Read the article from The Guardian online below.

The Guardian: Thailand wants Buddha tattoo ban for tourists

Culture minister says tattoos deemed ‘fashionable’ by visitors seen by many Thais as offensive and disrespectful

Thailand has ordered a crackdown on tourists getting Buddhist tattoos. Photograph: Christophe Archambault/AFP/Getty Images

Tourists visiting Thailand should be barred from getting culturally insensitive Buddhist tattoos, the culture ministry says.

Niphit Intharasombat, the culture minister, said residents have complained that tattoo parlours are etching sacred images of Buddha and other religious images on to the skin of non-Buddhist visitors.

"Foreigners see these tattoos as fashion," Niphit said on the ministry's website.

They do not think of respecting religion, or they may not be aware that these tattoos can be offensive, he added.

Thailand is mostly Buddhist, and Buddha statues and images are considered sacred objects of worship.

Niphit said the culture ministry had asked Thai tattoo parlours to halt the activity.

According to the official news agency, NNT, he also asked provincial governors to "inspect tattoo studios and seek their co-operation".

NNT also claimed Niphit wants a new law banning the practice.

Reference List


Discussion Question: Should some tattoos be banned if they offend people?
Discussion

‘Our findings provide new insights of young women’s experiences after getting a tattoo and the meanings they linked to their tattoos. Similar to Radley (1995), we found tattoos were reminders of personal experiences. For most of our participants, tattoos were more than simple acts of decorating the body. These participants assigned a range of thoughtfully constructed meanings to their tattoos that were connected to the self, life events, relationships, and to spirituality. For some participants, however, tattoos had no specific meaning and they shared they had no intention of applying any meanings to their tattoos. These participants were often dissatisfied with their tattoos and referred to their decision to obtain a tattoo as a mistake. We recognise, however that they eventually assigned a meaning to their tattoos by describing them as a result of a whim and a reminder of their impulsive behaviour.

Our study contributes to the literature primarily by focusing on women and their tattoo experiences uncovering relationships between tattoos and ideas about the self. The majority of participants indicated that their tattoo/tattoos were reflective of their personal values, interests, and their heritage. This finding is consistent with those of previous researchers’ who found that tattoos were outward expressions of the self and that people sued tattoos to declare who they are (Atkinson, 2003; Featherstone, 1999; Giddens, 1991; Kosut, 2000; Pitts, 2003; Sweetman, 1999).

Individual selves and bodies are not static but are subject to change over a person’s lifetime (Kosut, 2000). Our research demonstrated the meaning of tattoos is dynamic. Because selves change over a lifetime, the selection of a relatively permanent form of dress to communicate an aspect of self can be problematic. If someone selects a tattoo to communicate an aspect of self at one stage in life (age 180 and then matures and experiences new life events that result in changes to self, they may find the original meaning of the tattoo is no longer compatible with their current self. If this was the case, participants went through a type of negotiation or revision process where new meaning/meanings were added to tattoos appeared to evolve over time. This seemed especially to be the case when the tattoo held personal and private meanings. In contrast, when the tattoo held a widely shared meaning (e.g. Star of David) and this meaning was incompatible with ideas about the self, some participants wanted to have their tattoo removed or altered. This finding is consistent with Shelton and Peters
who found that tattooed individuals engaged in tattoo removal to separate from an undesired aspect of self.

Tattoos also resulted in changes to self-perceptions and changes in behaviours. Consistent with Sweetman (1999), we found participant’s self-confidence increased after getting tattooed. After going through the painful procedure of obtaining a tattoo, participants noted feeling both empowered that they had completed an act of self-creation. Participants also indicated that having tattoos on their bodies affected clothing styles purchased and worn. In making clothing selections, they often considered the interaction between the clothing item and their tattoos so that a clothing style did not interfere with the presentation of their tattoo. Interestingly, for some participants, tattoos became a concerted criterion that possessors used to judge or evaluate their own behaviours. This finding nugget that once tattooed these individuals monitored themselves so that their behaviour was consistent with the meaning of their tattoos.

Many of our participants acknowledged that it was important to get tattoos in areas of their bodies that could be concealed with clothing. This finding supports Goffman’s (1959) ideas about the relationship between dress and self-presentation. Participants made rational decisions about tattoo locations that they could control which others (audiences) would have access to this cue and have the opportunity to make inferences using it. Unlike men, who Howson (2004) noted often locate their tattoos in public areas of the body that are constantly displayed, our participants had a desire to control who had access to this dress cue.

For the list of references please go to the journal article to be found through library search.

Discussion Question: Are there differences with regards to tattoos (both responses towards them, and by those getting tattoo work done) in relation to gender, age, race, class, sexualities, disabilities, geographical locations? Consider each of these in turn.

**Literature Review/Theoretical Framework**

‘Goffman’s (195) discussion of the concept of self-presentation guided our inquiry. Self-presentation can be described as involving an actor’s shaping his or her behaviour to create a desired impression in others (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Goffman noted the importance of self-presentation and how everyday details about people’s behaviour allowed others to make inferences about the motivations that underlie those behaviours. Individuals are thought to purposively control their behaviour to represent desired attributes and try to shape the way that others see them (Goffman, 1959). If individuals are interested in managing their self-presentations using dress, they need to know the dress cues that others’ use and the meanings of those dress cues that form the basis of other’s influences as well as have an understanding of the person perception process.

Livesley and Bromley (19730 in their work with adolescents outlined a process of person perception. Their process begins with cue selection. Selected cues could consist of gestures, body language, facial expressions, or articles of dress. Perceives select cues that are the most salient to them. They then use the cues to formulate judgments or to make interpretative inferences about the observed individuals presenting those cues. Next, perceivers can assign additional attributes about the observed individual based on his or her initial interpretive inferences. This is called making extended inferences. The additional inferences can be made about the person or about other people associated with the person (e.g. family members). The perceiver then uses this inferred information to shape their subsequent behaviours relative to the observed individual. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that people engage in a person perception process, that it impacts their behaviour toward others, that a variety of dress cues are used as the basis for their perceptions,, and that a variety of information is inferred(see Damhorst, 1990; Johnson, Yoo, Kim and Lennon, 2008).

Combining Goffman’s (1959) thoughts concerning self-presentation with Livesley and Bromley’s (1973) view of the process of person perception and applying those ideas to our research suggests that individuals may use tattoos to communicate specific known attributes about themselves (i.e. actual self) and consequently attempt to manage other’s perceptions and behaviours. They might also use tattoos to communicate self-attributes they do not yet possess but desire to possess(i.e. ideal self) in the future.
For example, a young man might be an avid rider of Harley Davidson motorcycles. The attributes that have been linked to this brand include valuing personal freedom, masculinity and possessing an outlaw mystique (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). The young man has ridden a Harley Davidson motorcycle exclusively and views this brand’s attributes as consistent with his own. The cue that might symbolize those attributes (e.g. masculinity, freedom) is the Harley Davison brand logo. Thus, he may decide to get a brand logo tattoo to communicate to others both his personal attributes and his commitment to Harley Davidson motorcycles. The brand tattoo in this case, is selected because it reflects an array of attributes and the person wants those attributes to be inferred about him because they are perceived as aspects of his actual self. A young woman might get a Harley Davidson logo tattoo because she aspires to be a Harley rider and aspires to the traits linked to this brand. In this instance, the tattoo could be said to communicate an attribute of her ideal self, that is, what she wants to be.

To be successful in using dress in self-presentations, one needs to know what self-attributes one wants to communicate to others and what dress cues communicate those attributes. In both the previous examples, the individuals desired a specific tattoo because the tattoo had a prior agreed upon meaning, that meaning was relatively stable, and the individuals wanted that meaning to be inferred about them. Not all possible tattoos have shared meanings and even if they did, like other aspects of dress, these meanings may change over time (Roah-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Therefore, questions remain including: how does a tattoo that is obtained without a predetermined meaning become meaningful for its wearer? How does the meaning of tattoos change over time? Do some tattoos remain meaningless for their wearers?.

Reference list – you need to find the article by using Library search for the reference list (the journal article is available in full format online).

**Discussion question:** Do some tattoos remain meaningless for their wearers?
Question: Relating the ideas from tattoos to your Assignment.

We have focused on tattoos in relation to identity but you will have read the two page extract from the journal article about Goffman and self-presentation. In your groups, firstly say what you think you will focusing on in your assignment 1 (e.g. sports, clothing, food, religion). Obviously this depends on your interviewee/questionnaire responses to a large extent.

Once you have said that, and having read ideas about Goffman (you can use your phones to look up Goffman on the internet if you wish), think about how Goffman could be applied in relation to identity in the areas you have mentioned. E.g. Sports – someone might want to present themselves in terms of supporting a particular team by wearing a team shirt (this is a cue in relation to self-presentation of identity).