



# An examination of the encounter between Blackpink and the People's Party in Thailand: A visual analysis of the interrelation between cultural heritage and popular culture

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the visual framing of Blackpink's concert at Supachalasai National Stadium in Thailand, a heritage site closely linked to the People's Party. By combining iconographic and discourse analysis, this research explores how the concert's visual representation sparked public controversy and discourse. Using Panofsky's iconographic method, the study identifies symbolic contrasts between the stadium's architectural heritage and the vibrant pop culture of the concert. These contrasts highlight differing cultural and historical values, emphasising how pop culture events can impact public perceptions of heritage sites. Discourse analysis of social media comments reveals complex power dynamics, reflecting broader ideological tensions surrounding the People's Party legacy. The findings demonstrate the influential role of digital visuals in shaping public narratives, especially concerning cultural identity and heritage conservation. This research underscores the impact of visual framing in an era where digital media amplifies engagement, offering insights into how heritage sites are reinterpreted within contemporary culture. By analysing both visual and discursive elements, the study sheds light on the interactions between heritage preservation, modern cultural expressions, and public discourse in the digital age.

**Keywords:** *Visual framing, heritage site, pop culture, People's Party, iconographic analysis, discourse analysis*

## INTRODUCTION

Heritage sites are not just relics of the past; they are vibrant spaces with deep historical, cultural, and social meanings. These sites serve as physical embodiments of collective memory and identity, preserving the legacy of past generations while being interpreted and reinterpreted by present and future generations (Ashworth et al., 2007; Smith, 2006; Teixeira et al., 2025). In the digital age, images play a crucial role in this process. Through visual representation on platforms like Instagram, the historical and cultural values of these sites are highlighted and conveyed to broader audiences, visually constructing a destination's identity (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

In contemporary society, heritage sites are increasingly used for modern cultural activities, showcasing their adaptability. For example, pop culture tourism in Japan demonstrates how integrating heritage with pop culture attracts new audiences and aids in preservation (Severino, 2024). Heritage sites serve as venues for concerts, films, and fashion shows, bringing economic benefits and visibility (Teixeira et al., 2025). Film tourism at heritage sites can boost public interest and tourism (Haddad, 2023). However, such uses often spark debate at dissonant heritage sites, creating tension between contemporary events and the site's historical meaning (Ispán, 2024). As Laurajane Smith emphasised, “Heritage is not so much a ‘thing’ but rather a cultural and social process” that links the past with the present (2006, p. 44).

Additionally, digital media amplifies these interactions, connecting pop culture events at heritage sites with global audiences and fostering engagement (Liang et al., 2021; Shaid et al., 2023). According to the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, cultural significance encompasses aesthetic, historical, social, and spiritual values that inform conservation principles (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). While previous studies have examined the economic and social impacts of integrating pop culture with heritage (Severino, 2024; Teixeira et al., 2025), less attention has been paid to how visual communication on digital platforms initiates and frames public controversy. This study addresses that gap by analysing visual content and social media engagement, offering insights into how digital representations shape heritage narratives and influence contemporary public discourse.

A potent example of this interaction occurred on January 7–8, 2023, when the globally influential group Blackpink held their BORN PINK World Tour concert at Bangkok's historic Supachalasai National Stadium. The event is a compelling case study due to its Thai member, Lalisa ‘Lisa’ Manobal, a global icon whose success is a significant source of national pride (Park et al., 2025). It is this pride associated with a modern Thai figure that creates a stark symbolic contrast with the stadium's neglected state, a site tied to the contested legacy of the People's Party, thereby fuelling the controversy central to this study. However, in the days before the concert, an online image depicting the stadium adorned with a Blackpink banner gained significant attention, inciting considerable controversy. Users of social media expressed their discontent regarding the inadequate condition of the venue and its appropriateness for a high-profile concert. Comments included remarks such as, “It is the concert venue for a world-renowned band with a member like Lisa as the host...look at the condition, if no one is embarrassed, I am” (Khaosod, 2023).

Media coverage intensified the debate, linking the stadium's history to the People's Party (MGR Online, 2023). This controversy serves as an example of how

visual representations of pop culture events at heritage sites influence public perceptions and discussions on social media. By focusing on the visual framing of the Blackpink concert at Supachalasai National Stadium, this study explored how images can shape discourse and perceptions of heritage sites within contemporary culture. It is guided by two primary questions: 1) How does the visual framing of the concert articulate the symbolic contrasts between contemporary pop culture and national heritage? 2) How do these visual representations, as they circulate on social media, shape public discourse surrounding the contested cultural legacy of the People's Party?



**Figure 1.** The Supachalasai National Stadium decorated for Blackpink's concert  
Source: Thairath Online (2023)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Supachalasai National Stadium: A contested heritage site*

The Supachalasai National Stadium, which was the first athletics stadium in Thailand and the first at an international level in Asia, was constructed in 1937 in the original area of the Thai “Windsor Palace” that was demolished in 1935 (DOCOMOMO Thailand, 2014). The so-called “Windsor Palace” in Thai was modelled on Windsor Castle in Windsor near London whose exterior was a castle, but whose interior was a royal residence, like a palace, where Queen Elizabeth II lived recently until her death. On June 24, 1932, a group of civilians and military officers known as the People's Party staged a peaceful revolution to overthrow the absolute monarchy and establish a democratic government in Thailand. However, the People's Party governed the country only for 15 years, and then the supreme military leader, who was allied with the royalists, regained political power and crown property after the Siamese revolution of 1932 through coup d'état on November 8, 1947, which terminated the People's Party's influence (Tarling, 1996).

Although the People's Party governed for only 15 years, its ideology reshaped architecture, especially in public buildings, which Chattri Prakitnonthakan (2009) termed as “People's Party art and architecture.” The Supachalasai National Stadium, designed by a first-generation Thai architect, reflects this ideology, with art deco facades and

streamlined sculptures (Viryasiri, 2019). The symbols of the Department of Physical Education, positioned atop the north façade pillars, blend Western architectural influences with Thai values to promote public health (Prakitnonthakan, 2009). Situated on land leased annually from Chulalongkorn University, the stadium's management faces challenges stemming from its historical and political complexities (The Committee on Sports, 2020). Built on the site of the former "Windsor Palace", the stadium became a controversial symbol of the People's Party's legacy.

### *Situating the research: Heritage debates in the digital sphere*

Social media has transformed communication regarding public issues, as the recommendation algorithms used by platforms can create significant bias, potentially leading to the algorithmic manipulation of public discourse (Hasibuan et al., 2024). Visual content plays a powerful role in this environment, as research confirms that visuals significantly increase user engagement (Dhanesh et al., 2022). This dynamic contributes to the rise of visual activism—a trend where citizens in the ASEAN region use photography and social media to express grievances and mobilise collective action (Young, 2021).

For example, research in Indonesia shows how Instagram hashtags construct selective visual representations of urban heritage, often highlighting colonial architecture while sidelining vernacular narratives (Rahmawati et al., 2024). In Cambodia, studies have explored the tension between official "authorised" heritage discourses and alternative practices shaped by public debate and civic engagement (Fauveaud & Esposito, 2021). This growing body of regional scholarship underscores the importance of examining visual framing in contested heritage contexts such as Thailand which is the focus this study aims to advance.

### *Theoretical and analytical framework*

A key concept for comprehending controversies via online images is visual framing, particularly in relation to social issues. Visual framing refers to the use of visual elements to shape the interpretation of an event or issue. It helps people understand images as both contributors to meaning and as objects that are framed by cultural and political forces (Pasternak, 2021). Currently, Bock (2020) offers a model for visual framing that pays close attention to the unique characteristics of images. This model strengthens the paradigm's explanatory and critical potential. By applying Bock's three-part model of visual framing, this research provides a nuanced analysis of how images are selected, created, and used to communicate complex cultural narratives. This paradigm can significantly influence public opinion and discourse by emphasising themes or messages. Even though the paradigm is not new, the Blackpink concert at the Supachalasai National Stadium highlights the power of visual framing in contemporary society which is influenced and connected by digital communication. Understanding how visual content influences public narratives is crucial. This research explores how visual framing of the Blackpink concert at the Supachalasai National Stadium influenced online discourse, revealing the dynamics of pop cultural events at a heritage site.

Although visual framing helps us understand how images shape public discourse, it often prioritises immediate visual impact and framing techniques, potentially overlooking deeper cultural contexts (Pasternak, 2021; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). This limitation

makes it essential to emphasise iconography in analysing the Blackpink concert images. Iconography reveals intricate cultural symbols and historical narratives, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of the interaction between pop culture and heritage, and providing a richer analysis of public reactions to visual content (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Iconographic analysis, involving pre-iconographic, iconographic analysis, and iconological interpretation (Panofsky, 1955), offers a robust framework for examining symbolic meanings in visual representations, as demonstrated in recent studies on cultural symbols and contemporary architecture (Najaf et al., 2025; Wahidiyat & Carrollina, 2023). Applying this method to the Blackpink concert images at the Supachalasai National Stadium uncovers the complex interaction between pop culture and heritage sites.

Complementing these approaches, discourse analysis offers insight into how language in social media responses reflects and constructs social meanings and power dynamics around these visuals. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013) captures the ideological and interpretive dimensions in public reactions, while prior studies (KhosraviNik & Amer, 2023) highlight how social media discourse can amplify or contest dominant cultural narratives. Taken together, these methods provide a layered understanding of the Blackpink concert's impact on public perception, examining both the symbolic depth of visuals and the ideologies they elicit.

## METHODS

This study applies Bock's (2020) visual framing model as well as Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) multi-level framework to analyse images at denotative, connotative, and ideological levels. Data from Facebook, primarily comprising images and comments related to the controversy, were collected through Mandala AI (Mandala-AI, n.d.). Data was sourced from Facebook, a dominant social media platform for news consumption and public discourse in Thailand (Newman et al., 2023), making it a rich site for capturing reactions to the controversy. The data collection focused on public engagement surrounding the Blackpink concert at Supachalasai National Stadium from January 5–15, 2023. This dataset, comprising 27 posts with 63 images and 14,903 comments, forms a comprehensive base for examining public reactions.

This study used NVivo 14 to manage and systematically code qualitative data, enhancing the iconographic analysis by structuring and coding visual elements across 63 images. Through NVivo, iconographic analysis was conducted in three stages, based on Panofsky's (1955) approach: the pre-iconographic stage identified basic visual elements, the iconographic stage interpreted cultural symbols, and the iconological stage explored deeper ideological meanings. NVivo's visualisation tools helped trace relationships between visual elements within and across these images. This approach was carried out using open, axial, and selective coding, following Strauss and Corbin's (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) grounded theory model: open coding initially identified and labelled individual elements, axial coding grouped related themes, and selective coding refined the themes most relevant to the People's Party heritage and broader public discourse.

In the discourse analysis stage, Fairclough's (2013) critical discourse analysis was applied to a subset of 377 comments, focusing on description, interpretation, and explanation. NVivo facilitated systematic coding, incorporating thematic coding

techniques as demonstrated by Mohd Nor and Baharuddin (2021) to capture online public sentiment on significant social issues. This approach established a comprehensive thematic structure that illuminated how images on social media shape public discourse surrounding heritage and contemporary culture. In line with ethical guidelines, all data were sourced from public posts and user-identifying information was anonymised during analysis.

## RESULTS

This study examined the intersection of heritage and pop culture at Supachalasai National Stadium through structured iconographic and discourse analyses. Using Panofsky's three-stage iconographic method—pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconological—key visual and symbolic elements revealed the interplay between the stadium's historical significance and its contemporary use. Complementing this, the discourse analysis of social media comments uncovered diverse public perceptions and ideological tensions surrounding the People's Party heritage. A visual framing analysis further illustrated how these visual contrasts shape public narratives on cultural identity and modernisation.

### *Visual elements of heritage and pop culture: Pre-iconographic findings*

To explore the interaction between heritage and pop culture, this study applied Panofsky's three-step iconographic analysis (1955). In the pre-iconographic phase, key factual elements within the images were identified, including architectural features, concert banners, and public signage. These elements were then organised into categories, providing a foundation for further analysis in the iconographic and iconological phases.

Images were analysed to identify key visual elements, which were systematically categorised. The Supachalasai National Stadium's visual elements were grouped into categories reflecting its architecture, facade condition, and national symbolism, capturing its historical and cultural significance. Regarding Blackpink, visual identity, member portraits, and physical display banners were identified, emphasising vibrant design motifs and pop culture appeal, particularly focusing on Lisa, the Thai member. Contextual visuals integrated text and imagery, reflecting public perceptions and historical references.

As shown in Table 1, the number of images indicates how often each category appeared, while coded references reflect the frequency of specific visual elements. Rather than focusing solely on quantity, these metrics highlight both dominant and unique visual elements that contribute to the overall narrative. Higher counts suggest these elements were central to the visual framing, while fewer references point to symbolic or contextual nuances that enrich the interpretation of the cultural context.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate examples of the coded visual elements and how they align with the categories, which are described in Table 1. This categorisation paves the way for the iconographic analysis, which delves into the cultural and symbolic significance of these visual elements.

**Table 1.** Description and coded references of pre-iconographic analysis

| Category                             | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Number of Images | Coded References |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Supachalasai National Stadium</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                  |                  |
| Stadium Aesthetic                    | Encompasses architectural features such as the central part, main facade, stadium colour, towers, wall clock, and sculptures of Indra. It also highlights external features such as the front gate and the sign showing the stadium name on the fence.                                                                                                        | 56               | 233              |
| Structural State                     | Covers the physical condition and maintenance, including ambient and temporal objects like movable fences, people, cars, and the guard room. Additionally, it addresses exterior defects such as mould on facades and fractures on the front gate, along with unkempt elements like vegetation growth, disorganized cables, a Takraw hoop and an LED display. | 49               | 170              |
| National Representation              | Highlighting the national symbolism associated with the stadium. This includes visual elements such as the Thai national flag, national signage, and government logos.                                                                                                                                                                                        | 46               | 93               |
| <b>Blackpink</b>                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                  |                  |
| Visual Identity of the Concert       | Features black and pink colour backgrounds in a modern abstract style and concert titles with typographic designs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 37               | 85               |
| Portraits of Blackpink Members       | Displays all members of Blackpink, with a special focus on the Thai member                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 37               | 43               |
| Physical Display Banners             | Showcases tangible vinyl banners prominently featuring Blackpink concert visuals decorating the stadium.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 37               | 43               |
| <b>Contextual Visual</b>             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                  |                  |
| Historical Context                   | Visual elements that incorporate text and additional imagery focusing on historical context, including references to the People's Party, "Windsor Palace", and previously arranged events.                                                                                                                                                                    | 15               | 27               |
| Public Perception                    | Features visual elements that incorporate text and additional imagery focusing on public opinions, including headline texts of comments and captured images of Facebook comments.                                                                                                                                                                             | 13               | 16               |

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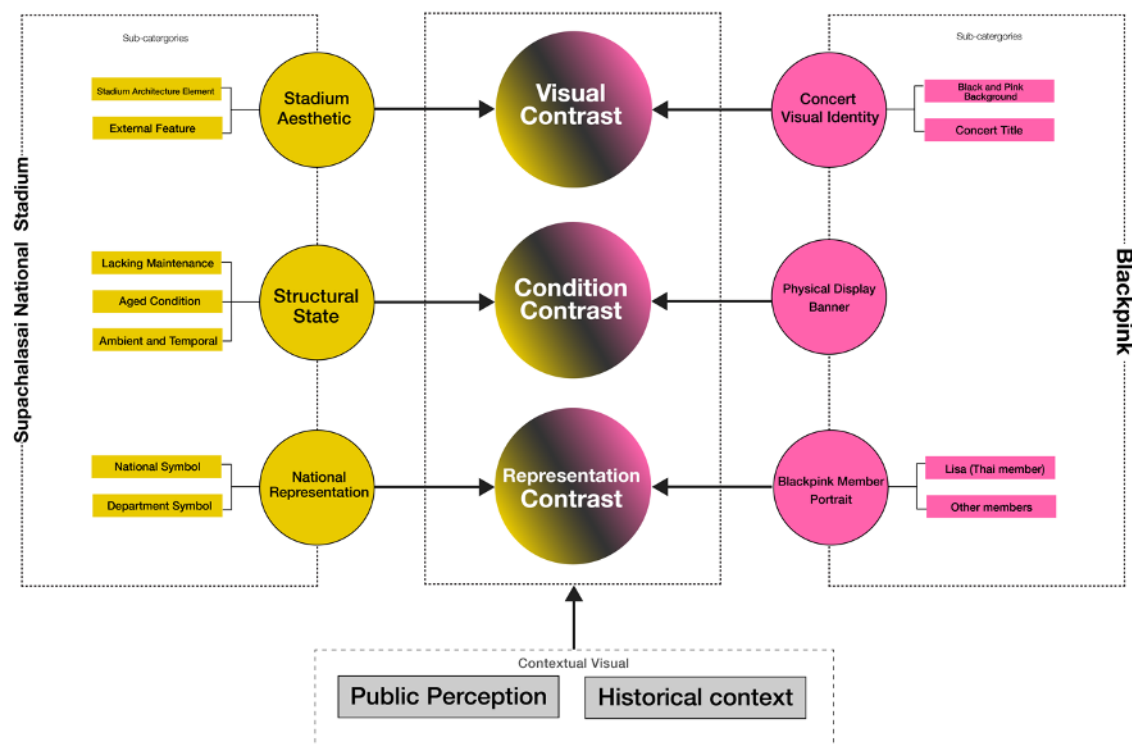
**Figure 2.** Example of visual elements coded in the categories  
Source of image: Khaosod Online (2023), edited by the author



**Figure 3.** Examples of contextual visual elements  
Source: MGR Online (2023), generated and edited by the author

### Symbolic contrasts in symbolic representation: Iconographic findings

This analysis, visualised in Figure 4, revealed three primary contrasts: visual, representation, and condition.



**Figure 4.** Key contrasts between heritage and pop culture represented in coded categories (Generated by the author, derived from NVivo 14 visualisations)

**Visual Contrast:** The *stadium aesthetic*, characterised by vertical lines, simple and plain elements, and geometric patterns, contrasts with the *visual identity* of Blackpink. The vibrant colours and modern graphic design of the banners, featuring abstract lines and trendy typography, highlight the juxtaposition between the historical architectural elements and contemporary pop culture.

**Condition Contrast:** The *structural state* of the stadium, marked by neglect and visible deterioration, contrasts with the *physical display* banners. While the stadium exhibits signs of decay and lack of maintenance, the newly crafted vinyl banners display the freshness and attention typical of modern concert visuals. This disparity emphasises the differing levels of care and attention directed toward these elements.

**Representation Contrast:** The *national representation* was intended to symbolise national pride. In contrast, the *Blackpink member portraits*, especially those featuring Lisa, evoke pride and a global cultural impact, underscoring a modern, vibrant identity that resonates with fans.

Additionally, the following three contrasts between the visual elements of the stadium and Blackpink influence the appearance of additional visuals. **Public Perception Visuals:** Visual elements from social media comments, such as screenshots and textual overlays, reflect the public's immediate reactions. Comments expressing feelings of shame and embarrassment about the stadium's condition are visually highlighted, indicating

critical public discourse around the venue's suitability for hosting a global pop event. **Historical Visuals:** Historical references, such as images of the People's Party and the "Windsor Palace", appear in supplementary imagery and text. These visuals place the stadium within a broader historical and political narrative, emphasising its transformation from a symbol of the Thai revolution under the People's Party to its current use as a contemporary concert venue.

### *Overlooked cultural significance: Iconological findings*

The interaction between the heritage of the People's Party and Blackpink at the Supachalasai National Stadium reveals significant contradictions in terms of condition, visuals and representation. Blackpink's presence acts as a catalyst, increasing the stadium's visibility in contemporary society, as indicated by the findings of contextual visuals in the public's perception. According to the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 2013), the iconological analysis delves deeper into the cultural significance of the site, uncovering how the heritage's aesthetic, historical, and social values are often overshadowed by contemporary elements, thus highlighting these contradictions.

**Aesthetic Value:** The Supachalasai National Stadium was built during the People's Party era and features art deco architectural elements, including geometric patterns, vertical lines, and a plain, structured design (DOCOMOMO Thailand, 2014). These elements reflect the values of the People's Party, emphasising simplicity and modernity. The architectural style, characterised by vertical lines and concrete textures, symbolise a departure from traditional Thai styles toward a more modern aesthetic. In contrast, the vibrant, dynamic visuals associated with Blackpink, including brightly coloured banners and abstract designs, represent a stark departure from the stadium's original aesthetic. This visual juxtaposition underscores a deeper cultural tension between the preservation of historical aesthetics and the encroachment of contemporary cultural expressions. The clash of these aesthetics not only disrupts the visual integrity of the heritage site, but also challenges the cultural narratives embedded within its architecture.

**Historic Value:** The stadium has historic value as a symbol of the People's Party era and its modernisation efforts (Prakitnonthakan, 2009). However, its current state, characterised by neglect and decay, starkly contrasts with the fresh and vibrant imagery brought in by the Blackpink concert. This visual dichotomy raises questions about the public's commitment to preserving the historical significance of such sites. The degradation of the stadium, juxtaposed with the modern vibrancy of the concert visuals, serves as a metaphor for the broader societal neglect of historical narratives. Historical contextual visuals, including images of the People's Party and Windsor Palace, further complicate this narrative by situating the stadium within a broader political and cultural discourse. This context challenges the public to reconsider the significance of the stadium; is it a relic of a bygone era or a living symbol worthy of preservation?

**Social Value:** The stadium's national importance is underscored by symbols such as the Thai flag and government logos. However, the juxtaposition of these national symbols with Blackpink, especially Lisa, who is a Thai artist of a globally recognised group, creates a multi-faceted narrative. While Blackpink signifies modern global culture and a source of Thai pride, the stadium's deteriorated condition presents a conflicting image. This contradiction is exacerbated by public and media narratives, where online comments reveal a spectrum of emotions from embarrassment to nostalgic pride. The

presence of Lisa adds a layer of national pride, yet this pride is often overshadowed by the physical decline of the stadium, reflecting a societal struggle to reconcile contemporary global influences with traditional national values.

The iconological analysis elucidates the cultural, historical, and societal dynamics inherent in the intersection of heritage and pop culture. The Supachalasai National Stadium, through its visual contrasts, exemplifies the tensions between heritage preservation and contemporary cultural influences, provoking discourse on national pride, historical memory, and modern expression. These visual themes underscore broader issues of cultural identity and the evolving role of heritage sites amidst contemporary events. This context provides a foundation for the subsequent discourse analysis, which examines public responses to these visual contrasts, as reflected in Facebook comments, to further illuminate how audiences engage with and interpret the People's Party legacy and the stadium's contemporary use.

### *Public discourse on the People's Party heritage through visual contrasts*

The Blackpink concert at Supachalasai National Stadium sparked significant online discussion on social media, primarily driven by visual contrasts between pop culture and cultural heritage. To examine how these visual contrasts amplified the controversy surrounding the People's Party heritage, a selective approach was taken, focusing on a subset of 377 comments relevant to the historical context identified in the iconographic analysis. The NVivo-facilitated analysis of these comments revealed four key themes: Management and maintenance issues, criticism of political context, public sentiment and reactions, and historical and cultural references. These themes provide insight into how the public engaged with both the concert and the heritage site, reflecting broader socio-political tensions and cultural values associated with the People's Party heritage.

**Management and Maintenance Issues:** Public discourse heavily criticised the stadium's management, pointing to its disrepair and perceived mismanagement. Comments noted the complex relationship between the Department of Physical Education and Chulalongkorn University, the landowner (Viryasiri, 2019), with some remarking, *"The contract will expire soon, so further development would be wasted."* Speculation about the university's intentions was a recurring theme, with users expressing concerns that the neglect was deliberate, as one commenter asked, *"Chulalongkorn University will demolish it to build a department store instead, so why would they renovate the stadium?"* Nonetheless, some comments favoured preservation, recognising the stadium's historical and cultural value despite its current condition.

**Criticism of the Political Context:** The discourse surrounding the Blackpink concert at Supachalasai National Stadium revealed criticisms targeting different political actors and ideologies. Criticisms of the People's Party's legacy itself included claims that it *"stole the royal family's property"* and left *"a legacy of disrespect."* In contrast, some comments criticised the Royal family, highlighting ideological divisions between liberal supporters of the People's Party and conservative royalists. A notable finding within this theme was how the debate was frequently framed as a generational conflict, with criticism aimed directly at younger supporters for their perceived ignorance of history. This was exemplified by comments such as, *"The liberal side is ignorant, not studying history, and blaming their forefather Pridi Panomyong (one of the key leaders of the People's Party),"* and more pointedly as, *"It's a self-contradiction for the kids who support the People's Party."*

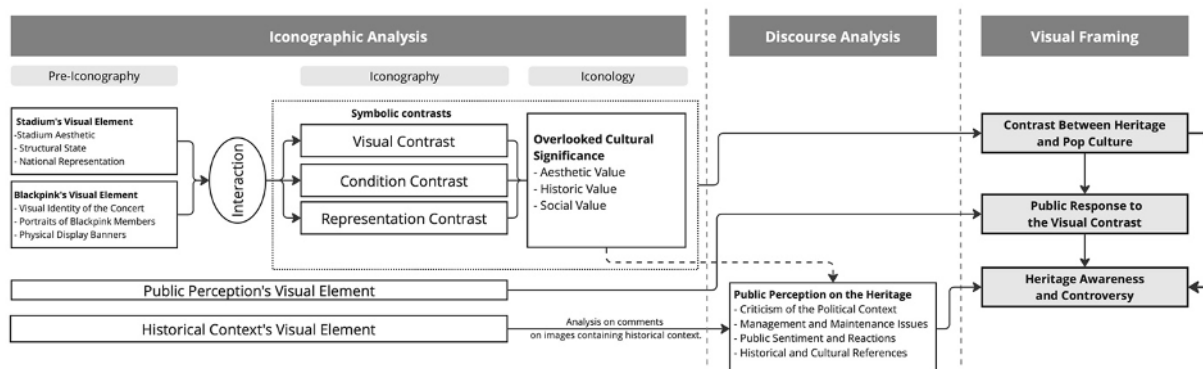
**Public Sentiment and Reactions:** Reactions to the stadium's condition and the concert organisation were varied. Public sentiment included sharp architectural critiques, with some describing the venue's appearance as "*Retro style, like Europeanism,*" while others questioned its functional suitability, arguing that "*it's a football stadium, not a concert venue.*" A different line of criticism was directed at the media for sensationalising the issue, with one user stating, "*The media is making false connections; it's a matter of the private company organising the concert.*" This discourse highlighted a spectrum of public expectations, touching on both immediate concerns and broader cultural identity issues.

**Historical and Cultural References:** Although less frequent, references to the Supachalasai National Stadium's historical and cultural significance elicited strong emotional responses. The sense of historical loss over the demolished Windsor Palace was palpable, from simple expressions of regret like "*After hearing the story, I cried,*" to more detailed critiques of the People's Party's legacy, such as, "*So sad for the palace. They (the People's Party) never thought to keep or create anything good for later generations, only leaving a bad symbol.*" This nostalgia also led to calls to reshape the stadium's identity.

### Visual framing of the heritage controversy and public discourse

This research is based on the visual framing theory, which states that the presentation of images significantly influences viewers' interpretations and responses (Bock, 2020). Bock's model proposes that visual framing is influenced by contingency, materiality, and ideology, asserting that images do not merely reflect reality, but actively construct it by emphasising specific viewpoints while concealing others. These framing elements are essential in shaping public perception, particularly in situations of cultural or social tension.

In the case of the Blackpink concert at Supachalasai National Stadium, this study employed visual framing to examine the interaction between heritage and pop culture. Using iconographic analysis (pre-iconography, iconography, and iconology) followed by discourse analysis, the study revealed how visual elements and public discourse shape perceptions as illustrated in Figure 5. Three visual frames emerge: The contrast between heritage and pop culture, the public response to the visual contrast, and heritage awareness and controversy. These frames highlight how visual contrasts prompt public engagement, as discourse analysis of the Facebook comments explores themes of political context, management, public sentiment, and historical references. Together, these analyses capture the complex interplay between contemporary cultural events and heritage preservation.



**Figure 5.** Analytical framework for examining visual framing and public discourse

**Contrast Between Heritage and Pop Culture:** The original photographs presented a stark contrast between the heritage site and the pop culture event, drawing attention to the differences between the architectural significance of Supachalasai National Stadium and the vibrant visual identity of Blackpink. The visuals underscored the stadium's poor condition, contrasting sharply with the modern, polished appearance of concert imagery. This neglect reflects poorly on the historical significance of the stadium as a heritage site linked to the People's Party. Furthermore, the symbols surrounding the stadium, such as the national flag and signage, failed to evoke national pride when juxtaposed with the globally recognised Blackpink brand.

This juxtaposition provoked discussions regarding the appropriateness and implications of using heritage sites for contemporary events, reflecting broader societal debates on cultural preservation and modernisation. Social media users' comments highlighted concerns over the stadium's outdated aesthetic and its perceived lack of suitability as a concert venue. Additionally, users expressed opinions tied to political issues and the stadium's deteriorating reputation. Although references to the stadium's historical context and its complex managerial structure were less prominent, they still contributed to the discourse.

The framing of these images as a contrast between heritage and pop culture stems from contradictions identified through iconographic analysis, as well as the consideration of Supachalasai National Stadium's cultural significance. Contextual visuals, including public perception and historical references, also played a role in reinforcing the controversy, setting the stage for a second visual frame.

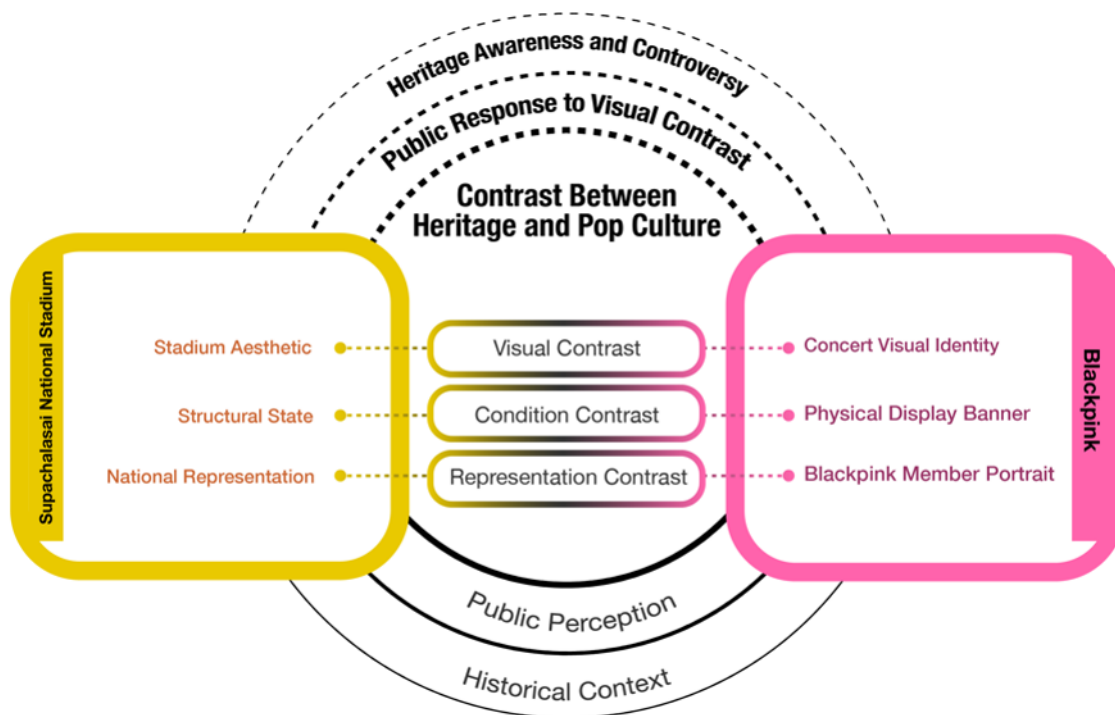
**Public Response to Visual Contrast:** Following the initial public response, media outlets amplified the visual contrasts by capturing and incorporating social media users' reactions to the images of the contrast between heritage and pop culture. This second frame goes beyond merely presenting the interaction between the stadium and Blackpink; it emphasises the public's reaction, thereby reinforcing and expanding the controversy. Media outlets highlighted a spectrum of opinions, from support and admiration to criticism and concern, shifting the focus from the interaction itself to public responses. This frame illustrates the social implications of the event, showing how public opinion, captured and magnified through visual content on social media, drives and escalates the discourse. The media's emphasis on public reactions underscores the power of social media in shaping narratives and controversies, making the issue more widespread than it might otherwise have been.

**Heritage Awareness and Controversy:** Although visual elements that emphasise the historical context of Supachalasai National Stadium are fewer than those in the first two frames, they nonetheless bring to light the contested nature of this heritage site associated with the People's Party. These elements serve not only as reminders of the stadium's historical significance, but also as prompts for a dominant narrative about its history, particularly regarding its connection to the former "Windsor Palace", which was demolished to build the stadium.

The images act as catalysts for public discussion on these themes. Discourse analysis revealed that social media users expressed opinions on historical and political aspects, referencing both the People's Party era of 1932 and its modern supporters, sometimes called the "new generation" of the People's Party. Additionally, sentiments of nostalgia and loss over the demolition of Windsor Palace reflect the influence of dominant historical narratives.

Moreover, the comments conveyed reflections on the cultural significance of the People's Party heritage, coupled with critiques of authorities for their handling of historical and political issues. Media outlets were also criticised for amplifying the controversy by focusing on sensational aspects to capture public attention. While the primary focus remained on the concert venue, this framing broadened the debate, fostering awareness about the People's Party heritage and emphasising the stadium's position as a contested space.

These analyses reveal how visual framing can transform a cultural event into a site of public discourse, prompting reflections on heritage and modernisation. The interplay between the Supachalasai National Stadium and Blackpink's concert illustrates how visual contrasts activate societal debates on historical memory and national identity. As shown in Figure 6, this interaction between heritage and pop culture triggers a ripple effect, where public perception and engagement expand the initial visual contrasts into broader heritage-related controversies.



**Figure 6.** Visual framing of heritage and pop culture through controversy

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the digital age, the visual representation of heritage on social media is crucial for shaping public perception and constructing a destination's identity (Rahmawati et al., 2024). This study confirms that images can trigger significant engagement and controversy on social media. The visuals from Blackpink's concert at the Supachalasai National Stadium serve as a powerful illustration of the interaction between pop culture and heritage. Heritage sites, embodying legacies from past generations, are continuously reinterpreted by contemporary society (Smith, 2006). Through iconographic analysis, which includes

pre-iconography, iconography, and iconological interpretation, these images shape public perception and highlight the integration of heritage into a modern context. Pop culture significantly influences cultural narratives and public perception (Storey, 2021). The powerful visual contrasts identified in this study have significant implications for heritage management, demonstrating how contemporary pop culture events can dramatically reframe the public's perception of a site's historical relevance.

The iconographic analysis revealed how visual elements from the concert highlight the contrasting relevance of the People's Party heritage in contemporary society. The People's Party heritage is historically, architecturally, and culturally significant in the Thai society, and this was particularly so during the Thai revolution (Prakitnonthakan, 2009; Tarling, 1996). However, the concert's visual framing often presents a contrasting narrative, drawing attention to the site's neglect. This "Heritage Awareness and Controversy" frame, understood through iconological interpretation, exacerbated negative emotions and led to calls for addressing the stadium's condition. The public's emotional reactions, driven by feelings of disgust, disappointment, and nostalgic pride, fuelled the discourse on the need for change. This demonstrates how, in a digital context, the emotional response to visual content can provoke public action and collective engagement (Young, 2021).

While Bock's (2020) visual framing model emphasises the materiality, contingency, and ideology within images, this study extends her framework by integrating iconographic analysis and discourse analysis. This multi-layered approach enables a more nuanced understanding of how visual framing operates across symbolic elements, public responses, and broader ideological debates on the intersection of heritage and pop culture. The integration of Panofsky's iconographic approach elucidates symbolic significances, whereas Fairclough's discourse analysis uncovers power relations and ideological dynamics within public discourse, especially as expressed through social media interactions. This study enhances Bock's approach by illustrating the reciprocal interaction between public responses and media framing, emphasising the co-construction of narratives concerning cultural heritage.

The ongoing discourse reflects the controversial legacy of the People's Party, impacting conservation decisions around the Supachalasai National Stadium. Complex challenges arise from both the political climate, which exerts pressure for the demolition of sites linked to the People's Party (Chotpradit, 2018), and issues of property management (The Committee on Sports, 2020). Public dissatisfaction with the stadium's condition echoes Chulalongkorn University's broader management approach, which has favoured commercial redevelopment over heritage preservation, as seen in cases like the Scala Theatre demolition (Chotiphatphaisal & Theerawatanachai, 2020). Such negative sentiment often drives calls for redevelopment over conservation (Aigwi et al., 2023). While this paper provides a deep analysis of this case, future research could apply this integrated framework to other contexts where pop culture and contested heritage intersect.

Social media is particularly effective in raising awareness and shaping public opinion on heritage conservation (Liang et al., 2021), while heritage controversies can shape urban outcomes and management practices (Fauveaud & Esposito, 2021). Additionally, digital platforms facilitate broader engagement and play a significant role in shaping cultural identity by connecting audiences with cultural heritage and contemporary interpretations (Veronika & Murtiningsih, 2022). This paper emphasises that effective management and recognition of the stadium's value are crucial, rather than removal or reconstruction

based on ideological divides. Iconological insights further underscore the importance of preserving the stadium's cultural and societal significance.

This research illustrates the value of integrating the visual framing theory with iconographic analysis to understand how images influence public discourse. Iconography provides deeper insights into the cultural significance of images (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011), while discourse analysis of social media comments helps reveal how images shape public perception. Social media has transformed communication regarding public issues, as the recommendation algorithms used by platforms can create significant bias, potentially leading to the algorithmic manipulation of public discourse (Hasibuan et al., 2024). The close public attention to contradictions in the images highlights the need for responsible media practices, guiding public discussions toward critical learning and informed dialogue.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the critical role of visual framing in mediating the relationship between heritage and contemporary culture in the digital age. By moving beyond a standard framing analysis, this research makes a distinct theoretical contribution. It proposes an integrated framework that combines visual framing with the symbolic depth of iconographic analysis and the socio-political insights of discourse analysis. This multi-layered approach provides a more robust methodology for understanding how visual contrasts on digital platforms activate public discourse, reframe historical narratives, and become central to the negotiation of cultural identity. Ultimately, this study extends the application of visual framing theory to the complex interplay of heritage, pop culture, and public memory in an era of digital engagement.

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