



# Improving Indonesian Soft Power Through Cultural Exchange in Thailand: Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep Summer Semester Program in 2024

Wiwik Handayani<sup>1\*</sup>, Nur Shadrina Prameswari<sup>1</sup>, M. Idris Ariyanto<sup>1</sup>, Intan Kusumaningsih<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Management, Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Received: December 24, 2024

Revised: March 10, 2025

Accepted: March 19, 2025

Published: March 31, 2025

Corresponding Author:

Wiwik Handayani

[wiwik.em@upnjatim.ac.id](mailto:wiwik.em@upnjatim.ac.id)

DOI: [10.29303/ujcs.v6i1.817](https://doi.org/10.29303/ujcs.v6i1.817)

© 2025 The Authors. This open access article is distributed under a (CC-BY License)



**Abstract:** This research discusses efforts to preserve Indonesian culture through the Summer Semester program held at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand. The main focus of this activity is to exchange Indonesian culture as a form of cultural diplomacy and increase Indonesia's soft power in the international arena. Through this activity, Indonesia can introduce cultural values and traditions to the global community, which contributes to strengthening Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world. This activity not only functions as a means of cultural promotion, but also as a medium for education and cultural exchange between nations, allowing participants from various backgrounds to learn and interact directly with Indonesian culture for participants from various countries.

**Keywords:** Summer Semester; Culture; Cultural Exchange; Cultural Diplomacy; Soft Power.

## Introduction

Culture is a combination of various life values that integrate diverse aspects of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, customs, and all other abilities and habits acquired by a society within a group. This culture generates diversity in human creation, taste, art, and ingenuity, which ultimately becomes part of a nation's identity (Sumarto, 2019). In other means, culture is one of the forms of a nation's identity (Amrizal & Hamdani, 2022). Indonesia is a pluralistic country that has diverse cultures from various tribes, races, languages, religions, political policies and others (Lintang & Najicha, 2022; Sarbaini & Akhyar, 2018). This diversity is a characteristic that is only owned by the Indonesian nation and is not shared by other countries, so that it forms the national identity or identity of the Indonesian nation (Sarbaini & Akhyar, 2018). Culture is part of

Indonesia's Soft Power and is one of Indonesia's strengths in foreign policy (Acharya, 2014). Joseph Nye coined the terms Soft Power and Hard Power in the late 1980s, soft power itself has the meaning of the ability to achieve desires using attraction and not using elements of coercion or transactions. This attraction arises from culture, political standards, and policies within a country. Meanwhile, hard power is defined as economic and military strength in the country (Nye, 2004). Acharya in his book states that Indonesia's hard power is relatively weak when compared to developing BRICS countries (Brazil Russia, India, China and South Africa) and also non-BRICS countries such as South Korea, Nigeria. and Saudi Arabia Their development focuses on Hard Power, while Indonesia focuses more on their soft power. However, this is actually an advantage for Indonesia because it is trusted to take an important role in various forms of cooperation with other countries (Acharya, 2014).

## How to Cite:

Handayani, W., Prameswari, N. S., Ariyanto, M. I., & Kusumaningsih, I. (2025). Improving Indonesian Soft Power Through Cultural Exchange in Thailand: Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep Summer Semester Program in 2024. *Unram Journal of Community Service*, 6(1), 64–69. <https://doi.org/10.29303/ujcs.v6i1.817>

Cultural exchange has always had a significant impact on other societies, whether by introducing new cultural products into daily life, transforming existing traditions and beliefs, or spreading languages across borders to serve as tools of communication between nations. In the context of diplomacy, cultural exchange plays a crucial role in strengthening relationships between countries. Cultural diplomacy is realized through various initiatives such as art exchanges, cultural festivals, and international education programs. These efforts not only promote cross-cultural understanding but also foster a sense of unity and solidarity. Such initiatives form a vital foundation for maintaining stability, enhancing cooperation, and building more harmonious international relations. While early instances of such exchanges were sporadic, the 19th century marked a shift toward cultural sharing as a deliberate and strategic policy endeavor (Clarke, 2020). Cultural diplomacy is one way to increase a country's soft power (Zhou, 2022). These efforts laid the groundwork for what we now refer to as "cultural diplomacy." Initially confined to communications among royal courts, this practice expanded significantly by the time of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, reaching broader audiences and engaging the wider public (Welch, 2017).

With the 2024 Summer Semester program held by Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, cultural exchange between Indonesian and Thai culture can be realized. The program participants from the Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur and several other campuses participating in this program have prepared several materials and performances related to Indonesian culture. This material and appearance was displayed in front of local Thai residents through official forums. The results have a positive impact on the image of Indonesian culture in the international arena and also have an impact on increasing the soft power of the Indonesian nation.

## Method

This research uses qualitative analysis methods to collect and analyze data related to typical Indonesian culture. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, value and context of the object being studied in depth. According to Creswell (2017), qualitative methods aim to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. The data in this research was obtained through direct observation of various sources, including websites, YouTube platforms, as well as interactions with students and staff at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand. This observation provides a more

comprehensive insight into the perception, understanding and acceptance of Indonesian culture by people in Thailand.

### 1. Stage of Preparation

In the preparation stage, there are several important steps that must be taken to ensure the smooth running of research and cultural activities. The first step involves administrative preparations for joining the program, including preparing various files such as passports, visas and other documents required to stay in Thailand. Apart from that, living needs while abroad, such as accommodation, transportation and daily logistics, are also carefully prepared. The second step is the preparation of cultural materials. In this stage, researchers and program participants prepare material to be presented, which covers various aspects of Indonesian culture such as traditional dance, music, and fine art. Intensive training is carried out to ensure that cultural performances can be delivered optimally and are attractive to the audience.

### 2. Implementation Level

The activity implementation phase began with the departure of the Summer Semester program participants and their entourage from Jakarta to Bangkok on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2024. After arriving in Thailand, participants immediately adapted to the academic environment at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep. For one month, participants will actively participate in learning and teaching activities at the university. In the class forums attended, participants presented material regarding Indonesian culture, which not only involved lectures, but also interactive discussions to facilitate a better understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity. This approach is in line with the opinion of Patton (2014) who emphasizes the importance of direct interaction and dialogue in qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the subject under study.

### 3. Art Performances and Farewell Parties

As the culmination of the activity, participants were involved in an art performance held at a farewell party. This arts performance is an important opportunity for participants to showcase various elements of Indonesian culture to an international audience. This activity is not just entertainment, but also functions as a medium for cultural diplomacy, introducing the richness and diversity of Indonesian culture to the outside world. Performances that include traditional dance, traditional music, and other artistic demonstrations aim to build cross-cultural appreciation and understanding. According to Maryani & Aguskin (2018) involvement in cultural activities such as these can enrich the understanding of a culture and the qualitative research

experience by providing insight into how culture is practiced, interpreted, and received in different contexts.

#### 4. Reflection and Evaluation

After the activity ends, reflection and evaluation are carried out to assess the success of the program. This evaluation involves gathering feedback from students, staff, and participants regarding their experiences throughout the program. The results of this reflection will be used to improve approaches in similar programs in the future, as well as to assess the impact of cultural activities on cross-cultural understanding. Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto (2018) suggest that reflection and evaluation are important parts of qualitative research, as they provide opportunities for deeper analysis and continuous improvement in the research process.

With this comprehensive approach, research is expected to make a significant contribution in introducing and promoting Indonesian culture in the international arena, as well as strengthening international relations through effective cultural diplomacy.

## Result and Discussion

The Summer Semester Program is a special academic period that takes place during the summer, outside of the regular semester schedule. This program is designed to give students a unique opportunity to share knowledge, broaden their horizons, and learn about various cultures from different countries. In this activity, students are not only involved in in-depth learning sessions but also have the opportunity to interact directly with the international community. This program is held at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK) in Bangkok, Thailand, which offers a dynamic academic environment as well as the opportunity to experience Thai culture firsthand. With a variety of academic and social activities, participants can develop global skills and build useful networks.

This activity was attended by several universities in Indonesia, including Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, and lasted for one month at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK) in Bangkok, Thailand. During this period, participants will engage in a variety of academic and cultural activities designed to expand their knowledge and skills. With this program, it indicates that students are taking an active and important initiative in preserving and introducing Indonesian culture on the international stage.

This program also serves as a platform for cultural preservation through cultural diplomacy. By integrating elements of Indonesian culture in academic and cultural contexts between countries, especially in the ASEAN region. Participants in this program were various participants from various countries, namely Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. During the program, students from universities in various regions in Indonesia have the opportunity to introduce and promote the richness of Indonesian culture internationally by taking part in Thai Culture activities in learning activities by comparing cultural diversity between Indonesia and Thailand as well as performing various dances and national songs of the Indonesian nation. to all participants who take part in this program. This initiative not only enriches participants' academic experience but also strengthens cultural relations between Indonesia and Thailand, as well as encouraging cross-country cooperation in efforts to preserve cultural diversity, especially in the ASEAN region.

Several activities carried out by Indonesian students in an effort to carry out cultural exchange in Thailand are as follows:

#### 1. Introduction to Culture in Learning Activities



**Figure 1.** Students presenting mind map to introduce Indonesia culture

In the learning process, students will be involved in cultural introduction activities that use image media to compare Indonesian and Thai culture. Through this visual media, participants will study and analyze various cultural aspects of the two countries, such as traditions, customs and daily habits. Each image presented will depict cultural elements from each country, and students will be asked to explain the meaning and context of the media displayed. Following the analysis, participants will discuss how these cultural elements can influence intercultural interactions and understanding, as well as how they can apply these insights in future academic and professional contexts.



## 2. Cultural Performance through the Farewell Party Art Performance



**Figure 2.** Students sang the Indonesia Pusaka song

At the start of the event, all students together sang the song "Indonesia Pusaka" as part of the opening. This national anthem is sung simultaneously to foster a sense of togetherness and pride in national identity among the participants. Through this moment, students are reminded of the importance of preserving and celebrating their cultural heritage while starting a new learning experience. This activity not only serves as a symbol of unity, but also as an introduction to fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect throughout the program.

### *Saman Dance Performance*



**Figure 3.** Students performs Saman Dance

In the next activity, students performed the Saman Dance, a traditional dance originating from Aceh, as part of a program to introduce Aceh regional culture. The Saman Dance, which is known for its fast rhythmic movements and distinctive vocal harmonization, will be presented by participants to show the beauty and uniqueness of Aceh's cultural arts and make other participants experience firsthand the beauty and richness of traditions from one of the regions in Indonesia.

### *Performance of the song Rek Ayo Rek*



**Figure 4.** Students performs dances of the Rek Ayo Rek song

The next activity was for students to sing and dance to the song "Rek Ayo Rek," a regional song originating from Surabaya, East Java. This enthusiastic song will be presented with energetic dance accompaniment, featuring lively and cheerful movements, which reflect the joy and warmth of Surabaya culture. This performance not only serves as entertainment but also as a way to introduce and celebrate East Java's cultural heritage.

### *Manuk Dadali Dance Performance*



**Figure 5.** Students performing Manuk Dadali Dance

During the activity, students danced to the song "Manuk Dadali," a traditional song originating from the Sunda region, Indonesia. This dance, inspired by a song symbolizing the beauty of the Garuda bird, will feature graceful and meaningful movements, reflecting the rich culture and natural beauty of Sundanese. This performance is designed to give participants direct experience of the unique art of Sundanese dance as well as introduce them to the symbolism contained in the song.

### Yamko Rambe Yamko Dance Performance



**Figure 6.** Students performs Yamko Rambe Yamko Dance

During the activity, the students also danced to the song "Yamko Rambe Yamko", a traditional song which has the characteristics of a musical arrangement and traditional Papuan identity by Agustinus Bambang Jusana. This dance displays movements full of energy and expression that reflect the spirit of Papuan culture. The song "Yamko Rambe Yamko," known for its rhythmic beat and uplifting lyrics, is accompanied by a dance that depicts the beauty and uniqueness of Papuan traditions. Through this performance, participants have the opportunity to experience firsthand the richness of Papuan culture and understand the deep meaning contained in these songs and dances. This activity aims to introduce participants to the diversity of Indonesian culture, as well as increasing their appreciation for the traditions and values of the Papuan people.

### Gemu Fa Mire Dance and Song Performance



**Figure 7.** Students sang Gemu Fa Mire song and danced along with the audience

In one activity, students danced and sang the song "Gemu Fa Mire," a song originating from East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This upbeat song is performed to the accompaniment of energetic and cheerful dancing, reflecting the warmth and joy of local culture. Apart from that, students also invited all participants to join in dancing together in this enthusiastic performance. Through active participation in dance, participants can experience the joy of the region's culture firsthand, while

learning about the cultural values and uniqueness of music and dance from East Nusa Tenggara.

The Summer Semester Program held at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand, offers an effective platform for preserving Indonesian culture through cultural diplomacy. This activity successfully integrates various academic and cultural elements, creating a unique opportunity for students to introduce and promote the richness of Indonesian culture at the international level. By adopting a soft power-based approach, this program strengthens Indonesia's position on the global stage and facilitates positive interactions between participants from various countries. The cultural activities carried out, such as the performance of the Saman Dance, the "Rek Ayo Rek" song, the Manuk Dadali Dance, the Yamko Rambe Yamko Dance, and the "Gemu Fa Mire" song, make a significant contribution to cultural preservation. Through this performance, students not only show the diversity of Indonesian culture but also invite international participants to participate in an immersive cultural experience. Active participation in dance and singing allows participants to experience firsthand the richness of Indonesian culture and strengthen interpersonal relationships that cross national boundaries.

In addition, this program functions as a means to introduce Indonesian culture to the international community through cultural exchange. By comparing Indonesian and Thai cultural elements using image media, participants can learn and analyze cultural differences and similarities, increase cross-cultural understanding, and develop a more inclusive perspective. This activity also supports the objectives of cultural diplomacy by introducing Indonesian values and traditions to a global audience, which can contribute to strengthening Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world.

### Conclusion

The Summer Semester program at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK) in Bangkok, Thailand, provides a valuable opportunity for students from various universities in Indonesia to expand their knowledge and skills through cultural and academic interactions. This program not only serves as a platform for preserving Indonesian culture at the international level, but also strengthens cultural ties between Indonesia and Thailand. By involving students in activities that prioritize cultural diplomacy, this program encourages cross-country cooperation in maintaining cultural diversity in the ASEAN region.



## Acknowledgments

Preserving the country's culture is the duty of every individual, making the nation's name proud on the world stage is a must for every citizen. This event was made possible thanks to the participation of Indonesian students who took part in the summer program and a dedicated team that was actively involved in the success of this event. Apart from that, we express our sincere appreciation to the Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur Management Department which has supported students and can contribute directly to international activities. We also thank UBP Karawang for holding a program in collaboration with Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep. The willingness of each party to collaborate and contribute plays an important role in the success of this program.

## References

- Acharya, A. (2014). *Indonesia Matters: Asia's emerging democratic power*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd.
- Amrizal, A., & Hamdani, Z. (2022). A brief introduction of Indonesian culture and its national identity to college students in the University of Nueva Caceres. *Mattawang: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 3(2), 178-182. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.mattawang944>
- Clarke, D. (2020). *Cultural diplomacy*. Oxford Research Encyclopedias: International Studies. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.543>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Lintang, F. S., & Najicha, F. U. (2022). Nilai-nilai sila persatuan Indonesia dalam keberagaman kebudayaan Indonesia. *Jurnal Global Citizen: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, 11(1), 79-85. <https://doi.org/10.33061/jgz.v11i1.7469>
- Maher, C., Hadfield, M., Hutchings, M., & de Eyto, A. (2018). Ensuring rigor in qualitative data analysis: A design research approach to coding combining NVivo with traditional material methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918786362>
- Maryani., & Aguskin., L. C. (2018). University students' understanding of cultural activities in American Culture class. *Lingua Cultura*, 12(2), 169-177. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v12i2.4043>
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Sarbaini & Akhyar, Z. (2018). *Pendidikan kewarganegaraan untuk perguruan tinggi: Membina karakter warga negara yang baik*. Banjarmasin: UPT MKU Universitas Lambung Mangkurat.
- Sumarto, S. (2019). Budaya, pemahaman dan penerapannya: "Aspek sistem religi, bahasa, pengetahuan, sosial, kesenian dan teknologi". *Jurnal Literasiologi*, 1(2), 144-159. <https://doi.org/10.47783/literasiologi.v1i2.49>
- Welch, E. R. (2017). *A theater of diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Zhou, J. (2022). The developing role of cultural diplomacy in soft power : A case study of Japanese cultural promotion (Dissertation). Linköping University. Retrieved from <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-189400>