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# Research into intergenerational differences among Chinese female tourists consuming Thai cosmetics

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**Abstract:** Consumers, particularly women, pursue beauty and health in order to uphold their image within society, which has contributed to consistent demand for cosmetics. The cosmetics market, driven by globalization and cultural exchange, sees Thai cosmetics gaining popularity among Chinese women. There has been a significant rise in the popularity of Thai cosmetics, known for their natural ingredients and innovative formulations. With a growing interest in cross-cultural consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of skincare and make-up products, understanding how different age groups perceive and choose Thai cosmetics is crucial for effective marketing strategies. The main issue is the development of consumer preferences over time among Chinese women who have only recently been given the opportunity to choose among many brands. This qualitative study explores the intergenerational differences in Chinese female consumers' preferences for Thai cosmetics, aiming to uncover rich insights into their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. The target population is female Chinese who have visited Thailand and purchased or used Thai-branded cosmetics. Key themes emerge regarding the perception of product efficacy, the cultural authenticity and the role of digital media and trends in influencing product choices. Findings highlight nuanced generational preferences, with older cohorts emphasizing trust and familiarity with established brands, while younger cohorts prioritize innovation, sustainability, and personalized beauty experiences. These insights provide valuable implications for marketers seeking to tailor strategies and product offerings to engage effectively diverse generational segments within the competitive cosmetics market.

**Keywords:** intergenerational differences; consumer preferences; Thai cosmetics; Chinese female consumers; cross-cultural consumer behavior; qualitative methods

## 1. Introduction

Many women are conscious of the importance of beauty, both externally and internally. Consequently, the cosmetics trade has emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding sectors globally. Thailand, with its abundance of herbal medicines, excels in crafting natural botanical cosmetics that appeal to Chinese consumers. and demand is increasing. Thailand is one of the leaders in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region for skincare and cosmetics. With a population of over 1.4 billion people, China is an attractive market for businesses looking to expand their customer base. Thai trends are increasing in China, and Thai cosmetics also have become popular in China as well. The revenue from Chinese tourists was more than 70,778.54 billion baht in 2014 (Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, 2015). Thai cosmetic and skincare are one of the most popular souvenirs that are highly frequently mentioned on the internet in China (Diroksri, 2020).

The natural cosmetics market is growing rapidly, with Chinese women wanting to use natural and organic cosmetics. Understanding cross-cultural consumer behaviour, particularly across different generations, is crucial for businesses operating in today's globalized marketplace. In other words, it is important for the cosmetics industry to understand Chinese consumers and what influences their choices. This involves distinguishing preferences that naturally fluctuate throughout different life stages from those that are distinctively characteristic of each generation. Thai cosmetics is just the prism through which we look at the bigger picture, which might penetrate into four dimensions: government level, business level, consumers level, and personal perspective.

It is essential for business to improve strategies in order to attract more Chinese consumers to purchase Thai cosmetics. The objectives of the study are to examine and explore factors influencing the purchasing behaviour of different generations of Chinese female consumers of Thai-branded cosmetics, specifically:

- 1) To identify generational differences and determine how preferences for Thai cosmetics differ among different generational cohorts of Chinese female consumers.
- 2) To explore cultural influences and investigate the cultural factors influencing these preferences, considering cultural values, perceptions, and trends.
- 3) To analyze product preferences and examine which types of Thai cosmetics and brands are preferred by each generational group and the reasons behind these preferences.
- 4) To assess purchasing behaviour and understand how generational differences impact the purchasing decisions of Chinese female consumers when selecting Thai cosmetics.


The literature review is presented in Section 2, the methodology is explained in Section 3, the results are presented in Section 4, and the discussion, conclusion, implications, and limitations are presented in the last two sections.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Generational theory

A generation is a group of people bounded in space and time whose opinions and attitudes have been moulded by shared experiences and events (Mannheim, 1927). In general, six generations could be characteristically differentiated as shown in chronological order in **Table 1**, among which, Gen X, Y and Z will be discussed in this research.

**Table 1.** Generations timeline.

	Veteran Generation (1925–1946)
	Baby Boom Generation (1946–1960)
	X Generation (1960–1980)
	Y Generation (1980–1995)
	Z Generation (1995–2010)
	Alpha Generation (2010+)

Source: Authors' construction on the basis of Zemke et al. (2000).

Generational theory provides a framework for understanding how different age cohorts exhibit distinct preferences and behaviours in consumer markets. Generations differ: “Different consumer segments have different preferences in terms of design, brand voice and platform.” (Osborne and Marchegiani, 2011). According to Belch and Belch (2020), generational cohorts such as Generation X, Millennials (i.e., an alternative name for Generation Y) and Generation Z demonstrate unique characteristics that influence their purchasing decisions, including perceptions of product quality, brand loyalty, and engagement with digital marketing channels. This is particularly pertinent when examining consumer preferences for cosmetics, where generational differences in attitudes towards skincare ingredients and brand authenticity play a significant role (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2015). This framework categorizes generations based on shared experiences, values and technological advancements, influencing their attitudes towards products such as cosmetics. For instance, Baby Boomers, raised during periods of economic growth, tend to prioritize product quality and brand reputation in their purchasing decisions (Minton and Schneider, 1980). In contrast, Millennials and Generation Z consumers, characterized by digital nativism and environmental consciousness, gravitate towards products that align with their values of sustainability and ethical sourcing (Deloitte, 2020). Chinese consumers differ from western consumers with regard to generational change. X generation grew up in comparatively modest surroundings with few consumer goods, especially those from overseas. Y generation lived through the opening of the Chinese market and the emergence of international products into everyday life. Subsequent generations have grown up in an increasingly strong and confident China and have become familiar with comparing and evaluating different international consumer goods from a position of knowledge and ability to buy.

## **2.2. Thai cosmetics**

According to the Thai Trade Center (2024), Thai cosmetics encompass a wide range of products that blend traditional Thai herbal remedies with modern skincare innovations, emphasizing natural ingredients like turmeric and jasmine to enhance beauty and wellness. Additional information collected from the Thai Cosmetic Manufacturers Association (2022) outlines Thai cosmetics as encompassing skincare, haircare, and beauty products that incorporate natural Thai ingredients known for their therapeutic and cosmetic benefits, catering to both domestic and international markets. What is more, Thai cosmetics also include makeup products enriched with natural ingredients such as rice bran oil and aloe vera, catering to consumer preferences for products that enhance beauty while nourishing the skin (Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, 2023). According to the Department of International Trade Promotion (DIPT, 2022), the export value of cosmetics, soaps, and acne treatment products totaled USD 3254.08 million, reflecting robust growth of 6.59% from the preceding year. Forecasts in 2023 suggest that by 2030, the value of the Thai cosmetics market will exceed USD 10 billion, with a consistent yearly growth rate of 5.0% since 2022. The natural ingredients and high-cost performance of Thai cosmetic products meet the needs of Chinese consumers (Dong and Wu, 2019).

### **2.3. Generational differences in Chinese consumer behaviour**

Current research indicates that generational cohorts in China exhibit distinct preferences shaped by cultural, economic, and technological factors. Millennials and Generation Z consumers are more likely to prioritize transparency in ingredient sourcing and ethical production practices, driven by heightened environmental consciousness and social media influence (Chin and Wang, 2017). In the later period, older generations such as baby boomers and Generation X may emphasize product efficacy and brand heritage when making purchasing decisions (Gu and Chan, 2020). These generational nuances underscore the need for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with diverse consumer segments within the Chinese market.

### **2.4. Consumer preferences in the global cosmetics market**

The global cosmetics industry has witnessed significant growth, driven by evolving consumer preferences towards natural and sustainable products (Ding et al., 2018). Within this context, Chinese consumers represent a key demographic, increasingly favouring international brands that offer perceived benefits such as advanced formulations and cultural appeal (Chan and Li, 2019). This trend underscores the importance of understanding how generational cohorts within China differ in their preferences for cosmetics, including their reception of Thai cosmetics known for their botanical ingredients and traditional beauty practices. Thai cosmetics, renowned for their botanical extracts and traditional beauty secrets, resonate well with Chinese consumers seeking authenticity and efficacy in skincare and beauty products (Wang and Kim, 2016). According to Retail Asia (2024), for Gen Xers, 67% still enjoy watching beauty product content but their interest in makeup is declining. Also, Gen Zs want brands with positive messages, whilst Gen Xers look for cosmetic products offering skincare benefits. Price and product characteristics ranked the highest among the daughters' and mothers' considerations in purchasing cosmetics, showing that the daughters had adopted their mothers' behaviour and thinking in product selection. The extended family also influenced the daughters' choice of cosmetics brands because of the close-knit community (Ting, 2020).

### **2.5. Cultural influences and cross-cultural consumer behaviour**

Cross-cultural studies underscore the impact of cultural dimensions on consumer preferences and behaviour. In China, collectivist values and cultural heritage significantly influence perceptions of beauty and skincare products, including those imported from Thailand (Lee and Chen, 2018). Thai cosmetics leverage these cultural preferences by highlighting natural ingredients and holistic wellness, aligning with Chinese consumers' desire for products that enhance both physical appearance and overall well-being (Rahimi and Naderpajouh, 2020a, 2020b).

### **2.6. Research gap**

It would be beneficial to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the distinct preferences, motivations and purchasing behaviours of Chinese Millennials, Generation Z and Generation X towards Thai cosmetics. This would help inform the formulation of targeted marketing strategies and the development of innovative

products. More studies focusing on distinct preferences, motivations, and buying behaviors of each generation towards Thai cosmetics could provide deeper insights into market segmentation strategies. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of exploration into how cultural values, the influence of digital media and evolving societal norms shape each generation's adoption of Thai cosmetics. Bridging these gaps could help to foster a more intricate comprehension of consumer behaviour in the cosmetics industry and guide future research efforts in this area. Hence this study attempts to relate intergenerational Chinese consumers' decisions to use Thai cosmetics based on this theoretical framework.

### **3. Methodology**

This study applied a qualitative approach integrating multiple methods to gather and analyze data on consumer preferences across different generational cohorts regarding Thai cosmetics for Chinese women tourists. Firstly, the researchers observed buyers' natural behaviours and interactions for a period of time. Dynamic perspectives of consumers behaviours were shared, collected and compared through focus group participation. Finally, in-depth interviews deeply explored individual experiences, motivations and perceptions on preferences concerning Thai cosmetics. Purposive sampling allowed for a diverse range of perspectives while maintaining depth in responses. A sample size of 50 participants for all groups was achieved, thereby ensuring representation across various demographic characteristics like age, geographic location, various work categories and shopping behaviours. This helped ensure the sample overall was not too homogeneous in nature and tackled non-response bias caused by any characteristic. All participants had Mandarin Chinese as their first language and many were willing to converse in English.

Since Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, and Chiang Mai are the main destinations for Chinese tourists in Thailand, participants were recruited mainly from these four regions through diverse channels including online forums, social media platforms and e-commerce communities to ensure a comprehensive representation for Chinese tourists in Thailand. This recruitment strategy aimed to capture a variety of experiences and viewpoints regarding buying Thai cosmetics interactions.

#### **3.1. Research design**

The observation technique directly assesses events, processes, behaviour or other phenomena during which respondents are observed in a natural environment (Pandey and Pandey, 2015) Observational methods were utilized to capture spontaneous participants' purchasing behaviour and interactions with Thai cosmetic products in natural settings, such as retail environments. The researchers conducted non-participant observations over a specified period for two weeks from the beginning of April 2024. Settings included cosmetics counters and beauty stores in which many Thai cosmetics are provided.

Taylor (2024) described focus groups as involving bringing a group of people together to provide feedback on a product. Focus group discussions (FGDs) act to gather qualitative data among Millennials and Generation X participants and providing valuable insights into their varying perceptions of Thai cosmetics, highlighting

differences in product expectations and brand preferences (Brown and White, 2019). In the second stage, focus groups provided a forum for participants to discuss, debate and compare their preferences, attitudes and behaviours towards Thai cosmetics in a group setting. Separate focus groups were conducted for each generational cohort to facilitate dynamic interactions and group discussions.

In-depth interviews generally consist of open-ended questions, making them ideal for collecting meaningful data about a product or service (Taylor, 2024). In-depth interviews were conducted with Chinese female consumers across different generational cohorts to explore their attitudes towards and experiences with Thai cosmetics, revealing nuanced preferences influenced by cultural values and beauty ideals (Smith and Jones, 2017). In the third stage, which is the main research part, in-depth interviews aimed to explore participants' personal experiences, values, and perceptions related to purchasing Thai cosmetics in a detailed and nuanced manner. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with participants from each generational cohort to explore and verify factors that caused these different preferences.

### **3.2. Sampling strategy**

In a 1998 study, Perry asserted that a minimum sample size of 15 dyads is sufficient for in-depth interviews. Another consumer behaviour study employing in-depth interviews (Jiao and Wei, 2019) had a sample size of only 15 participants, and they cited Boddy in 2016 to explain that in-depth qualitative research with a small sample size can be "... highly informative and meaningful in representing the picture of the whole population under review." It is important to note that the sample size may not be large enough to allow for the findings to be generalized to other settings. Nevertheless, it offered some insights into the evolving patterns of Chinese female consumers in relation to Thai cosmetics, particularly in contexts comparable to the present study.

Observations focused on identifying patterns in consumer preferences, product evaluations, and decision-making processes. It did not have a specific number of participants, however, as long as Chinese consumers were in the certain stores will be involved. The researchers observed and recorded detailed behaviours, such as product browsing, interactions with sales personnel and discussions with peers or family members.

Focus group participants were recruited based on their interest and involvement in using or considering Thai cosmetics, ensuring a balanced representation across age groups. A total of 45 participants from 5 focus groups were selected in Thailand. The subgroup participants were 9 Chinese women from each age group.

For the in-depth interviews, participants were selected purposively to ensure diversity across generational cohorts and varying levels of engagement with Thai cosmetics. A total of 150 participants were collected in Thailand. Specifically, the interview participants were 50 Chinese women from Generation X group (1960–1980), 50 Chinese women from Generation Y group (1980–1995), and 50 women from Generation Z group (1995–later years) respectively.

### **3.3. Data collection**

In-person observations in Thai cosmetics shops lasted for two weeks from 1 April 2024. Certain data about the current market situation gained by observing cosmetics shops, stands and shelves of various brands and consumers from convenience stores (7–11), shopping mall outlets (Eveandboy, Beautrium, Watsons), department stores and standalone beauty shops in Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket and Chiang Mai. These locations are popular with Chinese tourists and are often visited.

Data collection in the focus groups began with recruiting participants who met the study's criteria and obtaining informed consent. In this research, 9 participants in each focus group (5 groups) were involved for 60 min in total and were scheduled for the second week of May in 2024. Subgroups of respondents included overseas purchasing agents, sales assistants, college students, tourists, private personnel and internet celebrities.

In-depth interviews were based on purposive sampling, with screening questions posed via WeChat (a ubiquitous social media platform for Chinese people). Once the target respondent met the required criteria, the researcher contacted the individual for a detailed follow-up survey, during which an in-depth interview was scheduled from the third week of May in 2024. Interviews were conducted both in person and virtually, depending on participant preferences and logistical feasibility. Besides, each interviews lasted approximately 20 min per person in the in-depth interview period. An interview guide and discussion protocol were developed based on key themes identified from the literature review and pilot testing. Open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to using Thai cosmetics and how their generational background influences their preferences. A detailed list of the interview questions used in this study can be found in the Appendix, which provides further insight into the scope and nature of the inquiry.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

During the observational period, a range of techniques was employed to record the interactions of Chinese consumers with Thai cosmetics products, including video recording with a GoPro, field notes, and mystery shopping. Chinese-English interpretation was managed with the assistance of qualified linguistic experts.

Detailed field notes were taken during observations. The objectives were:

- 1) To determine how consumers interact with Thai cosmetic products (e.g., browsing, testing, purchasing).
- 2) Investigate environmental factors such as store atmosphere and promotional displays influencing consumer decisions.
- 3) Explore consumer engagement with store staff, promotional materials and other customers.

Photographs and screenshots (where applicable and ethically permissible) supplied field notes to provide visual context. These techniques enabled the observation of how Chinese consumers interact directly with Thai cosmetics products, make purchase decisions and navigate retail environments.

Focus group sessions were moderated to encourage open dialogue and exploration of shared and differing perspectives. Thematic analysis involved an

iterative process including familiarization with data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and reporting final findings. This methodology provided nuanced insights into consumer preferences and attitudes towards Thai cosmetics purchasing experiences. The researchers discovered deeper understandings and shaped macro concepts of different generational consumers preferences on Thai cosmetics.

In this research, in-depth interviews, exclusion of invalid samples to prepare generate data, and content analysis, discourse analysis and direct quotes used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis was done methodically and iteratively with Nvivo. The process began with carefully reviewing the literature's findings and transcribing interviews while carefully examining the transcripts. Initially, codes were developed to represent specific terms, expressions, or ideas pertaining to the intergenerational differences on Chinese female preferences. These codes were combined into potential themes for the discovery of recurring patterns within the data set. Themes were refined through a continuous comparison process that examined similarities and differences to guarantee coherence and consistency. To ensure the thematic analysis's rigour and credibility, accuracy and transparency were upheld at every stage. To ensure consistency in the coding and theme development, inter-code reliability checks were conducted. Additionally, data saturation was reached, indicating that themes had been thoroughly examined until no new information could be extracted from the data (Morshed, 2020).

### **3.5. Ethical standards**

Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Names have been withheld in reporting findings to maintain participant anonymity. The researchers strived to minimize harm and ensure participants were informed detailed information about the study's objectives, voluntary participation and data handling before the interview. Respondents were told they could withdraw from the process at any time.

## **4. Results**

Qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into how cultural perceptions and peer influences shape the preferences of Chinese female consumers towards Thai cosmetics (Fong, 2018; Lam et al., 2012). In-depth interviews revealed that older Chinese female consumers prioritize product efficacy and brand reputation when choosing Thai cosmetics, whereas younger generations emphasize natural ingredients and sustainability (Wong and Li, 2019). Focus groups conducted with Chinese millennials indicated a strong preference for Thai cosmetics that align with their digital lifestyles and desire for personalized beauty solutions (Chang and Wu, 2020). These preferences are often influenced by their social media interactions and peer recommendations (Chen and Chang, 2019).

Based on data shows in **Table 2**, our total respondents are equally divided between Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z with a total of 150 respondents.



Four categories of Thai cosmetics that are commonly used and purchased by Chinese female have been selected for the study. They are: skincare; make-ups; haircare and bodycare.

**Table 2.** Respondents’ breakdown by age group.

Gen-X	50	33.3%
Gen-Y	50	33.3%
Gen-Z	50	33.3%
Total	150	100%

In **Table 3**, most Chinese women purchased Thai make-up as their first choice (72.7%). The second-largest segment, comprising 106 respondents (70.7%), indicated haircare as their preferred choice among Thai cosmetics. Meanwhile skincare was chosen by 101 respondents (67.3%) and bodycare products were lowest (58%).

**Table 3.** Usage of cosmetics categories by generation.

Category	Skincare (facial)		Make-up		Haircare		Bodycare	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	<b>101/150</b>	<b>67.3%</b>	<b>109/150</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>106/150</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>87/150</b>	<b>58.0%</b>
Gen-X	41/50	82%	20/50	40%	37/50	74%	25/50	50%
Gen-Y	37/50	74%	41/50	82%	33/50	66%	32/50	64%
Gen-Z	23/50	46%	48/50	96%	36/50	72%	30/50	60%

The older group tends to place more emphasis on skincare products among all the beauty categories. Gen X participant number 5 said: “When you’re young and your skin is beautiful and supple, you tend to care less, so you can buy a basic moisturizer or cleanser and so many coloured make-ups. As you age and we are ageing the skincare you use becomes more important. It’s very visible when you don’t use skincare that is suitable for your skin.”

For coloured make-up, this was most popular in the youngest group and least popular in the oldest. Generation Z shows a high level of engagement with makeup, often using it as a form of self-expression and creativity. Millennials tend to use makeup more regularly compared to Gen X, integrating it into daily self-care and social routines. Generation X does use makeup but tends to favour a more natural look.

For haircare, there was very little difference in usage by all three groups.

Overall, generation X’s favorites cosmetics are anti-aging products (serums, creams, and treatments targeting wrinkles, anti-aging properties, and skin firmness) and moisturizers (hydrating creams and lotions for mature skin) Examples generated from interviews: people from this group preferred brands that combine traditional Thai ingredients with a good and established brand reputation (e.g., Mistine, Snail White, Srichand and Siam Botanicals).

Generation Y look for skincare with multiple benefits (e.g., products that combine hydration and brightening) and makeup with skincare benefits (BB creams, cushion foundations and tinted moisturizers that offer coverage and skincare benefits in one). They have a preference for brands that emphasize sustainability, ethical

sourcing, and ingredient transparency (e.g., Cathy Doll, Namu Life, Snail White, Cupcake and Belo Essentials).

Generation Z is more influenced by social media and online tutorials and has a preference for personalized skincare routines and DIY beauty treatments. Products with novel ingredients or formulations that cater to specific skin concerns like acne or sensitivity are also popular. Additionally, they favour expressive make-up in bold colours and unique textures in makeup products, including lip tints, colourful eyeshadows, and highlighters (e.g., Baby Bright, Into You and Cathy Doll).

After generating **Table 4** from the actual qualitative interview responses, it can be seen that a considerable portion of respondents from each generation has chosen Thai cosmetics as gifts. The analysis and summaries indicate that the preference for gifting Thai cosmetics varies among the generations, with each showing a unique inclination towards specific types of products that align with their generational values and interests. This suggests that Thai cosmetics are not only popular for personal use but are also considered suitable and appealing as gifts among Chinese female tourists.

**Table 4.** Purchase of Thai cosmetics as gifts.

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Purchased as Gifts (Yes)</b>	<b>Purchased as Gifts (No)</b>
Gen-X	10	40
Gen-Y	23	27
Gen-Z	36	14

Generation X tourists show a moderate interest in gifting Thai cosmetics, which could be attributed to their preference for established brands and product efficacy. Specific brands were mentioned during the interview, they were those with a reputation for quality and reliability, such as Mistine or Snail White, which are known for their anti-aging, wrinkles and moisturizing products.

23 out of 50 respondents from Gen Y have purchased Thai cosmetics as gifts for their families or friends, this generation shows a higher inclination towards purchasing Thai cosmetics as gifts, due to their interest in skincare products with multiple benefits and makeup that offers skincare benefits. Brands that emphasize sustainability, organic ingredients, and ethical sourcing, like Cathy Doll, Her Hyness or Namu Life, are popular choices.

72% respondents from Gen Z have purchased Thai cosmetics as gifts. Generation Z has the highest rate of purchasing Thai cosmetics as gifts, reflecting their interest in innovative products, trends, and social media influences. Brands that offer personalized skincare routines and unique beauty experiences, such as Baby Bright or Into You, are favored by this group.

#### **4.1. Generational differences in product preferences**

Generation Z: Younger consumers showed a strong inclination towards innovative products and new trends in beauty and skincare. They are heavily influenced by social media platforms where trends are rapidly disseminated, making them more likely to experiment with new brands and products. Also, this group tends

to embrace diversity and global influences, viewing Thai cosmetics as exotic and trendy, often being attracted by unique ingredients and packaging.

Generation Y: Consumers in this age group exhibit a balanced approach, valuing both traditional quality standards and modern innovations in cosmetics. They are more likely to stick with trusted brands that have a reputation for reliability, effectiveness and safety. Many in this group were working professionals who prioritize skincare routines and were willing to invest in products that align with their career and personal lifestyles.

Generation X: Older consumers prioritize proven efficacy and safety of cosmetics, often preferring established brands with a long-standing reputation. They may have a preference for Thai cosmetics that align with traditional Chinese beauty standards and cultural values, such as using natural ingredients and holistic approaches. Compared to younger generations, they may rely less on social media and more on personal recommendations and traditional media for information on cosmetics.

## **4.2. Cultural influences**

Cultural influences such as beauty standards, ingredient preferences and brand perception influence consumer preferences.

Beauty standards vary widely across generations. Younger generations often prioritize youthful appearances, seeking products that promise to prevent or reduce signs of aging by moisturizing, basic needs and fine lines. In contrast, older generations may embrace natural aging processes and value products that enhance skin health and radiance without necessarily focusing on anti-aging claims.

Ingredient preferences often reflect cultural heritage and generational differences. Older generations may value traditional ingredients with historical significance in skincare, such as herbal extracts or natural oils used in cultural beauty rituals. Younger generations are more influenced by global trends and technological advancements and are more likely to be influenced by brands that are innovative, trendy and socially responsible. They are often early adopters of new brands and products endorsed by influencers or popularized on social media platforms.

## **4.3. Purchase behaviour**

Generation X consumers typically prioritize value and quality over price alone. They are influenced by product promotion and enthusiastic service in-store compared with younger generations. They are more willing to invest in products that offer proven efficacy and reliability, especially when it comes to anti-aging and skincare solutions. They tend to exhibit strong brand loyalty based on trust and familiarity. Generation X values brands with a long-standing reputation for delivering consistent results and may stick to their preferred brands over time. Attributes such as anti-aging benefits, dermatologist-tested formulations, and natural ingredients are particularly appealing. They look for products that address specific concerns like wrinkles, sagging skin, and age spots, seeking visible results and long-term benefits.

Millennials are more price-sensitive compared to Generation X. They seek value for money and are willing to explore various brands and products to find affordable options that meet their skincare and makeup needs. While millennials can be brand

loyal, they are also open to trying new brands and products. They value brands that align with their values of sustainability, ethical practices, and ingredient transparency. Skincare products that offer multi-functional benefits, such as hydration, brightening, and anti-aging properties, resonate well. Makeup products with skincare benefits, like BB creams and tinted moisturizers, are popular for their convenience and dual functionality.

Generation Z is highly price-sensitive and tends to prioritize affordability when making purchasing decisions. They are more likely to compare prices and seek budget-friendly options without compromising on quality. Generation Z is less brand loyal than older generations. They are influenced by social media, online reviews, and peer recommendations, making them more inclined to switch brands based on current trends and influencers. They favour products that cater to specific skin concerns like acne, sensitivity, or oily skin. Innovative and trendy products, often endorsed by social media influencers, hold appeal. They value products that align with their personal style and self-expression.

By incorporating specific context and quotes into qualitative insights in **Table 5**, how generational differences shape Chinese female consumers’ preferences for Thai cosmetics were explained. These insights provide valuable understanding for cosmetic brands aiming to cater to diverse consumer needs and preferences in the Chinese market, emphasizing the importance of cultural authenticity, product efficacy and digital engagement strategies.

**Table 5.** Results generated after analysis of in-depth interviews.

Theme	Description
Theme 1: Perception of Product Efficacy	<p>Different generational cohorts exhibit varying perspectives on the efficacy of Thai cosmetics, influenced by their cultural background, personal experiences and expectations from skincare products.</p> <p>Quote 1 (Millennial Participant Number 12): “I prefer Thai cosmetics because they emphasize natural ingredients. It’s not just about looking good; It’s about feeling good knowing that what I’m using is good for my skin and the environment.”</p> <p>Quote 2 (Generation X Participant Number 34): “For me, the effectiveness of the product is crucial. I look for brands that have a reputation for delivering visible results over time. That reliability is more important than trends.”</p>
Theme 2: Cultural Authenticity and Appeal	<p>Cultural authenticity plays a significant role in the preferences of Chinese female consumers across different age groups. Younger generations often value products that resonate with authentic cultural elements, while older generations may prioritize brands with a history of quality and reliability.</p> <p>Quote 1 (Generation Z Participant Number 29): “I’m drawn to Thai cosmetics that incorporate traditional Thai ingredients and practices. It’s not just about skincare; It’s about connecting with a culture that values natural beauty—It represents Thai culture as an excellent gift to families and friends.”</p> <p>Quote 2 (Generation X Participant Number 20): “I trust brands that have been around for a long time and have a reputation for quality. Whether it’s about natural ingredients or cultural influence, authenticity matters in my choice of cosmetics.”</p>
Theme 3: Social Media Influence and Trends	<p>The influence of social media and digital platforms on consumer preferences is evident across generational cohorts. Younger consumers often look to influencers and online reviews for product recommendations, while older generations may rely more on personal recommendations and traditional advertising.</p> <p>Quote 1 (Millennial Participant Number 18): “I discover new Thai cosmetics through influencers I follow on social media. Their reviews and recommendations play a big role in my purchasing decisions - the most popular Juicy Tomato Water Lip Gel Tint under Baby Bright brand is endorsed by the famous Thai Star Baifern.”</p> <p>Quote 2 (Generation X Participant Number 36): “I prefer to read reviews from trusted sources before trying a new product. Social media can be overwhelming, but I appreciate honest opinions from people I trust— suggestions from daughters, friends or grandkids.”</p>

## **5. Discussion**

It is apparent that there are genuine differences between the generational groups as expressed by the consumer behaviour demonstrated. As previously noted, generations are groups shaped by commonly shared events, which tend to have a similar impact on their way of thinking (Mannheim, 1927). The extent of a generation varies in terms of time and space. In this case, the way that Chinese women adorn their faces and bodies with cosmetics has important implications for their sense of identity and agency. If the Maoist period was one of austerity and conformity and the post-Mao period one of the creations of the Chinese housewife and, her counterpart, the flower vase (Hooper, 1998), then new generations are enjoying the post-post-Mao period in which they have a great deal more agency over their appearance and the ways that they define their appearance, in addition to their attitudes towards personal health and hygiene. They are, to some extent, then, recreating themselves with a greater level of authenticity than has been possible before.

It is also noticeable that products from overseas, Thailand in this case, are drawn into the world of Chinese things and measured accordingly—the exotic is transformed into the familiar and so become more acceptable even to less adventurous consumers. This process would have been familiar to Bourdieu. It is notable that it is the youngest group that is not only most likely to warm to the exotic but to rely on new and innovative media to inform them of new products and product types.

Overall, the willingness of Chinese consumers to embrace products from other countries is a symbol of the power of globalization. Cosmetics are quite high-context products with which users may have intimate relationships. Further, Chinese culture has for many years developed local and Sino-specific solutions for all issues relating to the physical body. At the time of writing, there are reasons to be concerned that globalization may slow or even, in some cases, be reversed. In terms of consumer behaviour, it remains to be seen whether loyalty to overseas brands will continue to fuel purchases or whether the Thai producers will need to embed themselves more deeply into Chinese society in order to continue the success they have achieved with Chinese women.

## **6. Implications for marketing and industry**

The implications of these findings for marketing strategies targeting Chinese female consumers are profound. Tailored approaches that acknowledge generational preferences and cultural nuances are essential for successful market penetration and consumer engagement. Strategies include personalized marketing campaigns, product diversification aligned with generational preferences, and leveraging digital platforms to reach younger demographics. These dynamics not only could enhance market competitiveness but also foster brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction in the competitive landscape of Thai cosmetics for Chinese women. Understanding the generational differences in preferences for Thai cosmetics holds significant implications for marketing strategies and product development in the Chinese market.

Cosmetic brand managers can tailor marketing campaigns to resonate with the values and preferences of different generational cohorts. For example, highlighting natural ingredients and sustainability efforts may appeal to Millennials and Generation

Z, while emphasizing product efficacy and reliability could attract Generation X. There is an opportunity for brands to innovate by incorporating traditional Thai ingredients and cultural elements into their product lines, catering to the growing demand for authenticity among younger consumers. This approach not only meets consumer expectations but also differentiates brands in a competitive market. Given the influence of social media, brands should leverage digital platforms to engage with consumers, share authentic brand stories, and foster community interaction. Collaborations with influencers and user-generated content can amplify brand visibility and credibility among tech-savvy consumers.

## **7. Conclusion**

The qualitative findings revealed several key themes that shed light on the factors influencing Chinese female consumers' preferences for Thai cosmetics: Perception of product efficacy, Cultural authenticity and appeal, and social media influence.

Younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z) showed a stronger preference for innovative and trendy Thai cosmetic products compared to older generations (Gen X), who prioritize traditional beauty standards and product safety. Cultural factors such as the symbolism of ingredients and the perception of Thai beauty standards significantly influenced the product preferences of Chinese female consumers across all generational cohorts. Millennials and Gen Z demonstrated a higher propensity for purchasing Thai cosmetics online, driven by their familiarity and comfort with e-commerce platforms, whereas older generations will prefer purchasing in-store for a tactile shopping experience. Brand loyalty among Gen X was stronger compared to Millennials and Gen Z, who are more likely to switch brands based on peer recommendations and online reviews for Thai cosmetics. Marketing strategies utilizing social media influencers was more effective in engaging Millennials and Gen Z compared to traditional advertising methods, which resonate more with older generations when promoting Thai cosmetics.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The findings are based on a specific demographic of Chinese female consumers and may not be fully representative of all consumer groups or regions within China. Future research could explore regional variations, broader demographic factors, and longitudinal trends to capture evolving consumer preferences over time. Consumer preferences and trends in cosmetics can evolve rapidly due to changing fashion trends, technological advancements and marketing strategies. This study captures preferences at a specific point in time and may not reflect long-term trends or shifts in consumer behaviour over time. On the other hand, limitations inherent in this study included the scope confined to the chosen sample size, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to a broader population. There is, also, a clear need for studies that address demand by men for beauty products and for gift buying behaviour by men of cosmetics.

Future research is required to broaden and deepen the findings of this paper. Is the cosmetics sector different from others in the minds of Chinese women? Do cosmetics represent an intimate form of self-care and agency or are the findings germane to a wider range of consumption behaviours?

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview Questions**

Semi-structured interview guide

Scanning questions. Have you used or purchased Thai cosmetics?

If “Yes,” then continue the interview. Also, describe your experience with them?

### **Background and General Preferences:**

What Thai cosmetics products do you use currently?

What Thai brands do you use for each of the cosmetics products?

Where did you purchase these Thai cosmetics in the past?

### **Awareness and Knowledge of Thai Cosmetics:**

How did you first become aware of these Thai cosmetic brands?

Have you ever purchased any Thai cosmetics for friends and families as gifts?

If your answer is “yes,” which of the Thai cosmetics that you purchased?

Why did you purchase this Thai brand? (Culture, natural or purchasing satisfaction)

If your answer is “no,” why do you not purchase Thai Cosmetics?

### **Purchase Decision Making:**

What factors influence your decision to try or purchase a new product?

How much do social media platforms influence your choice of Thai cosmetics?

### **Brand Loyalty and Trust:**

Are there specific skincare or cosmetic brands you are loyal to? Why or why not?

Are there emerging trends or innovations in the cosmetic industry that interest you?

Would you repurchase Thai cosmetics? If “Yes,” then which one?