, and vibrant fan engagement.

Firstly, the visual appeal of Thai actors is a significant draw. Their physical features present a blend of variety and masculinity that diverges from traditional Japanese aesthetics. This distinctiveness comes not just from their facial features but also from their overall physicality, which often combines a ruggedness with a gentle charm. This unique blend offers Japanese viewers a fresh perspective on male beauty, blending traditional Thai attributes with a modern, universal appeal.

Secondly, the acting styles of Thai actors in BL series contribute greatly to their allure. Contrasting with the more understated and nuanced performances typical in Japanese BL dramas, Thai actors often portray their characters with overt emotional intensity and assertive physicality. This approach brings a new dimension

to storytelling, making the narratives more vivid and engaging for the Japanese audience. The raw emotional outpourings and tangible interactions seen in Thai BL series like *SOTUS*, *TharnType*, and *2gether* offer a fresh and captivating experience to viewers accustomed to the subtler styles of Japanese BL.

Lastly, the active and enthusiastic engagement of Thai actors with their fans aligns seamlessly with the Japanese concept of "oshi-activities", playing a key role in their rising popularity in Japan. Events like the *SOTUS* fan meeting in 2022 illustrate how Thai actors extend their presence beyond the screen, creating personal connections with Japanese fans. These events, featuring interactive activities like Q&A sessions and live performances, are tailored to foster a closer bond between actors and fans. This level of engagement, distinct from the typically reserved and formal style of Japanese BL fan events, resonates deeply with the Japanese audience's preference for more personal and intimate fan experiences. The warmth, approachability, and genuine appreciation shown by Thai actors cater perfectly to the Japanese culture of deeply supporting and connecting with beloved celebrities, thereby building a strong, loyal fan base in Japan.

The unique visual appeal, fresh acting styles, and vibrant fan engagement in Thai BL series create a compelling attraction for the Japanese audience. This novel and engaging experience, as highlighted in Patel's (2018) research on visual aesthetics in media, sets Thai BL apart in Asian entertainment. Together, these elements contribute to the distinctive allure of Thai BL series and their actors in Japan.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### Summary of Findings

At its essence, it was found that the allure can be distilled into three core elements.

Firstly, the appeal of Thai BL series in Japan is significantly enhanced by their strategic use of social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, tapping into the Japanese audience's long-standing interest in fan engagement. These platforms encourage dynamic interaction between fans and creators, transforming Japanese viewers from passive consumers to active participants in the narrative. This active engagement aligns well with the Japanese tradition of deeply involved fandoms, where fans not only consume content but also contribute to its cultural discourse. The availability of Japanese language content on these platforms further increases accessibility for Japanese audiences, enabling them to engage fully with the series at every stage. This approach maintains fan interest and allows Japanese fans, known for their enthusiasm and engagement, to influence future content, thereby creating a media landscape that is continuously evolving and particularly resonant in Japan

Secondly, the increasing popularity of Thai Y series like *2gether*, *TharnType*, and *SOTUS* in Japan marks an important cultural evolution, particularly suited to the Japanese context. These series introduce audiences in Japan to the distinctive cultural landscapes and storytelling styles of Thailand, offering a fresh perspective distinct from traditional Japanese narratives. This cultural exchange not only enhances the viewing experience with new cultural insights but also promotes deeper mutual understanding and appreciation between Thai and Japanese societies. It signifies a shift towards more reciprocal and balanced intercultural interactions, resonating well with the Japanese audience's growing interest in diverse global media

Moreover, Thai Y series stand out for addressing broader social issues, especially those related to the LGBTQ+ community, aspects less explored in Japanese BL narratives. This resonates with Japanese audiences who seek more progressive and

inclusive narratives, reflecting a potential shift towards greater gender parity and social awareness.

Thirdly, the appeal of Thai actors to Japanese audiences is particularly strong due to their unique visual appeal, distinctive acting styles, engaging fan interaction, and alignment with the familiar fan culture in Japan. Thai actors bring a refreshing perspective on male beauty that diverges from traditional Japanese aesthetics, showcasing diverse and charismatic features. Their acting in BL series, marked by vivid emotion and physical expressiveness, offers a refreshing contrast to the more restrained styles found in Japanese BL dramas, appealing to Japanese viewers who are accustomed to subtlety in their native media but are open to new forms of expression.

Moreover, the active and direct engagement of these actors with fans through events and social media resonates deeply with the established fan culture in Japan, where fans are known for their deep involvement and loyalty. This engagement mirrors the participatory nature of Japanese fan culture, where fans are not just passive consumers but active contributors to the media landscape. As a result, Thai actors and BL series have carved out a unique niche in the Asian entertainment industry, particularly resonating with Japanese audiences who appreciate the blend of novel aesthetics and familiar fan engagement practices.

In summary, the popularity of Thai BL series in Japan is particularly fitting and resonates deeply with the unique aspects of Japanese culture seeking fan engagements. The innovative use of interactive digital platforms like social media aligns with Japan's long-standing appreciation for deep fan engagement, transforming the viewing experience from passive to participatory. The cultural exchange offered by these series introduces Japanese audiences to new perspectives and narratives, diverging from their usual media consumption yet complementing their curiosity for diverse global content. Moreover, the distinct visual appeal and captivating performances of Thai actors harmonize with Japan's rich tradition of valuing aesthetic diversity in entertainment, further strengthening their appeal. This multifaceted phenomenon reflects a perfect alignment with the Japanese audience's preferences and cultural tendencies, securing a strong and dedicated fan base in Japan for Thai BL series

## **Implications**

Economically, the rise of Thai Y series opens doors for collaborative ventures between Japan and Thailand, offering opportunities for cross-cultural productions and marketing strategies that leverage shared fandoms. Such collaborations have the potential to drive innovation in content creation and distribution, providing economic benefits to both nations.

On a social level, the narratives presented in Thai BL series offer Japanese audiences, particularly women, a fresh perspective on gender roles and relationships. Through these stories, viewers are exposed to scenarios that challenge traditional norms and encourage reflection on societal expectations. This reflective process is crucial for cultural consumption as it allows for the potential reconstruction of personal perspectives and societal norms.

The BL phenomenon exemplifies a dynamic and reciprocal cultural exchange, marking a significant departure from the previously dominant one-way cultural influence from Japan to Thailand. This exchange underscores the evolving nature of cultural globalization, where Japanese audiences are now active participants in a global storytelling dialogue, both as consumers and influencers. The cycle of cultural exchange has become more complex and reciprocal: Japanese BL initially influenced Thai media, which, in turn, has started to shape Japanese consumption patterns and preferences.

This two-way exchange represents a fascinating evolution in modern cultural dynamics, illustrating the increasing fluidity and reciprocity of cultural influences across borders. The growing popularity of Thai BL in Japan not only completes a cultural exchange loop but also demonstrates the impact of cultural re-appropriation and the global journey of a genre. It underscores a broader cultural shift toward a more interconnected and mutually influential global media environment, where the influences are no longer unidirectional but increasingly bidirectional.

## **Future Research Recommendations**

While this study laid a foundation, numerous avenues warrant further exploration. The sustainability of the Thai Y series' popularity in Japan, in the face of evolving media landscapes and cultural dynamics, remains a pertinent question.

Moreover, the role of fan communities, both online and offline, in shaping the content's trajectory and the potential for collaborative media projects between Japan and Thailand, given this shared cultural interest, are areas ripe for investigation. .

### **Final Thoughts**

This phenomenon between Thai and Japanese entertainment sectors offers intriguing avenues for future collaborations. Thai content creators, having recognized their foothold in the Japanese market, could potentially collaborate with Japanese writers, directors, or production houses to co-create content that amalgamates the strengths of both cultures. Such collaborations not only hold the promise of producing content that resonates on a wider scale but also foster mutual cultural understanding and appreciation.

Furthermore, the success of the Thai Y series in Japan also poses an interesting question regarding the future of media localization. Historically, media content has been adapted or remade to fit the cultural nuances of the target audience. However, the Thai Y series' success, without significant alteration to its original content, challenges this traditional approach. It underscores the evolving preferences of the modern viewer who, perhaps due to increased global connectivity, is more open to embracing content in its authentic form, relishing in the cultural nuances and differences rather than seeking a familiar rendition.

## APPENDIX

### Interview

From August to November 2023, qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants from Japanese audience. These interviews are intended to delve into personal viewer experiences and opinions about Thai BL series, ensuring a comprehensive understanding. Special attention is placed on maintaining diversity among the interviewees, including a balance in gender and a variety of age groups (Mixture of group of 10-20s, 30-40s, 50s-60s, Male and Female, various sexuality )

#### **Date of Interviews: November 2023**

#### **Interviewee A (Female, 23 years old)**

#### Record

Interviewer: Good afternoon and thank you for joining. To start off, could you tell us what specifically about Thai Y series storytelling resonates with you?

Interviewee A: Sure, I'm drawn to the unique blend of realism and emotional depth in Thai Y series. They approach character dynamics and emotional conflicts in a way that is quite different from other dramas. The intricate exploration of relationships and personal growth in these series really speaks to me.

Interviewer: That is quite insightful. In your opinion, what makes Thai Y series so popular among Japanese audiences?

Interviewee A: I believe it is the fresh perspective they bring to storytelling. They focus on characters' emotional journeys and growth, which is quite appealing here in Japan. It is not just about the drama; it is about the characters evolving and dealing with real emotions, which is a refreshing change from the usual media content.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from these series? What about them stands out to you?

Interviewee A: Definitely! Gulf Kanawut is my favorite. His nuanced portrayal of emotions and his on-screen charisma are truly remarkable. He brings a depth and realism to his characters that is just captivating.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee A: Well, Thai Y series are more emotionally raw and vulnerable compared to other Asian dramas. They delve deeper into characters' emotional narratives, exposing aspects of relationships that are often glossed over in other shows.

Interviewer: Interesting. And has social media played a role in your engagement with these series?

Interviewee A: Absolutely. I discovered Thai Y series through social media platforms. The online communities are a great place for sharing thoughts and getting recommendations. They have definitely enhanced my overall experience with these series.

Interviewer: How do you feel the themes in Thai Y series differ from those in Japanese dramas?

Interviewee A: Thai Y series often tackle themes that are considered taboo or are rarely discussed openly in Japanese dramas, especially around LGBTQ+ relationships. They also tend to portray these themes in a more realistic and relatable manner.

Interviewer: Lastly, have you noticed any changes in the way Thai Y series are being produced or received over the years?

Interviewee A: Yes, there is been a noticeable shift. The production quality has



improved significantly, and the storytelling has become more diverse and inclusive. Also, the reception in Japan has become more mainstream, with a growing appreciation for the cultural and emotional depth these series offer.

**Interviewee B (Male, 35 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today. To begin, what aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging?

Interviewee B: Good afternoon! The bold exploration of LGBTQ+ themes in Thai Y series is what I find most engaging. It is rare to see such themes openly discussed in Japanese media, which I believe brings a much-needed diversity to the genre.

Interviewer: That is an important point. What would you say is driving the popularity of Thai Y series among Japanese viewers?

Interviewee B: I think the cultural authenticity and the willingness of Thai Y series to tackle complex storylines really appeal to Japanese audiences. They offer different perspectives on societal issues and cultural contexts, which is both intriguing and enlightening.

Interviewer: Who are your favorite Thai actors, and why do they stand out to you?

Interviewee B: Mew Suppasit stands out to me. His acting depth and emotional range are captivating. His performances feel like more than just acting; they're an embodiment of the character, leaving a lasting impression.

Interviewer: How do you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee B: Compared to other Asian dramas, Thai Y series have a certain rawness and authenticity. They address social issues more directly and aren't afraid to explore

taboo subjects, which I find quite unique.

Interviewer: Social media seems to play a significant role in the popularity of Thai Y series in Japan. Can you describe how it is influenced your viewing habits?

Interviewee B: Absolutely. Instagram has been a huge part of my engagement with Thai Y series. Following actors and being part of fan communities has kept me involved. It is significantly enhanced my overall experience, keeping me updated and connected to the series and its community.

Interviewer: How do you think Thai Y series have impacted the perception of LGBTQ+ themes in Japanese media?

Interviewee B: Thai Y series have started a more open conversation about LGBTQ+ themes in Japan. They've introduced these themes in a more accessible and relatable way, which I believe is slowly influencing how Japanese media approaches such topics.

Interviewer: Lastly, do you see any evolving trends in Thai Y series that excite you?

Interviewee B: Yes, I see a trend towards more diverse storytelling and the inclusion of a broader range of experiences and backgrounds in Thai Y series. This evolution in the genre is exciting as it promises richer, more varied narratives in the future.

**Interviewee C (Female, 29 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Good afternoon! Thank you for joining us. To begin, could you share what aspects of Thai Y series you find most engaging?

Interviewee C: Hello! Sure, I really love the mix of romance and comedy in Thai Y series, coupled with the beautiful scenery of Thailand. They offer much more than

just love stories; it is the cultural nuances, the humor, and the settings that really add to the overall experience.

Interviewer: That sounds fascinating. What do you think is driving their popularity among Japanese viewers?

Interviewee C: I think it is the actors' chemistry and the high production quality of these series that are really captivating. They're visually beautiful, and the storytelling is top-notch. It is the combination of these elements that makes them so appealing.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite Thai actors? What about them stands out to you?

Interviewee C: Yes, Bright Vachirawit is my favorite. His charm is just undeniable. He has this incredible ability to seamlessly switch between intense and lighthearted moments, making every scene he's in truly engaging.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee C: Thai Y series, in my opinion, are visually more vibrant and emotionally more stirring than other Asian dramas. They have a certain depth and authenticity that makes them stand out.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with these series?

Interviewee C: Social media, especially platforms like YouTube and Twitter, has been instrumental for me. They're great resources for finding new series and joining fan discussions. It is through these platforms that I've discovered many of the series I now love.

Interviewer: With the cultural elements you mentioned, do you think Thai Y series offer a unique cultural perspective?

Interviewee C: Absolutely. Thai Y series provide a glimpse into Thai culture and social dynamics, which is quite unique and different from what we're used to seeing in Japanese dramas. It is a refreshing change.

Interviewer: Lastly, do you think the popularity of Thai Y series has had any broader impacts on the Japanese entertainment industry?

Interviewee C: Yes, I believe so. The popularity of Thai Y series is likely influencing Japanese producers and writers to explore more diverse themes and styles in their own content. It is opening up the industry to new ideas and approaches.

**Interviewee D (Male, 41 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Hello and thank you for joining us today. Let's start with your thoughts on the engaging aspects of Thai Y series.

Interviewee D: Hello! The thing that fascinates me the most about Thai Y series is how they integrate cultural nuances and societal issues into their narratives. They have a way of weaving these elements into the storyline that is both informative and engaging. It is not just about entertainment; it is about telling stories that have depth and meaning.

Interviewer: That is insightful. What do you think makes Thai Y series so popular among Japanese viewers?

Interviewee D: In Japan, we're really drawn to stories that feel authentic and heartfelt, and Thai Y series offer just that. They have this emotional authenticity and compelling storylines that are highly relatable. It is a refreshing change from the more

formulaic approach we often see in other dramas.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from the Thai Y series? What makes them stand out?

Interviewee D: Yes, Win Metawin is an actor I really admire. His performances are subtle and nuanced, bringing a depth to his characters that is quite rare and admirable. It is his ability to convey complex emotions and thoughts through minimalistic expressions that really makes him stand out.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee D: Thai Y series, in my opinion, provide deeper insights into cultural contexts and are less formulaic compared to other Asian dramas. They tend to tackle a wider range of themes and present them in a more realistic manner.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with Thai Y series?

Interviewee D: Social media, especially Facebook groups, has greatly enhanced my viewing experience. It is a wonderful platform for discovering new series and engaging with a community that shares a similar appreciation for these shows. Discussing episodes and sharing thoughts with other fans adds another layer of enjoyment.

Interviewer: With the societal themes you mentioned, do you think Thai Y series have contributed to broader social conversations?

Interviewee D: Definitely. Thai Y series often tackle themes and issues that aren't typically discussed openly in mainstream media, especially in Japan. This not only contributes to broader social conversations but also helps in building a more inclusive

understanding of various societal issues.

Interviewer: Lastly, how do you see the future of Thai Y series evolving?

Interviewee D: I believe Thai Y series will continue to evolve, pushing boundaries and exploring even more diverse themes. Their growing popularity could lead to even more innovative storytelling and perhaps inspire similar trends in other Asian dramas. The future looks very promising for this genre.

**Interviewee E (Female, 54 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Good afternoon! It is great to have you with us. To begin, can you share what specifically draws you to Thai Y series?

Interviewee E: Good afternoon! Thank you for having me. What really draws me to Thai Y series are the themes they explore, like unconditional love and enduring friendships. These series often challenge societal norms and present love stories that are both heartfelt and inspiring. It is refreshing to see such depth and authenticity in storytelling.

Interviewer: That is interesting. How do you think these aspects contribute to their popularity in Japan?

Interviewee E: The universal themes of love and acceptance are key. In Japan, these series are so appealing because they resonate with a wide audience. They portray emotions and experiences that are universal, which makes them relatable to many people, regardless of their background.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from Thai Y series? What about them stands out to you?

Interviewee E: Yes, Tay Tawan is one of my favorites. His authenticity and warmth in roles really resonate with me. He has a way of bringing genuineness and depth to his characters, which is quite rare. His performances feel very real and heartfelt.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee E: Thai Y series, in my opinion, offer a fresher and more nuanced perspective on romance and relationships compared to many other dramas. They have a certain depth and a unique way of exploring themes that you don't often see in other Asian dramas.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with these series?

Interviewee E: Social media has been crucial. It has significantly expanded my access to series recommendations and helped me connect with fan communities. It is opened up a whole new aspect of enjoyment for these shows. Being able to share thoughts and discuss episodes with other fans has greatly enhanced my experience.

Interviewer: With the themes of love and friendship you mentioned, do you think Thai Y series are changing perceptions in Japanese society?

Interviewee E: I believe they are. Thai Y series are introducing new perspectives and challenging traditional views on relationships and societal norms. They're slowly influencing how such themes are perceived and accepted in Japanese society.

Interviewer: Finally, what future trends do you anticipate in Thai Y series, given their current trajectory?

Interviewee E: I think Thai Y series will continue to grow in popularity and will likely

start exploring even broader themes. They might influence other Asian dramas to adopt similar storytelling approaches. The genre is evolving, and I'm excited to see where it goes next.

**Interviewee F (Male, 27 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Hello and thank you for joining us. To start, what aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging?

Interviewee F: Hi, thanks for having me. What I find most engaging about Thai Y series are the emotional stakes and the strong character development. They craft storylines that are both impactful and highly relatable. It is the depth in their storytelling that really grabs my attention.

Interviewer: That is intriguing. What do you think is driving their popularity among Japanese viewers?

Interviewee F: I think it is the blend of traditional storytelling elements with modern themes that resonates with Japanese viewers. It offers a fresh take on familiar themes, making it appealing and refreshing. There is a sense of novelty, yet it feels familiar and accessible.

Interviewer: Who are your favorite actors from these series and why?

Interviewee F: Saint Suppapong is one of my favorites. His dynamic acting range is quite impressive. He brings a variety of characters to life in a way that is both believable and engaging. His versatility as an actor really adds to the depth of the series.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?



Interviewee F: Compared to other Asian dramas, Thai Y series delve deeper into emotions and character development. This makes them less predictable and more engaging. They tend to explore characters and their journeys more thoroughly, which I find very compelling.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with Thai Y series?

Interviewee F: Social media, especially platforms like Twitter and Instagram, are crucial for me. They're key in keeping up with the latest updates and connecting with the fan community. It is through these platforms that I discover new series and engage with other fans, which greatly enhances my experience.

Interviewer: With the strong character development you mentioned, do you think Thai Y series have a unique approach to storytelling?

Interviewee F: Absolutely. Thai Y series have a unique approach in that they focus extensively on character arcs and emotional growth. It is not just about the plot; it is about how the characters evolve and interact, which adds a rich layer to the storytelling.

Interviewer: Finally, what future developments do you hope to see in Thai Y series?

Interviewee F: I'm hoping to see Thai Y series continue to evolve and diversify in terms of themes and character representation. I'd love to see them pushing boundaries even further and exploring new genres within the series. The potential for growth and innovation in Thai Y series is immense, and I'm excited to see what they come up with next.

**Interviewee G (Female, 47 years old)**

**Record**

Interviewer: Good afternoon! Thank you for joining us. Let's start with what you find most engaging about Thai Y series.

Interviewee G: Good afternoon. What really appeals to me in Thai Y series is the portrayal of resilience and emotional growth. Watching characters go through significant development and overcome challenges is both empowering and inspiring. It is more than just entertainment; it is about seeing characters evolve and learn, which is incredibly engaging.

Interviewer: Indeed. And what do you think is driving their popularity in Japan?

Interviewee G: I believe it is their ability to address complex emotional themes in a relatable way. Thai Y series offer a depth of storytelling that is not always present in other types of dramas. They tackle real issues and emotions in a way that resonates with the audience here in Japan, making them very appealing.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from these series, and what makes them stand out?

Interviewee G: Oh, definitely. Ohm Thitiwat is one of my favorites. His performances are compelling and authentic. He has this ability to bring depth and realism to his characters, making them memorable and relatable.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series with other Asian dramas?

Interviewee G: Thai Y series tend to explore emotions and relationships more profoundly than many other dramas. They have a more realistic and less clichéd approach to storytelling. This depth in narrative and character development sets them apart.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with Thai Y series?

Interviewee G: YouTube vlogs and reviews have significantly influenced my viewing choices. They provide deeper insights into the series, helping me understand the nuances and backstories. It is been a great way to discover new series and connect with the wider fan community.

Interviewer: With the emotional growth you mentioned, do you think Thai Y series are influencing viewer perspectives on personal development?

Interviewee G: Absolutely. Thai Y series are definitely influencing perspectives on personal development and resilience. They show that overcoming challenges and emotional growth are parts of life, encouraging viewers to reflect on their own experiences and growth.

Interviewer: Lastly, what kind of evolution or trends do you hope to see in Thai Y series in the future?

Interviewee G: I hope to see Thai Y series continue to push the envelope in terms of storytelling and character diversity. It would be great to see them exploring even more varied themes and perhaps branching into different genres while maintaining their emotional depth. The potential for growth and innovation in the genre is exciting.

**Interviewee H (Male, 32 years old)**

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us today. To start, can you share what aspects of Thai Y series are most engaging to you?

Interviewee H: Absolutely. I find the story arcs involving self-discovery and acceptance in Thai Y series particularly compelling. They approach these themes

thoughtfully and engagingly, often dealing with issues that are both personal and societal.

Interviewer: Interesting. And why do you think these series are popular among Japanese viewers?

Interviewee H: I believe it is because of the unique blend of cultural context and emotional storytelling.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from these series?

Interviewee H: Yes, Perth Tanapon is an actor I really admire. He has an incredible ability to bring depth and complexity to his characters, making each performance captivating and memorable.

Interviewer: How would you compare Thai Y series to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee H: Thai Y series offer more nuanced explorations of relationships and emotions compared to many other dramas in Asia. They tend to delve deeper into character development and emotional arcs.

Interviewer: Lastly, how does social media influence your viewing experience?

Interviewee H: Social media plays a big role, especially fan forums and updates from actors. It keeps me engaged with the series and the community. It is a big part of my viewing experience, keeping me connected with the latest developments and fan discussions.

**Interviewee I (Female, 31 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us today. Could you elaborate on what makes Thai

Y series stand out to you?

Interviewee I: Absolutely! What really stands out to me is the cultural depth in Thai Y series. They portray relationships and societal themes in a very realistic way. The storylines are not just entertaining, but also provide a deeper understanding of different aspects of society.

Interviewer: What, in your opinion, drives their popularity in Japan?

Interviewee I: It is the innovative storytelling and the exploration of themes that we don't usually see in Japanese media. Thai Y series offer new perspectives on life and relationships, which is really refreshing and appealing to Japanese audiences.

Interviewer: Do you have any favorite actors from these series?

Interviewee I: Yes, New Thitipoom is one of my favorites. His versatility and ability to deliver powerful performances in different roles is really impressive.

Interviewer: How do Thai Y series compare to other Asian dramas in your view?

Interviewee I: I think Thai Y series focus more on character-driven plots and realistic portrayals of life's complexities, which sets them apart from other Asian dramas.

Interviewer: And how has social media influenced your engagement with these series?

Interviewee I: Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are essential for me. They keep me updated on the latest series and developments. The fan community is also very active, which makes the experience more enjoyable.

**Interviewee I (Female, 31 years old)**

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Interviewee I: Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are essential for me. They keep me updated on the latest series and developments. The fan community is also very active, which makes the experience more enjoyable.

**Interviewee J (Male, 26 years old)**

Record

Interviewer: Thank you for participating today. Can you tell us more about what attracts you to Thai Y series?

Interviewee J: I appreciate that they're not afraid to address difficult topics, which is quite rare in Asian dramas.

Interviewer: Why do you think they're popular in Japan?

Interviewee J: The progressive storytelling and the representation of diverse characters make Thai Y series stand out. They bring a new and fresh perspective to the genre, which is something Japanese viewers find appealing.

Interviewer: Who is your favorite actor from these series?

Interviewee J: Ohm Pawat is my favorite. His emotional range and the authenticity in his roles are exceptional. He's an incredibly talented actor.

Interviewer: How would you compare them to other Asian dramas?

Interviewee J: Thai Y series are more straightforward in addressing societal issues and aren't as confined by traditional narratives. This makes them more engaging and relatable.

Interviewer: Lastly, how has social media impacted your experience with these series?

Interviewee J: Social media has been a huge part of my experience. It is been essential for discovering new series and connecting with other fans. It is a great platform for

discussions and sharing opinions about the series

### Questionnaire

In August and October 2023, questionnaires were distributed to 50 members of Thai Y series fan clubs in Japan, aiming to capture a diverse range of perspectives. Response from 20 individuals. This question encompasses various topics, but here the it is focused specifically on the aspects related to social media. (Multiple answers)

#### 1. How did you discover Thai Y series, and what prompted you to start watching them?

From youtube's recommendation (15)

Friends recommendation (2)

Instagram and Twitter trends (2)

#### 2. What aspects of Thai Y series do you find most engaging and appealing?

Actors visual (15)

Unique and slow storyline (8)

#### 3. Do you think Thai Y series offer a unique cultural perspective compared to other Asian drama series? If so, how?

Unlike series like K-drama which has dramatic storyline, Thai BL is more fresh and slow tempos which is easy to watch for the audience (3)

Stories are usually typical BL setting but the Thai culture in it is very fresh for Japanese audience, like Thai university campus life has never been known in Japan (2)

The visual of Thai actors are not similar to neither Korean nor Japanese actors and feeling Thai beauty in it makes Japanese audience to become fans of them (1)

I like the sounds of Thai language better than other countries BL (1)

#### 4. Which Thai Y series have been your favorites so far?

*TharnType* (10)

*2gether* (6)

*Not Yet* (3)

#### 5. Have you noticed any specific themes or storylines in Thai Y series that resonate with Japanese audiences?



Typical BL storyline (Those who have hated each other falling in love ) is familiar with Japanese audience. (4)

Not only Typical setting, but also Thai BL tackling social issues like LGBTQ or poverty is fun and knowledgeable for Japanese audience (3)

**6. Are there any particular actors or actresses in Thai Y series that have gained popularity or have a strong fan following in Japan?**

Bright and Win (15)

Gulf (6)

**7. How do you think Thai Y series differ from Japanese drama series in terms of storytelling, production quality, or style?**

All the episodes are uploaded on Youtube, no need to be subscribed on special platform, easier to get access than Japanese drama (5)

Visual effects in terms of actors visual, background visual are more meticulous and sophisticated than Japanese series (4)

There are so many fan meeting event (3)

**8. Have you found any similarities or common elements between Thai Y series and popular Japanese drama series?**

Sometimes there is typical BL storyline similar to Japanese BL (10)

**9. In your opinion, what is the key factor contributing to the growing popularity of Thai Y series among Japanese viewers?**

Social media use (15)

Active uploading on youtube and Japanese subtitle (easy to watch ) (10)

**10 What is the impression of Thai Y?(Multiple answers )**

**1 新鮮 (shinsen) – Fresh 14votes**

Japanese fans often describe Thai Y series as fresh, indicating a sense of novelty and departure from the familiar patterns of Y series from other countries. This term suggests that Thai Y series bring something new, different, and refreshing to the table.

**2 独特 (dokutoku) – Unique 8 votes**

This word emphasizes the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Thai Y series compared to Y series from other countries. It highlights the cultural perspectives, storytelling techniques,

<p>or other elements that set Thai Y series apart.</p>
<p><b>3 惹かれる (hikareru) – Captivating 7 votes</b></p> <p>This word specifically highlights the captivating nature of Thai Y series, drawing Japanese fans in and keeping them engaged. It might be used to differentiate the level of captivation compared to Y series from other countries.</p>
<p><b>4 "ドラマチック" (doramachikku) 7 votes</b></p> <p>borrowed from the English word "dramatic" and is used in the Japanese language to describe something that is intense, emotional, or characterized by significant changes and developments. It is commonly used to express a sense of excitement, tension, or a sudden shift in a situation that captures people's attention and evokes strong feelings.</p>
<p><b>6 感動的 (kandō-teki) – Touching 6 votes</b></p> <p>translates to "touching" or "moving" in English. It means that Thai Y has the power to deeply move or touch people emotionally. This could refer to a story, a film, a performance, an experience, or any situation that elicits a strong emotional response, such as empathy, compassion, inspiration, or even tears of joy or sadness.</p>
<p><b>7 刺激的 (shigeki-teki) – Exciting 6 votes</b></p> <p>It is used to describe something that provokes a reaction, often a strong or intense one, in a person's mind or emotions. This term can be used in various contexts to refer to experiences, situations, or things that elicit excitement, interest, or a heightened sense of awareness.</p>
<p><b>8 魅力的 (miriyoku-teki) – Charming 6 votes</b></p> <p>describe Thai Y that possesses qualities or characteristics that draw people in, captivate their attention, and make them find it appealing or alluring. This term can be applied to various aspects such as a person's appearance, personality, behavior, or even objects, ideas.</p>
<p><b>9 迫真演技 (hakushin engi) - Convincing acting 6 votes</b></p> <p>When someone's acting is described as 迫真演技, it means they have effectively immersed themselves in the role and their performance is so convincing that it draws the audience</p>

into the Thai Y's story and makes them believe in the reality of the character. This term is typically used in a positive manner to praise an actor's skill in bringing a character to life in a believable and emotionally engaging way.

**11 What kind of word do you use when you describe Thai Y series actors ? (multiple answers and comments )**

**1 イケメン (ikemen) – handsome 13votes**

Ikemen (イケメン): Ikemen is a term used to describe handsome men or good-looking guys. Japanese fans may refer to Thai BL actors as ikemen if they find them attractive.

- Attractive with different eyes and nose from Japanese.
- Not only does he have a nice face, but he's also well built and muscular.
- Facial features not found in either Japan or Korea

**2 かわいい (kawaii) – Cute 8 votes**

This is a widely used Japanese word that means "cute" or "adorable." Fans may describe Thai BL actors they admire as "kawaii."

- The gestures are cute. I like it because it is easier to understand the cute gestures than the Japanese do.
- Not only is their face cute, but so speaking Thai is cute too.

**3 惹かれる (hikareru) – Captivating 7 votes**

This word conveys a sense of being captivating or charming. Fans may use it to highlight an actor's appeal. Engaging (魅力的): If an actor's performances are emotionally engaging or captivating, fans may use this word to describe them.

- Many of the actors seem a little sad and shadowy, which I find attractive.
- Fan service is abundant and easy to interact with. The gestures are cute and attractive.

**4 Charismatic (カリスマ的): 7votes**

If an actor has a strong presence and a compelling personality, fans might describe them as charismatic.

- Star quality is higher than that of Japanese actors.
- The star quality is very approachable and feels like a real star.

#### 5 Adorable Couple (可愛いカップル): 7votes

Japanese BL fans may use this phrase to refer to their favorite Thai BL actor pairs or on-screen couples. OTP (One True Pairing): Fans who have a favorite Thai BL actor pairing may refer to them as their "OTP," indicating their preferred romantic pairing.

- I would be tempted to recommend them as a couple because they are very complete as a couple.
- happy that they appear as the same couple not only in dramas but also in variety shows and other YouTube channels.

#### Report on the "Ossan's Love" Fan Meeting Event - 2021

In 2021, the fan meeting for the popular Japanese BL series "Ossan's Love" was held, drawing a considerable crowd of devoted fans. The event was marked by a series of activities designed to celebrate the series and its cast.

Actor Meet and Greet: Series stars interacted with fans, offering a unique and personal experience.

Behind-the-Scenes Footage: Exclusive insights into the series' production were showcased.

Series Merchandise: Fans had the opportunity to purchase official series-themed items.

#### Report on the *2gether* Fan Event in Japan - 2023

In 2023, a fan event for the Thai BL series *2gether* was held in Japan, highlighting the series' growing popularity in the country. This event was a testament to the cultural impact of Thai BL series in Japan.

Live Performances: Actors showcased their talents in live acts, creating an engaging and dynamic atmosphere.

Panel Talks: Cast members delved into their experiences and the series' concepts during insightful discussions.

Meet and Greet Sessions: Fans enjoyed personal interactions with their favorite actors, enhancing the event's appeal.

Fan Activities: Interactive elements were designed for fans to actively show their love and enthusiasm for the series and its stars.



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