A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING
THE ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY
IN THAILAND AND SOUTH KOREA:
FOCUSED ON MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL
BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1990S

BY

JIYEON MIN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS (ASEAN STUDIES)
PRIDI BANOMYONG INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2023
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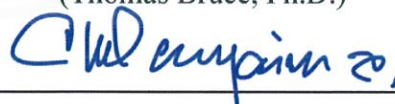the degree of Master of ARTS (ASEAN STUDIES)

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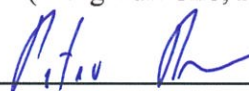Chairman   _____
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Thesis Title	A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN THAILAND AND SOUTH KOREA: FOCUSED ON MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1990S
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ABSTRACT

Today, homosexuality has broadened beyond sexual issues and is expanding its influence in politics, economy, society, and culture worldwide by developed media platforms. The acceptance of homosexuality varies across regions and countries, and the factors influencing it are also diverse. Particularly, this thesis aims to explore why the level of acceptance towards homosexuality differs between Thailand and South Korea, two Asian countries with developed media industries. It seeks to identify the factors that influence the acceptance of homosexuality and understand the underlying reasons behind these differences.
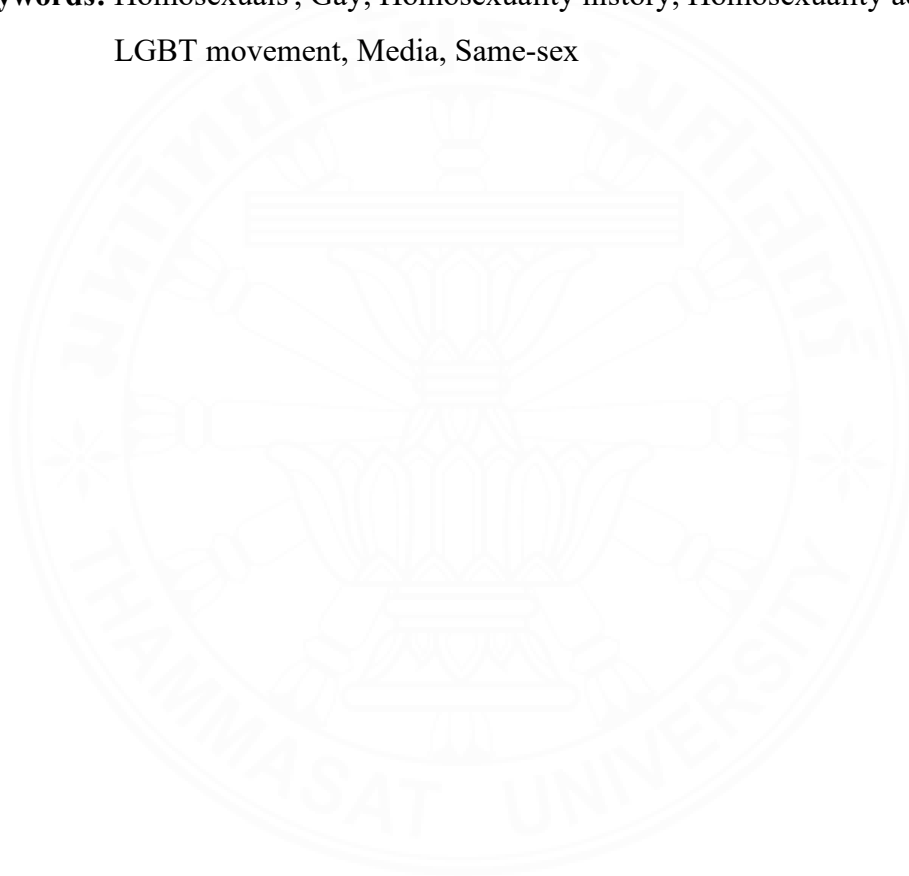
This study is divided into two parts, examining the history of homosexuality in Thailand and South Korea before and after the 1990s. The 1990s marked a pivotal time for gay rights globally, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of developed media environments, both online and offline.

The thesis primarily relies on a literature analysis and adopts a comparative approach to investigate the religion, homosexuality portraited in media, national policies, and the LGBT movement in Thailand and Korea. The research draws upon a

range of sources, including history books, research reports, dissertations, opinion polls, news articles from various media outlets, and data obtained from internet sources.

The ultimate goal of this study is to promote mutual cultural understanding by comparing the historical portrayal of homosexuality in the media between two countries before and after the 1990s, with a focus on identifying factors that influence the acceptance of homosexuality.

Keywords: Homosexuals , Gay, Homosexuality history, Homosexuality acceptance, LGBT movement, Media, Same-sex

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Background of the Study

Homosexuality is a controversial issue historically, and the world is divided between advocating and opposing on homosexuality. 67 countries worldwide consider homosexuality illegal and impose penalties for it (Carbonaro, 2022), including an anti-gay law that carry the threat of a life sentence or even the death penalty. On the contrary, since the Netherlands allowed same-sex marriage for the first time in the world in 2001, 34 countries around the world have legalized same-sex marriage as of 2022 (Wikipedia, 2023). Recently, the U.S. State Department decided to allow people to apply for passports by gender, without having to verify their medical records. Over the past decade, there has been significant progress in sexual minority rights, with same-sex marriage and other protections gaining widespread acceptance. As the world progresses towards democratization, economic development, and the improvement of human rights, there are certain regions that have exhibited a greater acceptance of homosexuality. The acceptance of homosexuality varies across regions and countries, and the factors influencing it are also diverse.

Among Asian countries, specifically, this paper explores the reasons behind the high level of acceptance towards homosexuality in Thailand, often referred to as the "LGBT paradise in Asia," and the slow progress in homosexual acceptation in Korea, despite being a developed democratic and economically advanced country. In general, media exposures following the democratic and economic development are considered to be the top reasons for changes in attitudes toward homosexuality and social minorities (Inglehart, 2006). As the world economy and democracy developed following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, the media development also grew fast as a more significant aspect of globalization. It has been widely argued that the media is now the dominant form of culture, providing materials for identity in terms of both social reproduction and change

(Kellner, 1995). Todays, it is not an exaggeration to say that the dominant values of a society are revealed through the mass media of that society (Fiske & Hartely, 1978).

This thesis aims to explore why the level of acceptance towards homosexuality differs between South Korea and Thailand, two Asian countries with developed media industries. It seeks to identify the factors that influence acceptance and understand the underlying reasons behind these differences. As South Korea (hereafter referred to as "Korea") has undergone significant developments in its economy, democratization, and media, it was anticipated that Korea would follow the high rates of homosexuality observed in Western countries (Barker, 2021). Additionally, Korea's undeniable cultural influence on the global stage as a prominent soft power in Asia, particularly through media platforms such as television, film, music, and social media, has positioned it as a significant exporter of popular culture and a thriving tourist destination since the 1990s (Chadwick, 2022). However, while Korea has recently made progress in LGBT rights, discussions surrounding homosexuality in Korean society are still considered taboo and seen as a potential threat to the prevailing social order, which emphasizes homogeneity and standardization in daily practices (Seo, 2015).

According to a survey related to the homosexuality by Dong-A newspaper, 78.5% of the respondents said they were reluctant to homosexual people in 2013 (Park, 2021) and 58% of the respondents oppose same-sex marriage in 2017 (Gallup, 2017). There were 10,000 homosexuals and about 0.07% of the population in 1996, and as of 2020, there were 130,000 homosexuals and about 0.4% (Gil, 2021). Some scholars said Confucianism and Buddhism, which have greatly influenced Asian cultures, do not openly condemn homosexuality but they emphasize traditional moral norms through social and familial hierarchical structures (Kim 1996; Molony, Theiss, and Choi 2016).

Meanwhile, Thailand is known to be more accepting of homosexuality compared to other Asian countries, with around eight percent of the Thai population, or five million people, thought to be part of the LGBT demographic (Nophakhun, 2018). According to a survey conducted in 2015 by Nida Poll: Most Thais agree with same-sex marriage by Thai PBS English News, it was found that 89% of Thai people began to accept their colleagues who identify as third gender, rather than merely tolerating them and 80% of respondents expressed that they would not mind if their

family members identified as LGBT, and 59% were in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage in 2015 (Nal, 2020). In addition, Thailand has a highly developed media sector in Southeast Asia, with earnings of about US$ 15.3 billion from the entertainment and media market in 2018 and is expected to grow by 5.05% in 2023 (Kate, 2018).

Thailand plays a significant role as a key hub in Southeast Asia for Korea to strengthen and expand its regional soft power. It has also emerged as the largest market for Korean culture through the Korean Wave. However, despite their close cultural ties and highly developed media sectors within the Asian context, the difference in the level of acceptance towards homosexuality between the two nations remains a topic of curiosity.

As a Korean researcher have lived in Thailand for nine years, the curiosity about the factors that have led to Thailand's greater acceptance of homosexuality than Korea has sparked an interest in investigating the matter. This study takes a comparative and historical approach, examining the current moment in Thailand and Korea, with the media playing a central role in this phenomenon. The aim of this comparative analysis is to identify why Thailand has emerged as a symbol of homosexuality in Asia, while Korea remains conservative on the issue. Thus, the research seeks to delve into the history and investigate the factors that have contributed to the divergent attitudes toward homosexuality in both societies, focusing on the portrayal of homosexuality in the media as a valuable source of information and insight into societal attitudes.

1.2 Research Objective

The objectives of the study are the following:

1.2.1 Research Objective 1: To analyze and compare the historical portrayal of homosexuality in the media in Korea and Thailand before and after the 1990s, with a focus on identifying factors that influence the acceptance of homosexuality.

1.2.2 Research Objective 2: To identify and examine the factors that have contributed to the varying acceptance of homosexuality between Korea and Thailand, such as religion, national policy, legislation, and the LGBT movement. The ultimate goal is to foster mutual cultural understanding between the two nations.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study is divided into two parts, examining the history of homosexuality in Korea and Thailand before and after the 1990s. The 1990s marked a pivotal time for gay rights globally, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of developed media environments, both online and offline (Tatiana, 2015). European Parliament recommended in the 1994 Roth Report to grant full and equal rights to homosexuals and lesbians (Roth Report, 1994). Additionally, various academic disciplines have addressed topics related to sexual minorities, including queer theory, gender identity, queer culture, sexual minority rights, and related policies leading to more discussions and exploration of homosexuality in society in the 1990s (Robert A. Rhoads, 1994). This period saw the emergence of gay and lesbian groups spreading world-wide (Bong, 2008, p 223; Yoon, 2005, p. 19; Yoon, 2012, p. 193) and it also means that homosexuality was not active and not that much of related information before the 1990s.
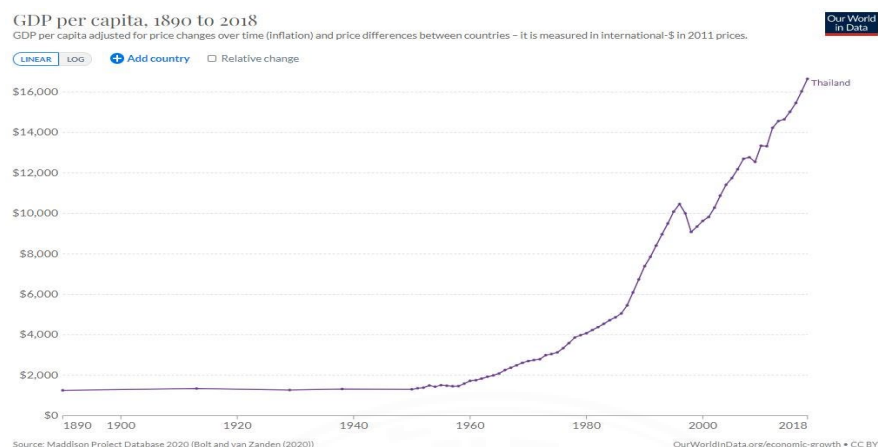
Figure 1. *GDP per Captia, 1890 to 2018 in Thailand, Source : Maddison Project Database 2020 (Bolt and van Zanden)*

According to the World Bank, Thailand experienced remarkable economic growth during the period of 1985-1994, being recognized as the world's fastest-growing economy. The real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita witnessed an average annual growth rate of 8.2 percent (Phongpaichit, 2015). Due to a combined export- and investment boom, this was worldwide the second highest growth rate after China (Richter, 2006 :7). Thailand's gay bars and magazines emerged at a time of rapid economic growth (Deininger and Squire, 1997; Pranee and Chalongpho, 1998) marked by an expansion of the Thai middle class and increasingly urban lifestyles (Funatsu and Kagoya, 2003). The magazine such as *Mithuna Junior, Neon, Morakot, Midway* developed close commercial relations with Bangkok's gay bars to produce materials for middle- class gay men in 1990s (Narupon & Jackson, 2021). This has resulted in the rise of various gay culture such as gay saunas, LGBT nightclubs and bars in Bangkok's urban areas. The Thai mass media began presenting stories about Thai gays and many types of media in Thailand have included homosexual characters since the 1990s (Lewis, 2007).

In Korea, the 1990s saw the emergence of active gay networks and the establishment of pro-homosexual organizations, gaining momentum in the new

political climate that followed the democratization process, marking the end of the military dictatorship in 1987 (Bong, 2008; Yoon, 2005, p. 13).
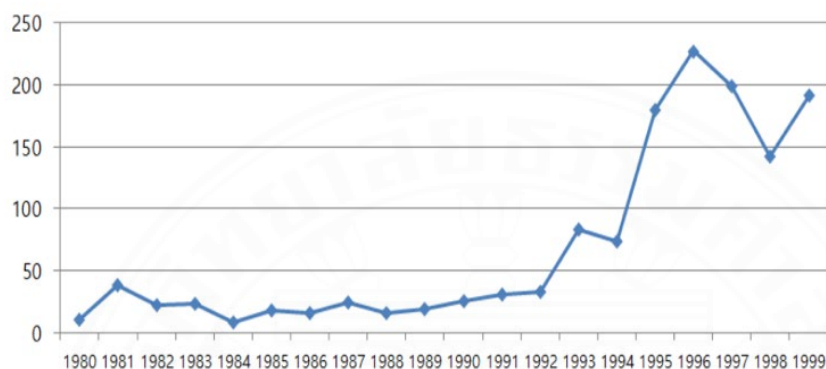
Figure 2. *Analysis of media coverage related to sexual minorities in Korea (2002), YTN newspaper*

	Period(year)	number of news coverage
1	1920-1939	32
2	1940-1959	22
3	1960-1979	190
4	1980-1999	1383
5	2000-2017	2854
	Total	**4481**

Figure 3. *Number of news coverage by period from domestic news articles extracted through Naver News Library, in Jan,1920-Dec, 2017. (Lee and Ryu, 2018), [Search Key word : homosexuality, same-sex relationships, Gay, Lesbian used by Analysis Tool R 3.4, Python 3.6]*

The first figure shows that the amount of media coverage related to homosexuality has risen sharply in Korea since 1990. The second figure shows an analysis of articles obtained from the Naver news library over the span of approximately 100 years. There has been a noteworthy surge in the frequency of news coverage regarding homosexuality during the 1980s and 1990s (Lee and Ryu, 2018). It shows that the 1990s marks an important period in South Korean society as it began to actively

discuss issues related to sexual minorities (Lee, 2017). The 1990s is an important period as it marks the emergence of the LGBT movement with 'Chodonghoei' community in South Korea in the beginning (Korea Queer Archive). During a time when coming out was challenging, solidarity and support among university students emerged and expanded, allowing previously stigmatized sexual minorities to raise their voices, furthermore, various forms of media visually represented the portrayal of homosexuality, reflecting the changing social atmosphere (Kim, 2012).

This thesis aims to examine the history of homosexuality in Thailand and Korea by comparing two distinct periods characterized by breakthrough changes in the attitudes towards homosexuality following new media development after political and economic development.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Homosexuality is not merely limited to issues concerning sexual minorities; rather, its impact extends to various fields, including politics, economy, society, and culture. Consequently, studying attitudes and the history of homosexuality in different societies is significant not only for understanding cultural differences, but also for reflecting on future changes in law, education, and family systems.

Scholars define LGBT politics as identity politics (Armstrong, 2002; Bernstein, 1997; Calhoun 1994) because LGBT activists establish organizations based on their gender identity and engage in political actions to advocate for their collective interests (Ku, 2018). In the case of Korea, the issue of homosexuality has the potential to become a significant conflict that polarizes Koreans along the ideological spectrum, similar to the way economic democratization, unification, and national security have in the past, given the apparent disparity between progressives and conservatives on this topic.

Thailand has also emerged as a hot topic within the political sphere, with political promises to pursue the legalization of same-sex marriage. This highlights the significance of homosexuality as a pressing issue within the political arena as well.

Move Forward Party reiterated a pledge to push forward with equal marriage and gender identity recognition bills in parliament recently (Siradapuvadol, 2022)

Thailand and Korea have had the most culturally and economically active exchanges now under the developed various kind of media since the establishment of diplomatic ties in the 1950s. According to the Korea Education Institute, the number of Thai students currently learning Korean as a second language is 46,446 as of 2021, the largest in the world. In Korea, over 2 million Koreans in 2019 visited Thailand for tourism before Covid-19 (Korea Tourism Organization, 2020).

A lot of Korean visitors to Bangkok have often expressed curiosity regarding the prevalence of LGBT individuals in Thailand due to differing levels of tolerance and acceptance towards homosexuality issues. However, Koreans often find it challenging to obtain accurate historical information on the reasons behind Thailand's large LGBT population. While several studies have explored homosexuality in both Thailand and Korea, few have compared the two countries with respect to this issue.

This research aims to identify factors that have contributed to differing perceptions of homosexuality in Thailand and Korea through an analysis of their respective historical moments. By examining cultural, traditional, and societal values and ways of thinking, this study seeks to promote mutual understanding between the two nations. Ultimately, the researcher hopes that this paper will strengthen the relationship between Thailand and Korea by fostering greater awareness and appreciation of each other's histories and cultures.

1.5 Research Methodology

Historical research helps us to understand why a specific social phenomenon occurred and how it developed (Llobera, 1998:75). This thesis, conducted within the field of sociology, primarily relies on a literature analysis and employs a comparative approach to investigate the history of homosexuality in Thailand and Korea. The

research draws on English and Korean history books, research reports, dissertations, opinion polls, news articles from the media, and internet site data.

Various types of media can be distinguished by their respective target audiences, content, and accessibility mechanisms. According to Baker (2014), the language used in news media is considered one of the most influential ways in which discourses can be disseminated, reinforced, or contested. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the language used in news articles as a reliable source of information (Klomkaew, 2002).

To identify relevant articles for the study, a keyword search was conducted primarily on newspaper websites and, alternatively, via Google. Keywords used included LGBT, homosexuals, gay, lesbian, homosexuality history, acceptance, traditional values, LGBT movement, media, and same-sex. This thesis focuses primarily on gay and lesbian within the LGBT context, particularly centered around male homosexuality. The decision to narrow the research scope to gay and lesbian was made in consideration of the comparative analysis between Thailand and Korea. Expanding the scope to include transgender issues would have encompassed a broader range of topics, making the comparison more challenging. Additionally, it should be noted that the transgender community in Korea is still relatively small, which further complicates the comparative analysis.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Sexuality and Homosexuality

The term 'homosexuality' is derived not from the Latin word "homo" meaning 'person' but from the Greek word "homos" meaning 'sameness,' indicating same-sex attraction between males or females (Herdt, 1988). Homosexuality is romantic attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual behavior between members of the same sex or gender (Eric B. Shiraev & David A. Levy, 2016). Throughout history, and across diverse cultures and countries, attitudes towards homosexuality have varied, with behaviors ranging from acceptance and tolerance to punishment and prohibition. Homosexual practices were not uncommon in ancient Greece and Rome, where the ancient Greeks lacked the terminology and concepts that correspond to the contemporary distinctions of "heterosexual" and "homosexual." (Foucault, 1966).

During the 19th and 20th centuries, psychologists developed various theories on the origins of homosexuality, most of whom classified it as a form of mental illness (American Psychiatric Association, 1973). The origins of homosexuality have been the subject of much debate among psychologists, with some, like Sigmund Freud, characterizing it as a result of conflicts in psychosexual development, while others have explored social influences and physiological events during fetal development as possible contributing factors. It is now widely accepted that many instances of homosexuality arise from a combination of constitutional or innate factors and environmental or social influences (Encyclopaedia, 2020).

In the 21st century, numerous societies have engaged in more candid discussions of sexuality and sexual practices. The 1960s saw a surge of these trends, paving the way for the gay liberation movement to take off in America. The increasing acceptance of homosexuality has sparked new theoretical discussions "essentialist" and "constructionist". The argument separates those who believe that labels like "gay" and "straight" correspond to objective, culturally consistent traits of individuals from those who argue that these labels are shaped by specific cultural and social factors (Foucault,

1972). Essentialists tend to hold the view that sexual preferences are influenced by biological forces, while constructionists contend that sexual desires are acquired through learning processes (Halperin & David M. ,1990).

Essentialists recognize that there can be cultural variations in the expression and interpretation of homosexuality, but they emphasize that these differences do not negate its status as a universal category of human sexual expression (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Meanwhile, Michel Foucault questioned in his book 'The History of Sexuality' the societal treatment of sexuality as an inherent truth rather than a socially constructed concept (Foucault, 1998). His theories suggest that identity is not innate, and that politics often rely on hierarchies of desire to oppress individuals. He introduced social constructions of key concepts in history, including sexuality, discipline, and theorization of power, which altogether tied new forms of power into the emergence of the modern state.

In modern settings, a perfect example of how government can effectively exercise indirect control over people is the media, whose channels are used to justify the state's needs, often coinciding with discriminatory policies, which in this case study, include state-sanctioned homophobia. (Foucault, 1988).

Foucault argues that it is crucial to examine the network of power that operates through discourse in society, not only in relation to legal matters surrounding homosexuality, but also in terms of social and cultural aspects. This includes the portrayal of homosexuality in religious teachings, sexual norms, and its representation within mainstream discourses (Singhakowinta, 2010).

In addition, two main theories regarding gender are distinguished in the literature: the biological theory and the sociological theory. The biological theory posits that sex is determined by inherent biological factors, while the sociological theory asserts that gender is shaped by cultural and societal influences. (Bodén & Hammer, 2008).

2.2 Globalization and Media related to Homosexuality

Globalization is affecting lives everywhere, and it is certainly having an impact on how people perceive their own and others' sexuality, and on how our intimate relationships are being formed (Babb, 2004). Since the 1990s, developing countries around the world have been the site of strong LGBT movements that simulate and reproduce EuroAmerican models of identity, sexuality, and citizenship (Povinelli & Chauncey, 1999). Indeed, in this world, which has recently seen an explosion of gay identities, cultures, and movements in non-European countries (Boellstorff, 2005; Rofel,2007; Wilson, 2004), queer globalization is often linked to Westernization that appears inherently transnational in nature. Embodying Western identity politics of LGBT subjects, queer communities started making efforts to obtain visibility, equal rights, and incorporation in mainstream society (Paquet, 2005). Homosexuality that is shielded from the gaze of the family, like in case of the formation of queer urban cultures in Asia, remain linked to circuits of global cultural flows (Martin 2003).

The origin of queer theory in the early 1990s happened concurrently with the pioneering research on sexuality and homosexuality related to the media. As time passed, both spheres of research started to move into online settings, researching the relationships between mass media and sexuality in general, queer sexuality specially (Stern and Handel, 2001; p, 2005). In terms of exploring the correlation between sexuality and the media, academic research can be generalized as follows.

The first category focuses on sexuality as a significant factor in shaping media culture and overall culture, alongside globalization and multiculturalism (Kenneth, 1997). Kenneth also investigates the controversies surrounding shifts in the regulation of sexual practices and their portrayal in recent decades. There is a prevalent argument that the media has become the dominant form of culture, offering resources for the construction of identity in terms of both social reproduction and transformation (Kellner, 1995). Scholars in this field discuss some dominant theories that help us understand the expression of sexuality in mass media. Some researchers have developed various evolutionary models that propose gender differences in the consumption of sexually explicit media arise from inherent variations in evolved sexual mechanisms interacting with environmental factors (Malamuth, 1996), while others

link the representation of gender and sexuality in contemporary media with the problems of social inequality (Cooky, 2010).

The second block includes texts on the history of media coverage of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex issues (Campbell, 2005); media technology and sexuality in relation to queer studies with an empirical analysis of current and historical Internet activities (O'Riordan, 2005). All these studies are concerned with homosexuality as they intersect with new media and current communication technologies.

2.3 Different Homosexuality Acceptance in Different Culture

According to Ronald Inglehart (2005), although economic development can lead to significant societal changes, a society's cultural heritage still has a significant influence in determining its development trajectory. While various cultures may be moving in a particular direction, they may not necessarily be converging; instead, they may be evolving within their own societal boundaries. Despite the growth of their economies, Asia has generally maintained a conservative attitude, with self-expressive values on the rise mostly in the industrialized world. Confucianism and Buddhism, which influenced Asian cultures, do not attack homosexuality in an overt way (Shin, 2019). Instead, they emphasize traditional moral norms through social and familial hierarchical structures. (Kim 1996; Molony, Theiss, and Choi 2016). As a result, despite significant economic growth, many Asian societies have maintained conservative attitudes towards homosexuality.

South Korea has not made significant progress in advancing gay rights, in contrast to other countries at a similar level of development despite achieving a high level of economic and democratic development (Barker, 2021). It means that Korea has not fully followed the modernization theory, which posits that economic development leads to increased secular values and democratic in society, resulting in the rise of self-expression values to homosexuality (Inglehart,1997).

Meanwhile, Thailand is less developed economically and democratically than Korea, but homosexual acceptance is more developed than Korea. This comparative

analysis aims to address the question of why Thailand has become a leader in promoting homosexuality in Asia, while South Korea has lagged. Some scholars emphasize that homosexuality is built differently in different cultural settings. Each country has experienced a rise in gay activism in the last three decades; however, the gay rights movements in Korea have not been as influential and have not resulted in significant changes. A market research and data analytics firm conducted an internet-based survey and found that 63% of Thai netizens support same-sex civil partnerships (Nal, 2020). In 2017, Bangkok was named as the second- best LGBT city in Asia (Calvin, 2018).

Meanwhile, only 38% of Korean people in 2021 has opinions in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage increased from 17% in 2001, 25% in 2013, 35% in 2019 (Korean Gallop, 2021). 73% in their 20s, 52% in 30s, and 17% in 60s and older, it was found that the lower the age, the more favorable the approval to the same-sex marriage.

The analysis of people's values and historical attitudes towards homosexuality will be used to interpret the gap between Thailand and Korea in terms of gay rights progression and social acceptance.

2.4 Factors to Attitudes toward Homosexuality

Recently, several studies have been conducted across various cultures to examine attitudes toward homosexuality (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Dastan, 2015). Most studies examining these attitudes have tried to identify the factors that determine the base of discrimination in order to improve the understanding of homosexuality. Research in the U.S. (Herek, 1991) indicates that socio-demographic characteristics of people based on gender differences, age difference, education, income, marital status, geographic region, religious beliefs result in differed attitudes toward sexual minorities. The main findings are summarized as follows.

First, a gender difference is evident in the attitudes. In general, males tend to show more negative attitudes than females do. A survey of 33 countries, including Korea, showed a clear distinction between men and women (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009), and even the World Values Survey (WVS) data of 79 countries from 1999 to 2009 showed that women were more favorable to homosexuality than were men (Jäckle &

Wenzelburger, 2015). The survey of Korean adults conducted every five years from 1994 to 2014 also revealed that men showed more negative attitudes
than did women in general (Youn, 2018).

Second, age differences played a role in the attitudes. Specifically, the older generation tended to display more negative attitudes than did the younger. The differences were similar in the survey of 33 countries, including Korea (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009), and in the WVS data (Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015). In the survey from 1994 to 2014 conducted in Korea, the older respondents had more negative attitudes (Youn, 2018). Most of the studies from the Western countries also showed that senior citizens were more negatively biased toward homosexuality (Shackelford & Besser, 2007; Smith et al., 2014; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Tolar et al., 2013; Van den Akker et al., 2013).

Third, the experience of social interaction with gay people and education about gay issues influenced the attitudes. People who have had more social interaction with gay people or had more opportunities to receive education about homosexuality showed more positive attitudes. Similar results were found in studies conducted in Hong Kong, Türkiye, the United States, Canada, and European countries (Brownlee, Sprakes, Saini, O'Hare, Kwok, Wu and Shardlow, 2013; Lingiardi et al., 2005; Sakalli, 2002; Snively, Kreuger, Stretch, Watt, & Chadha, 2004; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Tolar et al., 2004).

Fourth, socioeconomic status (SES) was a factor influencing the attitudes. For example, according to the WVS data, the lower-income group viewed homosexuality more negatively than did the higher group (Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015).

Fifth, the attitudes also differed according to the education level. In general, the higher the schooling was, the more favorable were the attitudes. This difference was consistent across most countries in the survey of 33 countries, including Korea (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). The WVS data showed similar results (Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015).

Sixth, political ideology was related to the attitudes. In general, the more conservative was a political ideology, the more negative attitudes were in several countries of South America, North America and Europe (Lingiardi et al., 2005; Shackelford & Besser, 2007; Smith et al., 2014; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Tolar et al., 2004).

Seventh, religious background played a major role in determining attitudes, and people who have strong religious beliefs often viewed homosexuality in a negative light. This was conspicuously observed in studies of Christians. That is, in the survey of 33 countries, including Korea (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009), and in studies of Christians and other religious believers in several countries of South America, North America, and Europe, religious people were more homophobic than were non -religious people. Furthermore, among religious people, those who showed stronger spirituality had more negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006; Shackelford & Besser, 2007; Smith et al., 2014; Snively et al.,2004; Tolar et al., 2004; Van den Akker et al., 2013). On the other hand, even within the same religion, the attitudes differed according to which

denomination they belonged to or how much they believed in the orthodoxy of past doctrines. Among Christians, for example, the views of Protestants and Orthodox Catholics were different (Burdette et al., 2005; Wills & Crawford, 1999; Youn, 2018).

Eighth, traditional familism influenced the attitudes. Specifically, the attitudes differed according to whether people were married, had children, or endorsed traditional gender roles. For example, people living with a spouse displayed more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than did those who had never married, were divorced, or were widowed. The attitudinal differences by marital status were similar in the survey of 33 countries, including Korea (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). The WVS data showed that the group who had children was more prejudiced against homosexuality than was the childless group (Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2015). Studies showed that people who emphasize male superiority as in traditional societies were more negative about homosexuality (Kwok, Wu and Sharlow, 2013; Van den Akker et al., 2013), and people who display strong sexism were more negative about homosexuality than were those who do not (Sakalli, 2002).

CHAPTER 3

Historical Background for Factors Influencing the
Acceptance of Homosexuality Before the 1990s

3.1 Religion

3.1.1 Thailand

Thailand has a rich and complicated history about gender and sexuality. Without the historical background, any understanding of homosexuality in Thailand would be imperfect. According to Encyclopedia of Sexuality, Thailand has been profoundly influenced by Buddhism with regards to gender and sexuality, as well as by Hinduist practice, local animistic beliefs, and popular demonology from ancient times (Factsanddetails, 2019). Buddhism, with over 95% of the population identifying as Theravada Buddhists, plays an essential role in shaping Thai identities, beliefs, traditions, and social values and attitudes. Successive Thai governments in Bangkok have utilized Buddhism as a key ideology for the country's economic development and social stability as well (Cho, 2019).

According to Harvey (2000, p.434), Buddhism has never propagated a negative view of homosexuals or advocated for their persecution. Moreover, whenever Buddhism has encountered a culture that accepts and embraces homosexuality, it has not resisted it (Bernat, 2016). The teachings of Buddhism emphasize the "Middle Way" as the path to enlightenment, promoting moderation and avoiding extremes in all aspects of life. Consequently, Buddhism has generally maintained a neutral stance on the topic of homosexuality (Cabezón, 1993, p.82).

This teaching may explain the Thai's avoidance of direct confrontation when it comes to homosexuality, which is neither illegal nor immoral according to Buddhism, the religion of the state. Thai ethical thinking is permeated by the idea of moderation, which could be seen as a way of expressing the Middle Way concept.

Moreover, the Buddhist philosophy of the Three Characteristics of Existence, namely Dukkha (Suffering), Anicca (Impermanence), and Anatta (Non-Self), may contribute to the social acceptance of sexual minorities (Richard, 1998). According to this view, gender and sexuality are perceived as fluid and not fixed categories. In Buddhist belief, individuals may reincarnate into different genders or sexualities in their subsequent lives as a result of karma, further supporting the notion of the variability and non-fixed nature of these aspects of human identity. (Singhakowinta, 2010).

In Thailand, where traditional Theravada Buddhism is practiced, it is commonly held that a person's homosexuality is rooted in their misdeeds from a past life (Jackson, 1993). These misdeeds encompass actions such as engaging in adultery, participating in prostitution, sexually abusing one's children, or displaying sexual irresponsibility, such as neglecting the care of a woman who becomes pregnant as a result of one's actions (Bunmi 1986:120- 121). This belief is reinforced by the story of Ananda of *Malalasekera* and *Abhidhammapitaka* (no reference cited) ;

> *When Ananda was born as a blacksmith he sinned with the wife of another man. As a result.he suffered in hell for a long time and was born for fourteen existences as someone's wife, 21 and it was seven existences more before his evil deed was exhausted (Malalasekera 1960:267-268).*

Prasok, a newspaper columnist writing on Buddhism, refers to this scriptural account, saying in *Siam Rath* newspaper in March, 1989;

> *In previous existences Phra Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, had been a gay or. kathoey for many hundreds of lives. In his last life he was born as a full man who was ordained and was successful in achieving arahantship three months after the Buddha attained nibbana. The reason he was born a kathoey was because in a previous life he had committed the sin of adultery. This led to him stewing in hell for tens of thousands of years. After he was freed from hell a portion of his old kamma still remained and led to him being reborn as a gay or kathoey for many hundreds of lives (Prasok 1989:10)*

This story highlights the view in traditional Theravada Buddhism that an individual's sexual orientation may be attributed to their past life karma. The story of Princess Ruja in the *Mahanara-takasapa Jataka*, where it is stated that she was born as a male homosexual in her previous life as a punishment for committing adultery (Royal Thai Buddhist Scriptures, Book 28, 1971: 263- 265). According to Jackson (2009), the Buddhist belief in karmic laws is often cited to explain the presence of homosexuality in Thailand. It is commonly believed that homosexuality is regarded because of violating prohibitions against heterosexual misconduct and is thus seen as a karmic consequence. This view portrays homosexuality as an inherent condition that cannot be altered, at least within the present lifetime of a homosexual individual.

Thus, based on Buddhist religious scriptures, texts, and teachings, it is believed that the impact of past actions (karma) resulting from such transgressions cannot be negated, and individuals must accept the consequences of their actions (Bunmi, 1986). This view is often associated with feelings of compassion and sympathy towards homosexuals, who are "unfortunate" due to their perceived lack of choice in their sexual orientation (Jackson,1999).

Buddhist Jataka scriptures, also known as the Pali Canon, contain accounts describing non-heteronormative behavior among males in Buddhism (Jackson, 2009). Specifically, four gender types are mentioned: male, female, *ubhatpbyanjanaka*, referring to hermaphrodites who possess both male and female organs, and male transvestites and *pandaka*, referring to homosexuals (Jackson, 1999). Unconsciously, the background of this type of Buddhist literature has long influenced the tolerance of Thai people towards transgender individuals and homosexuality throughout history.

Historically, Thailand is known for its inclusive society that values diversity, including different racial and ethnic groups as well as sexual minorities. This acceptance stems from the teachings of Buddhism, which emphasize harmonious and inclusive values, promoting equal respect for all beings regardless of their differences. (Winichakul, 1994). The Thai cultural traits of hospitality and generosity further exemplify this respect for diversity, fostering an atmosphere of openness that encourages tolerance towards homosexuality.

However, despite this historical influence, many older generations still prioritize the traditional heterosexual family structure as a means of upholding the family's

reputation and maintaining ethical standards in accordance with Buddhist teachings. In Thailand's patriarchal society, gender and familial roles are of utmost importance, and showing respect to one's parents is considered crucial to leading a virtuous life (UNDP, 2014). In the view of Thai's life keeping with tradition, patriarchy, gender roles, and non-confrontation, the same-sex marriages would form social problem disturbing the existing family system.

3.1.2 South Korea

By the fifth century CE, the "Three Teachings" of China, comprising Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, had made their way into Korea, intertwining with the existing institutions and culture of the region (Cawley, 2021). Korean Confucians leveraged the principles of Confucianism, particularly those promoting hierarchy and moral leadership, to establish a robust state bureaucracy and create a structured and organized societal framework (Cawley, 2021). The introduction of Confucian thought from China had a significant impact on Korean intellectual history, emerging as one of the most influential cultural influences in the region (Wikipedia : search 'Korean Confucianism).

In the East, Confucianism places great emphasis on lineage preservation, viewing marriage as a means to achieve this goal (Wang, Yang, Zhang, & Chang, 2016). According to Confucianism, homosexuality has been regarded as taboo in Korean history because it is believed to disrupt the traditional family system and social order (Kim and Hahn, 2006). The dominance of Korean values is evident in "*SamKang-Oh-Ryun*" (The Three Fundamental and Five Moral Laws), which has been a cornerstone of Korean socio-political life throughout much of the country's history. This value system has had a significant impact on family structures, ways of thinking, philosophy, and lifestyles in both ancient and modern Korea (Kim and Hahn, 2006) ;

The Sam-Kang-Oh-Ryun

–*The king is the mainstay of the state (Kun-YiShin-Kang).*
–*The father is mainstay of the son (Bu-Yi-JaKang)*
–*The husband is the mainstay of the wife (BuYi-Bu-Kang)*

–*Between father and son it requires chin (attention)*
–*Between king and courtier, eui (righteousness)*
–*Between husband and wife, pyul (deference)*
–*Between old and young, saw (elders first)*
–*Between friends, shin (faith)*

The principles outlined in The *Sam-Kang-Oh-Ryun*, with their emphasis on vertical relationships, family patriarchy, resistance to change, and family-centeredness, have had a profound impact on every aspect of Korean culture, ranging from philosophy to daily lifestyles (Kim, 2012). As a result, Korean society is often viewed as an extension of the family, which impacts ethical decision-making at the individual level through the value of 'filial piety.' This concept underscores the significance of 'the righteousness of earth and the practical duty of man' in Korean culture, serving as an integrating force within patriarchal families and ensuring the transmission of values across generations as a moral foundation (Legge, 1899).

This heterosexually oriented family system is regarded not only as an ethical virtue but also as a fundamental component of social norms within Korean Confucian society (Kim and Hahn, 2006). As a result, Korean culture, along with other Asian cultures with strong ties to Confucianism, continues to perceive homosexuality as problematic and disruptive to family traditions (Lim, 2012).

Not only Confucianism, but the influence of Buddhism has also been profound on Korean society since the arrival of Buddhism in Korea in 372 and has tens of thousands of temples built across the country (Lew, 2000). Korean Mahayana Buddhist in the past prioritize traditional values and uphold a patriarchal family structure, which could lead to a negative view of homosexuality (Kim, 2010). They may emphasize the societal norms and perceive homosexuality as conflicting with Buddhist norms. In particular, the *Jogye Order*, the largest sect of Korean Buddhism within the Mahayana tradition,

actively opposed anti-discrimination laws concerning homosexuality in 2010, viewing them as legislation that undermines traditional ideological foundations and social norms of Korean society (Kim, 2010). In summary, during the *Joseon* Dynasty (1392-1910), a code of conduct was established based on the principles of these two religions, Confucianism, Buddhism, to regulate the customs and behavior of the Korean people according to Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Korea.

During the late Joseon dynasty period, Protestantism was introduced to Korea through Christian schools and medical services. Christianity played a vital role in the struggle for independence from Japan and supported social development with a significant impact on various aspects of Korean society, including the economy, culture, and politics (Nargiz, 2022). Following democratization, Korean Christianity has emerged as a strong social and political institution, with around 30% of the country's population identifying as Christian (Pak, 2011). Since its significant propagation in the 1950s, Christianity has undergone remarkable expansion in Korea, surpassing other religions in terms of the number of followers (Pak, 2011).

In comparison to Buddhists and Catholics in Korea, Protestants tend to hold more conservative political beliefs and express more negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Nargiz, 2022). According to the Christian viewpoint, homosexuality is considered a sin and abnormal sexual behavior that goes against the structure of the human body and God's design for humankind. Hence, Christians believe that the real love would be to help to quit homosexuality and led to the correct life (Lee, 2021), which is in line with God's created order. The Bible opposes same-sex relations strongly, as seen in the following verses: "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable" (*Leviticus* 18:22) and "Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error" (*Romans* 1:26-27). Christians should follow God's word that created order only male-female relationships with their faith in the Truth.

In conclusion, while Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shamanism, and other smaller religions coexist in Korea, the religion in Korea has been characterized by a rise of Christianity and a revival of Buddhism since the division of Korea into two sovereign states (Kendall, 2009). Therefore, with the influence of Protestant and

Buddhist teaching and Confucianism as the state philosophy, homosexuality has been set as eccentric and unnatural in Korean society (Jung, 2022).

3.2 Historical Record for Homosexuality

3.2.1 Thailand

Homosexuality and transgenderism have had a long presence in Thai history. Homosexual behaviors among Thai men and women have been depicted in numerous wall murals in temples dating back to the Rattanakosin era (1782 AD – present), as well as in verbal accounts of non-heteronormative behaviors among members of the Thai Court (UNDP, 2014). There are abundant oral accounts of behaviors that deviate from heterosexual norms in Thailand, although they have not been formally documented due to being perceived as perverse and abnormal by social institutions such as the government, religious organizations, and educational establishments (UNDP, 2014).

During the Ayutthaya period (1351-1767 AD), King Trailok issued a royal decree prohibiting same-sex behaviors, known as *Lenphuean* among female and *Len-Sawat* among male courtiers. The punishment for violating this decree was 50 lashes from a leather whip, a tattoo around the neck, and being paraded around the palace walls (Terdsak, 2002). According to Ekkarong Phanuphong in his book, 'Detecting Suspicious Historical Chronicles: Sex in History', *Lenphuean* was still considered to be a common phenomenon in the royal palace despite the royal decree issued 400 years earlier. Even King *Rama* IV (reign 1851 - 1868) wrote a personal letter to his daughters warning them about the practice that ;

"Don't lenphuean with anyone. It would be better if you had a husband but remember that you should not let them swindle your money." (cited in ibid., p54)

During the early Rattanakosin period, male authors like Sunthon Phu implicitly criticized in *Singha Kraiphob* (1958: 124) the female courtiers for being overly engrossed in female homoeroticism to the point of neglecting their responsibilities (Numun, 2012 :160). While the act of *Lenphuean* was regarded as a challenge to public morality, it was not deemed a severe crime in *Siam*. Historical records do not document any punishments for members of the royal concubines in accordance with palace law, suggesting that homosexuality was not viewed as a serious offense during that time. According to the personal journal of Harris Townsend, an American Ambassador to *Siam* during the reign of King *Rama* IV in 1856, this leniency towards such behavior was due to the high value placed on maintaining social harmony and avoiding public scandal (Singhakowinta, 2010):

"Lenphuean is very common as if it were an animal instinct. There is no severe, punishment for engaging in it. It has never been punished, with exception in cases of monks." (quoted by Anek Nawikkamun 1999: 41, cited in ibid., p. 54)

Thai laws did not classify consensual sexual activities between people of the same sex as crimes prior to the beginning of Siamese modernization with the exception of the prohibition and punishment against *Lenphuean* in the royal court, as well as *Lensawa*t among Buddhist monks (Singhakowinta, 2010). Male homosexuals, particularly those who were monks, were often compelled to renounce their monastic status, despite the fact that they were the ones who were seen as tarnishing the sanctity of Buddhism in Chronicles of the Reign of King Rama II (Skinner, 1999). During this time, there are no official records of punishments being administered for same-sex relations among commoners (Ekkarong 2003).

However, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the late 19th century, the Thai government began to adopt Western criminal law codes that included the criminalization of "sodomy" as an "unnatural crime" punishable by imprisonment for three months to three years (Singhakowinta, 2010 : 20). This law has passed in 1907

under pressure from Western imperialists for legal reforms but it was abolished in 1956 as no one had ever been convicted under this law (Singhakowinta, 2010 : 20).

National project of Westernization in Thailand since the late 19th, it began to abolish outdated traditional institutions and embrace modernization (Cho, 2019). For example, the concept of gender recognition was restricted to binary categories of men and women in order to showcase the country as a civilized nation and avoid colonization by Western powers. As part of this process, unisex characteristics of Thai hairstyles, clothing, and names were removed. (UNDP, 2014). This was part of Thailand's national survival strategy to present itself as a "civilized nation" to colonial powers (Jackson and Cook, 1999).

3.2.2 South Korea

Prior to the late 1980s, Korea was governed by authoritarian regimes which severely restricted civil liberties, including sexual rights, of its citizens.

Although homosexuality is not commonly found in Korean literature or historical records, there are some instances where homosexual attitudes were prevalent. For instance, there are records that describe members of the royal family and Buddhist monks as being gay or bisexual (Youn, 1996).

The earliest example of homosexuality in Korean history can be traced back to the Shilla dynasty, specifically to King Hyekong (36th king, 765-780), who was regarded as having girlish behavior. Historians described him as a man in appearance but possessing feminine qualities. Unfortunately, he was killed at the age of 22 by his subordinates who revolted against his "feminine" nature (Youn, 1996).

The *hwarang*, an elite warrior group of male youth of the Silla Dynasty (B.C. 57–A.D. 935), offers the clearest example of ancient homosexuality in Korea (Kim and Hahn, 2006). The *hwarang* were known to engage in homoerotic relationships as part of their training in becoming warriors selected from the sons of the nobility through popular election (Rutt,1961:49). Homosexual themes can also be identified in Korean vernacular poetry and historical records, including works like the Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms (Kim and Hahn, 2006).

Ch'oyong's Song

Playing in the moonlight of the capital
Till the morning comes,
I return home
To see four legs in my bed.
Two belong to me.
Whose are the other two?
But what was my own
Has been taken from me, what now?

The song mentioned above has been traditionally interpreted in Korean society as an indication of the *Hwarang's* inclination towards same-sex partners, which was incorporated into their practices along with their military role (Kim and Hahn, 2006). As a result, modern Korean words were created to refer to a playboy, lazy good-for-nothing, and prostitute (Rutt, 1961).

Moreover, Kongmin (1352-1374), the 31st king of the *Koryo* dynasty (A.D. 918-1392), was renowned for his predilection for falling in love with young boys (Kim and Hahn, 2006). Kongmin stopped managing to national affairs and spent his time seeking out boy's monks after his wife's death. He found an organization for recruiting and pursuing handsome young boys and his reputation as a pederast has been cemented (Youn, 1996). The story of "Kongmin King" became the inspiration for the film called "*Ssanghwajeom* (2008)" and was considered a shocking film in Korea at the time.

In the later period of the Joseon dynasty (A.D. 1392-1910), homosexuality became increasingly viewed as socially unacceptable by the Confucian upper-middle classes because Confucianism, which was the dominant ideology during the Joseon Dynasty, emphasized strict gender roles and family values (Kim and Hahn, 2006). However, it is important to note that there were still individuals from minor nobility and lower classes who continued to engage in same-sex relationships, which underscores the presence of divergent attitudes towards homosexuality within Korean society. A prime example of this can be seen in the Namsadang, who were male

entertainment troupes that traveled to rural areas to perform for the lower classes. These troupes sometimes resorted to engaging in homosexual prostitution as a means of earning income (Kim, 1982).

In the palace chronicles of the Joseon dynasty (A.D. 1392-1910), an incident of lesbianism was recorded in 1436 when Sejong, the fourth ruler of the dynasty, summoned his cabinet to investigate rumors of his daughter-in-law engaging in sexual relations with her maidservant (Neff, 2013). To preserve the dignity and reputation of the royal family, the daughter-in-law was expelled from the palace (Youn, 1996).

Following the Korean War and the country's liberation from Japan during World War II, the military government that governed Korea for three decades actively promoted Confucian ideology, emphasizing values such as familial piety, patriarchal authority, and communalism (Moon, 2005). In the Korean society of the time, entrenched in a rigid hierarchy and fixed gender roles, the existence of sexual minorities was not widely recognized, and individuals identifying as homosexual were unable to express their gender identity publicly. Moreover, in contemporary Korean society, homosexuality is often stigmatized as a disease, a mental or genetic disorder, and some view it as a psychological imbalance (Ku, 2018).

However, since the 1970s, groups of homosexuals have organized around common locations and occupations. For instance, some lesbian cab drivers formed the "*Yeounhoe*" (Women Cab Drivers' Association), and in the 1980s, the "Itaewon Community" - also known as "Homo Hill," one of the few queer-friendly areas in the country - emerged. Nonetheless, these groups remained primarily private social gatherings and did not publicly disclose their identities or engage in political activism (Han, 2002).

The lack of social networks and the oppressive, conservative nature of Korean society - marked by a latent Confucian legacy and a dictatorship government system - directly impeded the formation of gay organizations and pro-gay movements (Lee, 2007). Instead, movie theaters and gay bars served as covert meeting places, creating a locality-oriented subculture that paved the way for the LGBT community. The rapid urbanization of Seoul further facilitated this development (Lee, 2007).

During the 1980s, the gay subculture in Korea did not primarily function as a space for homosexuals to form and spread their identities but rather as a place where their

desires as homosexuals could be expressed (Seo, 2005). In summary, the development of the gay subculture in the 1980s relied heavily on the establishment of extensive networks and the formation of supportive communities (Ku, 2018).

In conclusion, there is no record of special punishments or sanctions for homosexuality in the Three Kingdoms and Goryeo periods, which may be attributed to the fact that Confucianism had not yet fully taken hold. However, in the Joseon dynasty, after Confucianism had become the prevailing ideology, severe punishment was imposed on homosexuality, with women being subject to the death penalty if discovered engaging in same-sex relationships.

After the Korean War and the country's independence from Japan, homosexuality was not illegal, except for in the military, where Clause 6 of Article 92 of the Military Criminal Law criminalized sexual intercourse between individuals of the same sex, carrying a potential penalty of up to two years' imprisonment. However, due to the enduring influence of Confucian values and the oppressive social climate during the era of military dictatorships prior to the 1990s, the existence of sexual minorities remained unknown to the general public, and individuals who identified as homosexual were unable to express their gender identity publicly.

3.3 Homosexuality Portrayed in Media Before the 1990s

3.3.1 Thailand

The emergence of mass media, particularly the expansion of news media in the 1950s, and the ongoing effects of globalization, have contributed to a greater dissemination of information related to gender and sexuality. As media outlets proliferated and became more interconnected on a global scale, the public's awareness of these issues was enhanced, and discussions around gender and sexuality became more visible and widespread. Tom Boellstorff (2007) highlighted the crucial role played by mass media, such as dramas and movies, in shaping the identities and experiences of gay and lesbian individuals in Southeast Asia.

In 1965, the term 'gay' was first mentioned in the Thai press (Terdsak, 2002), which corresponded with a noticeable rise in the number of gender and sexual identities in the mid-1960s (Jackson and Cook, 1999). Sensationalistic headlines were commonly used in the press of the 1960s to publicly "out" LGBT individuals and humiliate them (Narupon and Jackson, 2021).

The issue of *kathoey*, homosexuality, and same-sex behaviors gained significant public attention after the murder of Darrell Berrigan, the influential editor of *Bangkok World,* on October 4th, 1965. Jackson's article "An American Death in Bangkok: The Murder of Darrell Berrigan and the Hybrid Origins of Gay Identity in 1960s Thailand" provides an extensive examination of this case (Jackson, 2000).

The police cited the victim's same-sex sexual relationships as a motive for the murder and this led to sensational coverage of the trial in Thai newspapers, with a strong emphasis on homosexuality and same-sex behavior in Thailand (Singhakowinta, 2010 : 105). After that, in 1965, *Thairath*, a Thai newspaper, published a sensational report regarding the existence of a group of male sex workers who identified themselves as gay. According to the report, these individuals, described as young men, engaged in relationships with Westerners, acting as their "sleeping partners." *Thairath* highlighted that these male sex workers lived in luxurious rented houses and apartments, with their expenses being covered by their Western partners (Thairath October 11, 1965, p. 16, cited in ibid., p. 67).

The Thai press, in contrasting the "normal" masculinity of these young men with the effeminate and cross-dressing *kathoey*, accentuated the distinctions between the two identities and positioned being gay as a newly recognized non-normative category within the Thai sex/gender system (Jackson, 2000). This discovery of men identifying as gay in Bangkok, as reported by the Thai press in October 1965, represented a significant turning point in the evolution of sex/gender paradigms, reimagining transgenderism and homosexuality within Thai public discourses (Singhakowinta, 2010: 105). During this period, Western terms were adopted and modified to describe same-sex behaviors, and the term "gay" was introduced, initially referring to male prostitutes (Pongpanit, 2010).

After World War II, the Thai government granted permission for the United States Armed Forces to visit Thailand for rest and recreation purposes. This decision sparked a significant increase in businesses and services catering to American military personnel and Western expatriates stationed in Thailand, particularly in major cities. Given that Thailand served as a regional hub for American military and economic expansion, this led to a substantial growth in the tourism industry (Singhakowinta, 2010 : 104). It is worth noting that certain individuals, including relatives of cabinet members, reaped considerable benefits from this policy. They held ownership stakes in national airline companies, hotels, travel agencies, and other tourism-related businesses, some of which were indirectly involved in prostitution activities (Enloe ,1989. p.35; Truong, 1990, p. 160). The presence of Western expats from diverse backgrounds after the war further contributed to the diversification and increasing visibility of homosexual individuals in Thailand (History of Thai LGBT, 2009). Thus, there was an increase in news coverage of homosexuality and a growing openness in Thai society to discuss issues related to same-sex behavior, including biomedical perspectives. During the economic growth of Bangkok in the 1960s and 1970s, the service sector provided lucrative employment opportunities that attracted many male homosexuals to work as sex workers (Sorasuchart, 1982). Due to the deployment of many American troops near Pattaya, the area became a popular entertainment destination for American soldiers (Baxer, 2007). In addition to bars that employed female sex workers, there were also establishments that hired males for soldiers who were interested in having sex with men. This eventually led to the creation of Boyztown, a gay red-light district located in Pattaya, during the 1980s. The development of the gay sex industry was made possible by Thailand's tolerant attitude toward sexuality, which allowed it to coexist alongside the heterosexual industry (Ocha, 2020). As the number of gays was increasing during this period, the number of novels about male homosexuals has increased continually by women writers such as *Manut,* Huajai Ti Tong Kailaan*,* and *Mai Plaek Pa by* Supa Thevakul*, Luk Rak, Soy Sawat, Phan Si Rung,* and *Maya* by Suwannee Sukontha, *Plaeng Prom* by Wo Winitchaikul*,* and *Kon Klang Mueng* and *Kao-ee Thong* by Sifa (Numun, 2012 :161)

Additionally, the AIDS/HIV epidemic in Thailand from the 1980s has strongly gave negative attitudes towards same-sex. The country's response to the HIV/AIDS issue has been a learning curve since the first case of AIDS was brought into the country by a foreigner in 1984 (UNDP, 2014, p. 7). In an article for *Matichon Daily*, entitled in "AIDS the killer: gay heaven vanished", the author wrote clearly to homosexuals as the carriers of the disease (cited in Terdsak 2002: 171). It is posited as a symbolic code of promiscuity as in the campaign "Promiscuous, Homosexual, You'll die from AIDS!" (Rubin,1993). This has shaped social perceptions in most people's view that homosexuality behaviors are an act of mental abnormality.

Despite this negative perception, AIDS victim groups created a supportive network that fostered a sense of authority and ideological resilience (Deleuze,1998). This environment played a pivotal role in the emergence of contemporary LGBT activists and the cultivation of their sexual identities. Many owners of gay bars in Thailand worked to improve the negative image associated with homosexuality and actively sought to promote a more positive image of the gay community. This included collaborating with gay organizations to raise awareness and knowledge about preventing AIDS/HIV among homosexuals.

3.3.2 South Korea

The history of homosexuality in Korea has received little research, despite much speculation surrounding it due to the country's strongly heteronormative culture. In fact, the first article on homosexuality in Korea was not published until 1924, when a Japanese professor reportedly pleaded for homosexuality to a Korean student and kissed him, leading to his resignation from the school from *Dong-A newspaper* in October 25, 1924 (Son, 2018). This news must have been shocking to Korean society at the time. In 1929, a newspaper reported that a married woman in Pyongyang had fled with a girl from the same neighborhood due to their homosexual love from *Dong-A newspaper* in April 10, 1929 (Son, 2018). The newspaper criticized homosexuality as being banned because it ultimately destroys morality and society. In 1931, two students from a famous girls' school in Seoul who had a homosexual relationship committed

suicide by jumping in front of a train together from *Dong-A newspaper* in April 12, 1931 (Son, 2018).

During the period of military dictatorship following the Korean War, there is little evidence of articles on homosexuality in newspapers, as the government issued warnings to prohibit the publication of magazines about homosexuality. In fact, the press treated homosexuality as a perversion and obscenity. However, from the mid-1980s, "same-sex love" began to gain visibility and was increasingly excluded from Korean society in popular magazines, coinciding with the establishment of the first gay and lesbian organizations. During this era, magazines such as "*Sunday Seoul*" propagated the idea that "same-sex love" was a corrupting force that endangered the nation's cultural and traditional values. They portrayed homosexuality as a social offense that posed a threat to society and collective well-being, particularly with the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Chon, 2015).

Most of the articles related to homosexuality in the 1980s were introduced by foreign sources. During the height of the AIDS epidemic in the West in the 1980s, a Korean news anchor even stated, "South Korea has nothing to worry about since we have no homosexuals" (Cho and Kim, 2011:207). According to the 1982 World Values Survey, a significant majority of the interviewees, approximately 76%, expressed the belief that homosexuality was not justifiable under any circumstance. (Inglehart et al.2014). For this reason, the generalized concept in Korean society is that homosexuality exists as a novelty found overseas rather than domestically. The social construct of homosexuality was given the image of the decadent sex culture of capitalism, and the body and desires of homosexuals were not only peripheral but also socially and morally wrong (Kwon, 2014:29)

Besides, when the medical community reported that AIDS bacteria had been detected for the first time in two gay men in their 20s in 1986 (Kyunghyang newspaper, Nov, 1986), the awareness of homosexuality began to be linked to the image of public health terrorism. This news has very important implications for the way of homosexuality is considered physically 'threats' contaminating the traditional culture from overseas through sexually transmitted diseases, especially the HIV virus in Korean society.

Up until 1990s, the prevailing understanding among Koreans, including members of the sexual minority community, was that homosexuality was a foreign phenomenon associated with the supposed "decadence" of the West (Cho and KwonKim, 2011). When the term "gay" was used, it was used to refer to transgendered persons, while men who had sex with other men were referred to as homos. It considered homosexuality to be a perverted behavior confined to a few exceptional individuals and considered it to be a free-floating desire that any man could be "tempted" or "seduced into" (Chon, 2015). It became the task of the emerging gay and lesbian movement to transform this sexual desire into a gay and lesbian identity and people with these identities into a gay and lesbian community.

CHAPTER 4
FACTORS INFLEUNCING THE ACCEPTANCE OF
HOMOSEXUALITY AFTER THE 1990S

4.1 Economic and Media Development After the 1990s

4.1.1 Thailand

According to the World Bank, Thailand experienced remarkable economic growth during the 1990s, establishing itself as the world's fastest-growing economy. During this period, there was a notable rise in social and commercial interactions between gay bars and urban middle-class gay men in Bangkok (Funatsu and Kagoya, 2003). Thailand's gay bars and magazines emerged at a time of rapid economic growth marked by an expansion of the Thai middle class and increasingly urban lifestyles (Deininger and Squire, 1997; Pranee and Chalongphob, 1998). This has resulted in the rise of homosexuality visibility in Thailand by numerous gay venues in Bangkok, LGBT-themed publications, films and TV series with popular gay and transgender characters at a time of rapid economic growth (Deininger and Squire, 1997).

Additionally, with the latest UN figures showing Thailand ranking 8th globally for spending the most time on the internet daily in 2021 (The Nation, 2022), and in the top 10 for social media use, there has been increased access to social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (Leesa-Nguansuk, 2018). This has facilitated greater awareness and understanding of homosexuality among Thai people, leading to higher levels of tolerance and acceptance.

Moreover, Thailand has become a prominent center for gender-affirming surgery, with an increasing number of people traveling from around the world to undergo these procedures (Dow, 2023). Alongside this, there has been a growing number of academic researchers and the establishment of various LGBT community groups and NGOs, which have played a significant role in promoting LGBT rights and increasing awareness and acceptance of homosexuality in Thai society (UNDP, 2021).

In the 1990s, magazines developed close commercial relations with Bangkok's gay bars to produce materials for middle- class gay men, such as erotic photo albums of male models and erotic stories, which provided platforms for new forms of social and sexual relations and classifications (Narupon and Jackson, 2021). The commercial gay print media such as *Neon* (1984-1995), *Morakot* (1985-1998), *Midway* (1986-2001) and entertainment venues played major roles in encouraging the development of a sense of gay identity, together with associated notions of gay values and sexual activities, among modern Thai gay men (Pongpanit, 2010:20). Particularly, *Mithuna Junior* (1983-1997), Thailand's first commercially successful gay magazine, reinforced modern homosexual norms that organized masculinity and sexual commodities in Bangkok's gay community, and subsequently across the country (Narupon and Jackson, 2021).

Since the 1990s, Thai media has included the homosexual characters who played various roles in TV shows portraying them in comedic or melodramatic roles that served as sources of amusement (Lewis, 2007). According to BL Watcher website, the production of BL dramas in Thailand began with 5 dramas in the 1990s and the number increased to 13 in 2020, further grew to 30 in 2021, and reached a remarkable 54 productions in 2022. This data highlights the significant growth and popularity of Thai BL dramas in recent years. Later from 2010 up to 2019, Thailand witnessed the production of over 50 movies or series specifically focusing on homosexual themes (Nal, 2020).

In 2014, the Thai TV channel *'Channel 9'* became the pioneer of Thailand's queer media on mainstream platforms with the release of the drama *'Rak Pad Pan Kao.'* Following the success of this drama, other Thai entertainment companies began paying more attention to producing this new genre, leading to a surge in the number of series about LGBT individuals being broadcast in Thai society. GMMTV, a subsidiary of Thailand's largest entertainment conglomerate, released a BL series titled *'SOTUS,'* which was a huge hit and became the blueprint for the BL industry, paving the way for its popularity and proving that BL series can be extremely profitable (Kinori, 2022).

Not only Television series but also gay entertainment shows like "*Take Guy Out Thailand*" have a significant influence on both young and old viewers, and they can spread rapidly through social media. Online media and gay websites have also played

a critical role in the display of gay culture since 1997. These websites have gained significant popularity, such as *missladyboy.com, dekchai69.com, thaiboxy.com, gooogay.com*, among others (Sakuna, 2018). Gay websites have emerged as a significant platform for communication and self-expression among gay individuals, allowing them to share their life experiences and connect with a wide range of online resources related to homosexuality (Sakuna, 2018). The global movement advocating for LGBT rights, along with the growing global acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, coupled with enhanced access to information through the internet and social media, have had a notable impact on Thai society, particularly among the younger generation, fostering greater acceptance of LGBT communities in Thailand (Jackson, 1999)

In particular, the genre of Thai BL dramas, which feature male-male romantic relationships, made its debut in 2014 with over a hundred series to date and gained their popularity skyrocketed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (The Economist, 2023). It also took off overseas Thailand thanks in part to many being available on developed streaming platform and this genre experienced a surge in popularity both domestically and internationally (Ratcliffe, 2022). Some see BL as Thailand's soft power, doing for the Southeast Asian nation's global image what the yoga boom has done for India or K-pop for South Korea (Chad, 2022). Rujirat Ishikawa, an assistant professor at the School of Cultural and Creative Studies at Tokyo's Aoyama Gakuin University, notes that while BL originated from Japanese manga comics, Thai production companies have played an important role in transforming the BL genre by adapting it for television and producing a multitude of highly popular series (Ratcliffe, 2022).

The romantic comedy drama series '*2gether*,' one of the biggest hits in the BL genre, surpassed 100 million views on the streaming platform Line TV just months after its release (Time, 2022). GMMTV's senior director himself acknowledged the increasing demand for the BL genre, highlighting how the Thai entertainment industry has experienced a consistent annual growth of 30-40% attributed to Boys Love content (Tortermvasana, 2022).

According to TIME magazine writer Chad de Guzman: in 2021 "Thailand's investment promotion arm helped secure $10.7 million in foreign investment for Thai

BL for export-oriented purposes. Thai BL is seeing success not only in Thailand but also across the globe". The country has emerged as Asia's biggest creator of "boys love" dramas and exports of these gay romance series and movies exceeded 1.5 billion baht in 2022 (Phoonphongphiphat,2023).

The media portrayal of homosexuality has resulted in an increasing trend among Thai youth to view gayness and lesbianism as fashionable, with many attempting to emulate gay lifestyles as a way of being modern (Jackson and Cook, 1999). This trend is reflected in the increasing number of young homosexuals, both male and female, adopting gay mannerisms such as gay-inspired behaviors, dress, hairstyle, and humor (Nareeluc, 2016). This phenomenon is partly due to the fact that individuals who are exposed to media are more likely to perceive their world in a way that aligns with the reality presented in the media (Morgan and Shanahan, 2010). According to Jackson, he asserted that modern Thai gay culture has emerged from Thai capitalism at the intersection of local economic and media influences, which in the later decades of the 20th century supported the provision of services for the local gay market (Jackson, 2009).

4.1.2 South Korea

Shin- Yoon (2010) claimed that "Korean viewers learn homosexuality through media", it is because Korean heterosexual audiences of the developed media texts were naturally and frequently exposed to homosexuals through TV, films, or Internet (Kwon, 2014). This happened thanks to the rapid growth and increasing access to the Internet (Kim, 2010: 18).

The background for the development of Korea's media industry was the establishment of a cable business led by the government to the public since 1990s after rapid economic growth (Kwon, 2008). Because of that, most Koreans have a chance to see American dramas and contents often, one media survey reported that 40.1% of Korean adults regularly watched American Drama (Kang, 2007). These U.S. same-sex themed programs found a particular audience in the twenties and thirties age group, leading cable channels to cater to this segment by airing such programs (Kwon, 2008).

It wasn't until the 1990s that homosexual characters and issues began to emerge more prominently in mainstream texts (Shugart, 2003).

In Korea, the introduction of queer theory and the term queer began to prevail in universities around the mid-1990s (Bong,2008). The film industry and mass media also have been the driving forces behind the adoption of a new perspective for Korean sexual minority groups, largely due to the introduction of queer theory. The release of "*Broken Branches*" in 1995 broke the chain of invisibility and silence surrounding homosexuality within the Korean film community, bringing the controversial topic to the forefront and challenging the Confucian social system's patriarchal extended family values (Kim and Singer, 2011).

By the 2000s, it has become easier to find portrayals of gay individuals in TV dramas and other media in Korea such as '*The King and the Clown*' became a record-breaking box office hit in 2005. It sparked a new narrative of the "pretty boy" that showcased the visually attractive notion of a gay man (Kim and Singer, 2011).

Korean TV dramas have been slower to incorporate LGBT characters and storylines than other media. After the success of "*Life is Beautiful*," the first television drama to portray homosexuality, there was an increase in the inclusion of supporting LGBT characters such as '*Secret Garden*' (2010) and '*Reply 1997*' (2012) to '*Love With Flaws*' (2019) and '*Itaewon Class*' (2020). In 2021's mega-hit '*Squid Game*' from Netflix, without any apparent reason, a gay predator was unexpectedly introduced into the narrative. Through increase of exposures in media, the LGBT communities strengthened as gay bars and clubs were opened around Itaewon area and Itaewon has been famous as an open space where homosexual people could meet and act freely (Han, 2013).

As the number of media contents related to homosexuality increased, there were numerous social controversies and hotly debated issues surrounding the topic. For example, the "National Alliance for a Proper Sexual Culture" published an advertisement in major newspapers in 2010 that expressed homophobic views, stating "If my son becomes gay after watching gay drama *'Life is Beautiful'* and dies of AIDS, SBS (the broadcasting channel) should take responsibility.", "How can a man become a daughter-in-law??"(Kim,2010). They strongly protested and demanded the discontinuation of the drama. During that year, comedian Hong Seok-cheon became the

first person in Korean history to come out as gay publicly, which caused a significant shock among the public. However, Hong faced significant discrimination from Korean society and temporarily lost his job from entertainments as a result. In 2012, Lady Gaga's Seoul concert, which had homosexual themes and was titled "Born This Way," also sparked significant debate about homosexuality with Christian groups. The Korean Association of Church Communications expressed their concerns about Lady Gaga's songs promoting homosexuality and submitted a request to the event organizer to cancel her show or implement age restrictions (Cho, 2012). Consequently, the organizer was compelled to refund tickets purchased by individuals under 18 years of age. Notably, Korea stands as the only country in Asia to have imposed an age restriction on Lady Gaga's tour (Cho, 2012).

While major filmmakers or drama production have avoided directly portraying gay identities to prevent loss in ticket sales in the past, todays the rise of LGBT characters in the mass media is a sure sign that Korea is becoming more open, inclusive, and accepting of the queer community according to the LGBT-friendly global trends (Hilton,2008). Recently, as Korean entertainment has gained popularity worldwide and become more accessible thanks to developed streaming platform like Youtube, Netflix and Viki etc. K-dramas give an impact of homosexuality to world widely not only in Korea.

4.2 National Policy and Legislation for Homosexuality

4.2.1. Thailand

Thailand gained global recognition for its perceived tolerance towards the LGBT community during the latter part of the 20th century as sexual norms were liberalized in the West even though conservative factions of Thai society continued to resist the inclusion of LGBT (UNDP, 2021). Professor Douglas Sanders, a prominent scholar as LGBT right activities, describes "There is a tolerance for sex and gender diversity in Thailand that is unique in Asia" (Sanders, 2011). One of the reasons for

acquiring a high level of tolerance is due to the proactive efforts of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (hereafter referred to as "TAT").

As stated above in chapter 4.1.1, the economic growth that Thailand experienced during the late 20th century had a significant impact on the development of contemporary LGBT culture. Specifically, modern Thai LGBT culture is heavily influenced by the commercialization of LGBT identity (Jackson, 2011). The TAT actively promotes the country as an LGBT-friendly destination, with the slogan "Go Thai. Be Free." featured prominently on its website (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2018). Their efforts were aimed at attracting same-sex couples and foreign homosexual visitors, with a deliberate emphasis on promoting Bangkok as the gay capital of Southeast Asia (Thanthong-Knight, 2020).
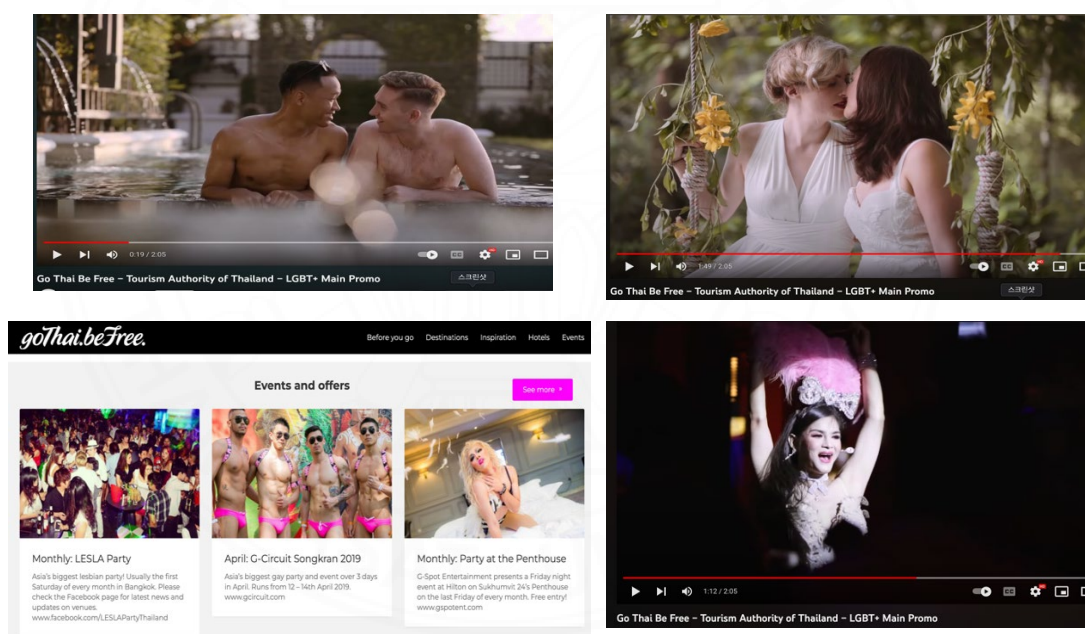
Figure 3. *Go Thai, Be Free Homepage (https://www.gothaibefree.com) supported by Tourism Authority of Thailand, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G76v5MimrAk]*

As a result, Thailand has become an icon of sexuality in the world and LGBT tourism accounts for 1.15% of the GDP of the country, representing $5.3 billion in 2017 (LGBT Capital, 2018a). This has led to Thailand being advertised as a "gay paradise" with numerous entertainment venues including red-light districts and bars that cater to gay men and transgender women with the TAT supporting and promoting this

movement (Nareeluc,2016). TAT Deputy Governor Srisuda Wanapinyosak addressed "We are proud that LGBT+ travelers can stay anywhere in Thailand with complete peace of mind. Our kingdom is open to every possible shade under the rainbow. LGBTQ are seen as a high-potential market with an above-average level of disposable income" (Thaiembdc, 2019). TTG Asia, a travel industry publication and website, said "Thailand has quietly been pursuing this niche market segment, but it is only this year that the Tourism Authority of Thailand is openly coming out to target the pink dollar" (Thaiembdc, 2019). A TAT official said that the TAT has realized the importance of LGBT groups and will continue to do research to serve their demand (Phoonphongphiphat, 2023). Jackson (1999) argues that the TAT's positive image serves as a strategic promotion strategy to attract LGBT tourists to the country.

On the other hand, some scholars have pointed out a contradiction in Thailand's promotion of the country as an LGBT-friendly tourist destination. This is because the country also employs a tourist strategy based on cheap sex, which criminalizes and stigmatizes poor Thai individuals who provide sexual services to millions of male foreign tourists every year. Within the Thai state's economic development strategy for tourism, poor Thai men and women are marketed as friendly and welcoming to foreign visitors, with the country promoted as the "land of smiles" (Esterik, 2000). Mainstream urban society often condemns tourist cities such as Pattaya and Phuket, yet continues to reap the economic benefits of mass tourism in these areas (Statham and Scuzzarello, 2021).

Ironically, despite the active promotion strategy for LGBT tourism by the TAT, incidents such as the cultural ministry's plans to stop employing homosexuals to work for the ministry and requests to Thai TV stations to restrain homosexual messages on TV programs, revealed by the '*Thairath*' media on June 4, 2004, highlight the ongoing stigma and discrimination against same-sex relationships by the heterosexual majority. The deputy permanent secretary was quoted as saying:

> *"The cultural ministry will vigorously campaign about homosexual behaviour. Although we are. not legally empowered to imprison these people (homosexuals) like the case of obscene materials, we will ask the public to join our anti-homosexual campaigns to stop the further proliferation of homosexuality. This will also include the ban of the representation of homosexuality in the media. The cultural ministry will issue the letter to all television stations for their cooperation (to enforce the ban). We will discipline our officials who have that kind of behaviour at the ministry and we will not recruit people with that behaviour to work with us."*
> *(Thairath June 4,2004)*

Despite Thailand's reputation as a welcoming destination for the LGBT community, as evidenced by its promotion as a "gay paradise," the incident highlighted the prevalence of prejudices against homosexuality in Thailand. This incident reveals that Thailand has actively promoted itself as an LGBT-friendly destination for foreign tourists, yet the government has been hesitant to fully embrace LGBT rights within the country

However, due to the vigorous movement by gay organizations against this campaign, the policy was ultimately discontinued. Subsequently, the Thai government has initiated legislation protecting the rights of the LGBT community, with the establishment of a new anti-discrimination law in 2015. The passed Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 in Thailand is significant as it is the first time Thai law has recognized that individuals can identify as male, female, or as "a person with a sexual expression different from their original sex." The Act aims to criminalize discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender and imposes a jail term of up to six months for those found guilty of such discrimination (Ojanen, 2016). Furthermore, in June 2022, Thai lawmakers brought the country one step closer to legalizing same-gender marriages by passing four different bills on same-sex unions, making Thailand the second territory in Asia.

Recently, as Thailand tries to rebuild its travel industry post-COVID, the TAT has sought to capitalize on the popularity of Thai BL dramas, hosting "*Thai Boy Love*" at a recent marketing event in Osaka, Japan. As Poowin Bunyavejchewin, senior researcher at the Institute of East Asian Studies at Thammasat University in Bangkok, stated, "The Thai state needs money. BL would be a high potential revenue generator" (Chad, 2022).

According to Ratchada Thanadirek, a deputy government spokesperson, the Ministry of Commerce organized a business-matching event in Bangkok between Thai producers of BL content and importers from Japan, South Korea, and China. The event resulted in the formation of 158 business partnerships, with anticipated export revenues from LGBT-themed content exceeding 3.6 billion baht (Phoonphongphiphat, 2023).

In the past, the conservative and heterosexual majoritarianism among Thai legislators and legal practitioners (UNDP, 2014) illustrate a discrepancy between the

orientation toward LGBT tourism by the TAT for foreign tourists and the conservative stance of the Thai government for their own citizens. However, with the passage of the Gender Equality Act and the recent push for legalizing same-sex marriage, it appears that Thailand is making progress in recognizing and protecting the rights of the LGBT community.

4.2.2 South Korea

Korea's perception of homosexuality began to gradually change with the democratization movement in 1987 and the onset of globalization in 1993 (Cho 2020: 274). The LGBT rights movement in Korea began to gain traction in the new political atmosphere following the end of military dictatorship in 1987 (Bong, 2008; Yoon, 2005). During the 1997 presidential election, homosexual activists organized street protests and interviews with the presidential candidates were conducted, which included their opinions on homosexuality (Ku, 2018). This marked the first time that homosexuality was discussed in national politics in Korea (Lee, 2017).

The most significant development in the 2000s was the creation of a governmental institution to protect the rights of sexual minorities (Ku, 2018). The National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRC) and the Law of National Human Rights Commission were established in 2001 as part of President Kim Dae-jung's campaign pledges. Even though discrimination based on sexual orientation is not legally binding, the law recognizes it as a violation of equal rights. This sets a significant precedent for the legitimacy of gay rights in Korea (Ku, 2018). Furthermore, in 2006, the National Statistical Office ceased classifying homosexuality as a psychological disorder.

The issue of anti-discrimination has been the most significant concern for the gay rights movement in Korea since the late 2000s (Ku, 2018). The Roh Moo-hyun administration attempted to include "sexual orientation" in the existing legal framework for human rights protection as one of the grounds for constituting a "discriminatory act violating the equal right" in 2007 (Ministry of Justice, 2007). However, conservative religious groups and organizations, such as the Professors' Alliance for Proper Education and the Patriotic Parents' Association, strongly protested to remove

discrimination against sexual orientation from the bill. They published an advertisement in the *Kukmin daily newspaper* on October 8, 2010, featuring an article on the first-ever conference held at the National Assembly to counteract the establishment of the anti-discrimination law.

In respond, the Ministry of Justice stated that "If concerns persist regarding the social and economic burdens that could result from establishing the law, the process of institutionalizing protection through social consensus may prove to be challenging." (National Assembly, 2020). Meanwhile, center-progressive members of the National Assembly have introduced several anti-discrimination bills to safeguard the rights of the LGBT community since 2008, including in 2012, 2013, 2020, and beyond, all of which have consistently faced strong opposition from conservative organizations (Kim 2022: 4). Since the introduction of the anti-discrimination law in 2007, there have been anti-discrimination protest movements in front of the National Assembly building for approximately 16 years up to the present (Yim, 2022).

As contentious as the struggles over legislative efforts have been, heavy opposition has also made many politicians tread carefully in their decisions on LGBT rights.

Currently in South Korea, the only law that regulates homosexuality is the military criminal code (Yoon, 2012). According to article 92.6 Military Criminal Act in the 1962, sexual acts among soldiers are punished with up to one years in prison. For instance, in June 2010, the Constitutional Court examined the constitutionality of Article 92(6) of the Military Criminal Act, which criminalizes same-sex sexual intercourse both within and outside the military as a form of reciprocal rape, punishable by up to two years in prison and forced retirement (Li, 2005). The Constitutional Court has affirmed the Act's legality on three separate occasions, in 2002, 2011, and 2016.

However, last April in 2022, South Korea's Supreme Court overturned the conviction of two men prosecuted under article 92.6 of the Military Criminal Act. Military authorities had accused the two men of engaging in sexual activities while off duty, convicting them of two-year-long prison sentences (Thoreson, 2022). The Supreme Court determined that the use of article 92.6 by the authorities to punish consensual sex outside of military settings posed a threat to the autonomy, equality, and dignity of soldiers (Thoreson 2022).

Still, according to a study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) entitled "Society at Glance 2019: A Spotlight on LGBT People", Korea lagged progressive countries which are more supportive and accepting of the LGBTQ community. As of 2016,

As of 2016, South Korea ranked low on the indices, scoring only 13% out of 100% possible (SOGILAW 2016: 17–19). According to the 2018 Stonewall Global Workplace Equality Index, a significant percentage (79%) of South Koreans still maintain the belief that there are no individuals with a non-heterosexual orientation in their surroundings (Stonewall 2018: 2). Additionally, findings from The Korea Social Integration Survey, as cited by Bicker (2019), reveal that nearly half of Koreans express reluctance to have a homosexual neighbor, friend, or colleague in the workplace.

Continuously, national policy or establishment of law for LGBT in Korea have been delayed due to strong resistance from conservative evangelicals, activists, and school parents to protect the society from threats to traditional family values and from sexually transmitted diseases (Youn, 2015).

4.3 LGBT Rights Movement and Anti- LGBT Movement

4.3.1 Thailand

Globally, LGBT movements have persisted during globalization and are becoming increasingly common (Warner, 1999). Since the 1990s, online and offline communities have rapidly developed in tandem with the rise of the gay community in Thailand. The advent of PC communications enabled the creation of online gay communities, providing a platform for individuals to communicate anonymously and allowing members of the gay community to create virtual societies without the fear of revealing their identities online (Bong, 2008; Yoon, 2012).

The emergence of the AIDS/HIV epidemic in Thailand in 1987 prompted the Thai LGBT community to unite and establish various organizations, including Anjaree, Sapaan, Bangkok Rainbow, Rainbow Sky, and Political Gay Group since the 1990s

(Sanders, 2011 :240). Despite negative portrayals of homosexuality in Thai public discourse as a perversion or illness (Jackson, 1999), many LGBT community started to campaign for more equal social protection and legal rights for the LGBT community (Sinthuphan and Ruendhawil, 2022 :2). The LGBT community successfully campaigned for the removal of homosexuality from the country's official list of mental disorders in December 2002 (UNDP, 2014:7). In the end, the Ministry of Health Department removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorder and it was a significant milestone for Thai activists for homosexual rights as it demonstrated an effort to reduce social discrimination and stigma (Katikireddi, 2003). It seems that Thai LGBT advocacy was hence born out of a mission to change public perception of the LGBT community, as well as to educate its members about prevention of and treatment for the disease (Ungpakorn, 2017).

There was an incident of the cultural ministry's attempt to ban homosexuals from working by the Thai media revelations in 2004 as mentioned above in chapter 4.2 triggering growing LGBT communities' anger against Thai government. This sparked public discourse on human rights and equality, leading to increased pressure on the Thai government to fully uphold these principles (Singhakowinta, 2010).

Later, the growth of LGBT groups and organizations in Thailand has been rapid since around 2010, with funding for HIV prevention playing a role in this expansion (UNDP, 2014: 48). In recent times, LGBT activists have been at the forefront of the pro-democracy movement led by the youth, which has called for reforms to the monarchy. They have linked these political demands to the struggle for LGBT and gender equality, and protest groups have expressed support for same-sex marriage. Student rights groups like 'Bad Students' have also highlighted instances of discrimination against LGBT students in schools and provided guidance to young people on how to deal with bullying or unfair treatment (Siradapuvadol, 2020).

Furthermore, in June 2022, a coalition of non-governmental groups organized "Creation Pride 2022," Bangkok's first official Queer parade since 2006, which took place on the city's main thoroughfares. The newly elected Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittiput supported and joined the event. A few days after the parade, Thai lawmakers passed four different bills related to same-sex unions at their first reading (Reuter,

2022). This legislative development suggests that there is growing political momentum in Thailand towards recognizing the rights of the LGBT community.

On the contrary, there have been some cases of anti-LGBT protest movements emerging, albeit on a small scale. For example, on 21 February 2009, anti-LGBT protesters opposed a gay pride parade in Chiang Mai, leading organizers to cancel the event. The protesters claimed that the event was inappropriate for Chiang Mai, a city renowned for its cultural heritage. The local police did not take any action to stop the intimidation, and eventually, the organizers of the event apologized to the protesters (Prachatai, 2009).

Recently, the League of Islamic Council of Southern Thailand issued a statement in Feb, 2022 opposing the Cannabis and Hemp Act, the Liquor Bill and the Marriage Equality Bill (Sattaburuth, 2022). According to the Sheikhul Islam Office's Fatwa, they will not support these laws including same sex marriage because same-sex marriage, narcotics and alcoholic drinks go against Islam and its patriarchal values.

However, due to the smaller scale of the anti-homosexuality movement compared to the pro-LGBT movement, it has not received much attention in public opinion and is not well recognized by the general population.

4.3.2 South Korea

Over the past three decades since the 1990s, South Korean society grew more accepting of the minority and LGBT-friendly communities like the Korea Sexual Minority Culture and Rights Center, *Chingusai*(□□□□) have provided support for LGBT individuals (Muller, 2022).

The Korean gay community has experienced significant growth in recent years, in large part due to increasing access to the internet since the 1990s (Kim, 2010). Online communities for the LGBT community have developed rapidly to meet the needs of this growing community, including chat rooms, dating sites, and other social outlets (Kim, 2012).

Scholarly literature on the gay rights movement in Korea identifies the formation of the first official gay and lesbian organization, *Chodonghoe*, in 1993 as the pivotal moment for the movement (Lee, 2010; Seo, 2005; Yoon, 2012). This organization later split into two separate groups: *Chingusai* for gay, and *KiriKiri* for lesbians. The emergence of these organizations led to the rapid growth of both online and offline LGBT communities in Korea (Ku, 2018).

These allowed gay communities to be formed and spread to most universities in Seoul and Yonsei University's Come Together and Seoul National University's *Maum 001* were constituted in 1995 (Seo, 2001, p. 71). This attracted the attention of society and "for the first time, there were social mentions of homosexual identity and attempts to look at this identity from the standpoint of human rights" and it played a role as the cornerstone of movements in the 2000s (Na, 2014).

The members of groups cooperated and united for raising homosexual awareness in society by mass media such as movie screenings related to homosexuals and these networks built in the 1990s.

In 1997, the LGBT community in Korea held its first demonstration, urging the government to revise school textbooks containing discriminatory content against homosexuals. This event marked the first time that the community publicly presented themselves, voiced their official demands to the government, and consolidated their various organizations into a united voice (Ku, 2018).

The LGBT rights movement in Korea has made significant progress since the 2000s, with the annual holding of queer festivals and legislative efforts to establish Anti-Discrimination Laws that include "sexual orientation" as a protected ground (Ku, 2018). However, conservative Christian groups have strongly opposed these efforts, and in 2017, established the 'Union to the Anti-Discrimination against Homosexuality' with the goal of repealing the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law (Ku, 2018). The visibility of the LGBT community has significantly increased in the 2010s but has consistently been confronted with severe opposition. As a result, visibility of sexual minorities has increased, leading to heightened political attention towards LGBT issues (Ku, 2018).

As the size for Queer Festival grows every year, certain Christian organizations have initiated protests in front of the festival venue to express their opposition to the

event. Seoul Queer Culture Festival attracts people every year who show support for the LGBT movement worldwide. However, only a few meters away from the parade route, Christian groups gathered to voice their opposition to homosexuality, arguing for the potential harms of homosexuality and emphasizing the significance of "natural family" as the essential basic unit of society with slogans "Homosexuality is sin! Return to Jesus!" in 2017 (Dunbar, 2017).

Anti-gay activist groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, Parents' Association, conservative NGOs assert that homosexuals pose a threat to national security, health and education. These organizations contend that it is the duty of the Protestant Church to halt the spread of homosexuality and "heal" individuals with same-sex attraction to promote social normalcy (Woo, 2017:103).

Still, anti-discrimination laws that included sexual minorities have not yet been passed in South Korea, because of strong opposition from conservatism, school parents, pastors, professors, and activists of Christian organizations, even though the laws had been proposed from 2007 till now (Lee, 2009).

Therefore, homosexuality is not illegal in Korea; however, there are no specific regulations in place that explicitly prohibit discrimination against sexual minorities. Overall, LGBT movement has developed but there has been limitation to progress LGBT rights compared to other improved advanced country's LGBT rights.

As a result, the visibility of the LGBT community has significantly increased in the 1990s, but it has consistently faced strong opposition and resistance leading to heightened political attention towards LGBT issues (Ku, 2018).

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This paper explored the factors behind the high level of acceptance towards homosexuality in Thailand, often referred to as the "LGBT paradise in Asia," and the lack of progress in homosexual acceptation in Korea, despite being a developed democratic and economically advanced country with a focus on the periods before and after the 1990s. To achieve this, the thesis examined both country's history of homosexuality, including religion, historical background, national policy, legislation, LGBT movement perspectives and attitudes portrayed in the media. As a result of the research, it was able to identify some factors that contribute to the difference in the acceptance of homosexuality between the two countries.

First, historically, it is the different religious backgrounds that deeply influence attitudes and values towards homosexuality in two countries. In Thailand, the state religion of Theravada Buddhism takes a neutral stance on homosexuality, as it follows the principles of the "middle way" and "karma." Sulak Sivaraksa, a prominent social critic in Thailand, has argued that "the Buddha never mentioned homosexuality; he merely cautioned against the harmful use of sexuality (Corless,R., 1995). Basically, Thai society's high accepting attitude towards homosexuality seems to be mainly influenced by Buddhist teachings and a multicultural outlook.

In contrast, in Korea, negative attitudes towards homosexuality are rooted in a blend of Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Christianity, all of which condemn homosexuality. Christianity's impact in Korea has not been observed in other Asian countries, with about 30% of the Korean Christian population compared to less than 1% in Thailand. Korea is the sole Asian country with a significant Protestant population, which has served as a key opposition group in the struggle for LGBT rights (Rich, 2016). Basically, Confucian roots with the Christian teachings prohibiting homosexuality have had a deep impact on the level of acceptance towards homosexuality in Korea. Additionally, Korean Mahayana Buddhist in the past prioritize

traditional values and uphold a patriarchal family structure, which can lead to a negative view of homosexuality.

Secondly, there are different levels of visibility of homosexuality in their respective media even though homosexuality became increasingly visible in media in both countries during urban-centered economic growth since the 1990s. It is true that homosexual characters have started to appear in developed media environment of various TV shows, dramas, and films, and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have helped raise awareness about homosexuality in two countries since globalization. However, the media environment based on the visibility of homosexuality and the social reactions to it differ significantly.

In Thailand, the gay sex industry flourished with the presence of American soldiers in Pattaya after World War II and the growth of homosexual communities in Bangkok, such as bars, saunas, and nightclubs for foreign tourist and middle class. Despite the negative attitudes towards homosexuality in the media during the AIDS/HIV epidemic, gay communities seized the opportunity to address the crisis by introducing homosexual health education and disseminating information about gay communities through magazines and other media outlets. Essentially, these inclusive environments have facilitated a natural increase in societal openness and the visibility of homosexuality within the media.

In contrast, in Korea, most articles related to homosexuality in the past predominantly focused on foreign topics, portraying homosexuality as an aspect of Western culture. Despite the presence of small homosexual communities, newspapers and magazines often depicted "same-sex love" as a societal threat, detrimental to health and the traditional family system. This portrayal linked homosexuality to the AIDS/HIV epidemic, further stigmatizing it as a source of contamination. Therefore, in the Korean media environment, it has been challenging to increase the visibility of homosexuality, and media companies have often faced intense opposition whenever content related to homosexuality is released. Still, criticism from parents, conservative groups, and Christian organizations remains high whenever homosexuality-related content is aired on public broadcast channels in Korea.

Thirdly, the differences in the legalization and national policies regarding homosexuality between the two countries since the 1990s have contributed to the

varying landscape of acceptance. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has been actively promoting the country as an LGBT-friendly destination, advertising it as a "gay paradise" and introducing Thai BL drama series with many LGBT entertainment venues to the world. This has made Thailand the most popular gay center in Asia and one of the world's major gay tourist destinations, due to the government-led promotion of homosexuality since the 1990s (McCamish, 2000). Additionally, the Thai government passed the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2015, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation protecting the rights of the LGBT community and at a point where the legalization of same-sex marriage is well underway currently. Many Thai politicians have expressed support for LGBT rights and received a positive response from citizens.

In contrast, the establishment of laws for LGBT rights in Korea has been delayed due to the strong opposition of Korean anti-LGBT movements associated with Christian organizations, conservative activism, and school parents. Still, there is no regulation outlawing discrimination against sexual minorities. Oh Se-hoon, the current Seoul Mayor, personally expressed an oppositional stance towards homosexuality and many Korean politicians hesitated to express support for gay rights.

Fourth, when comparing the LGBT rights movements in Thailand and Korea, it can be observed that Korea's is relatively less active but anti-LGBT movement is much active than Thailand. Recently, there has been rapid growth of LGBT groups and organizations in Thailand, with LGBT activists actively participating in the pro-democracy movement led by the youth. They actively advocate for LGBT rights and same-sex marriage. However, the scale of the anti-LGBT movement in Thailand is relatively very small.

On the other hand, in Korea, the anti-LGBT movement is larger in scale compared to the LGBT rights movement. For example, at the queer festival held on July 16, 2022, there were approximately 10,000 participants in support of homosexuality, while the anti-LGBT protesters numbered around 100,000, roughly ten times larger (Lee, 2023). Since 2007, with the initiation of the anti-discrimination law campaign, the scale of the anti-LGBT coalition movement has gradually expanded. As a result, as of now, the anti-discrimination law has not been passed.

So far, there has been scarce research comparing the topic of homosexuality between South Korea and Thailand. Recently, both countries have seen a growing homosexuality economic market, and the influence of LGBT media is on the rise. Therefore, understanding the level of acceptance of homosexuality has become a crucial element in comprehending the culture of each respective nation. Through this study, it was possible to grasp the extent to which religion, media, national policies, and laws in both countries significantly influence the acceptance of homosexuality.

Despite these differences, it is noteworthy that currently, among the younger generation, fan fiction and fan-made novels that include same-sex romances in K-pop boy bands are trending simultaneously in both countries through the Korean Wave (Ryu, 2008a; Ryu, 2011; So, 2008). Moreover, with the increasing popularity of Thai BL (Boys' Love) series in Korea, the demand for Thai homosexual content has been rising. Recently, the collaboration between Korean directors and Thai main actors in the BL drama "Eccentric Romance" and this indicates a growing cultural exchange between the two countries in terms of homosexuality-related content.

Today, as media advancements accelerate and a generational shift to young generation with greater openness takes place, cultural exchange regarding homosexuality between South Korea and Thailand is also rapidly progressing. Comparing the changing perceptions of homosexuality in South Korea and Thailand during a period of increased cultural exchange facilitated by media platforms focusting after Covid19 period could contribute to a better understanding of the cultures of both countries in the future.

5.2 Limitations of the study

After finalizing the main topic for my thesis, I dedicated a considerable amount of time to deliberate upon the appropriate research methodology to employ. While I initially considered using surveys or interviews, I realized that the objective was not to compare specific groups, but rather to focus on the historical factors that could influence the attitudes towards homosexuality in both South Korea and Thailand. So far, there have been no comparative studies on the factors influencing homosexuality in South Korea and Thailand. However, the use of historical records and documents as

primary sources for comparing existing facts, rather than deriving new insights, poses certain limitations in terms of research methodology.

Secondly, there may be other factors beyond the scope of this study that influence homosexuality, apart from the religions, national policies, and media discussed. For instance, Thailand's unique traditions, folk, popular belief and high openness, in addition to the Theravada Buddhism prevalent in the country, could have an impact on Thai people's perspectives on homosexuality. Considering that all the religions discussed in this study were imported, it was necessary to explore local practices, traditions, and especially folk, belief practices related to a society's attitude towards sexuality and gender. However, in order to focus on comparing the religions that have had the greatest influence on South Korea and Thailand, the discussion of folk religion and superstitious practices was omitted, and the extensive number of materials raised concerns about potential distractions from the main topic.

Third, there were some difficulties in determining the scope of history to be covered in this study. In this thesis, I focused on the period following the globalization that occurred after the collapse of closed Communist regimes in 1991, which was marked by significant media advancements. However, as the extensive period from ancient times to the present posed limitations on gathering specific information, I selectively covered key events related to homosexuality.

Particularly, prior to the 1990s when media development was limited and there was a scarcity of clear factual data.

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