

Attitudes Towards Britain and the British – Year II

Thailand

Research Study Conducted for
the British Council

May 2000

Contents

Preface	2
Summary of Findings	5
Familiarity and Favourability with Key Countries	5
Images of the United Kingdom	7
United Kingdom's Strengths & Weaknesses	9
British Society	12
Education	15
British Business	19
British Science & Technology	24
British Personalities	27
British Art	28
British Media	30
Britain's Relationships with other Countries	31
Languages & the English Language	33
Sources of Information about the UK	34
Visiting the UK	36
Implications	37
Appendices	

Preface

This report contains the findings of a survey conducted for the British Council by Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) among a group defined as the ‘successor generation’, in Thailand. This forms part of a project which took place in 17 countries between January and June 2000. The first wave of the study was conducted between May and August 1999 in 13 countries.

Background and Objectives

As the British Government’s principal agency for cultural relations overseas, the British Council’s overreaching objective is to enhance the reputation of the United Kingdom in the world as a valued partner. In order to better understand how people in different countries perceive the United Kingdom, the Council instigated this market research study.

The main purposes of research into the UK’s image were three-fold:

- to form a baseline of reliable data, to be used for targeting work, and measuring its effectiveness
- to test hypotheses about our image and ways to improve/re-shape it
- to provide ‘credible evidence’ of attitudes towards the UK and their variation by country

This year, the main survey covered the following countries:

Argentina	Hungary	Nigeria
Bangladesh	Italy	Pakistan
Czech Republic	Japan	Singapore
Greece	Kenya	Spain
Hong Kong	South Korea	Thailand

In addition, independent projects were carried out in the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. Although not British Council ‘Priority One’ countries, these results have been

added to the overall figures throughout this report and in the tables provided separately.

The target population was defined as the ‘successor generation’, i.e. those who might be expected to become the decision makers of future years. The precise definition varied from country to country, to take into account specific cultural factors (and was agreed in consultation with MORI’s partner in each country and the local British Council office). These people are generally, however, aged between 24-40, well-educated, and either studying for a post-graduate qualification or employed in government/industry on a fast-track to the top.

In Thailand, the definition agreed upon was people aged between 22 and 35 years old:

- Students with the following characteristics: ambitious, achievement-oriented, having a clear outlook for the future e.g. salary expectations or preferred positions
- Professionals working:
 - in universities
 - for the government (involved with national policy-forming process)
 - in leading private companies (e.g. media, finance, telecomS, agro-industry, tourism, law, health, medicine, architecture & design, engineering)

Methodology

The survey was conducted in two phases, carried out in parallel, including a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase; the qualitative part of the research consisted of two **focus group discussions** in Thailand. Fieldwork took place on 16th May 2000 in Bangkok. Groups were moderated by an experienced researcher with MORI’s research partner in Thailand.

The objectives of this phase were to:

- Explore how people perceive Britain:
 - top of mind thoughts

- what feelings they have towards Britain
- positive and negative images
- where Britain stands in their consciousness generally
- knowledge about Britain
- Discover opinion-forming processes:
 - what factors influence an opinion & how ?
 - what would be the most effective methods of influencing people's opinions ?
- Establish the extent to which there is an overlap between the British Council's strategic objectives and perceptions of the successor generation

On completion of the group discussions, MORI's local partners provided a transcript of the discussion (in English) and a short summary report of the findings.

The **quantitative stage of the survey** was undertaken among 260 members of the same target audience. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. Fieldwork took place between 12th May and 17th May 2000 in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Quotas were set to ensure that a reasonable cross-section of members of the successor generation was interviewed.

Report Layout

This report will concentrate on the Thai results, and compare them to those recorded world-wide. The report is based on the quantitative findings, illustrated throughout with verbatim comments from the focus group discussions. Copies of the English language versions of both the questionnaire and topic guide are appended.

Reference is occasionally made to last year's findings. Of course, these were based on 13 different countries, so do not represent trend data. In fact, despite the different

countries involved, there is a remarkable degree of consistency in the findings between the two waves.

Interpretation of the Data

Where percentages do not add to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding or to multiple-response questions, whereby respondents could give more than one answer to a question. An asterisk denotes a value of less than 0.5 per cent, but greater than zero. Details on the statistical reliability of the data contained in the report are appended.

Publication of the Data

These findings are subject to the Terms and Conditions of Contract agreed at the outset of the project. Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of MORI. Such approval is only refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation of the research findings.

Summary of Findings

Familiarity and Favourability with Key Countries

Fifteen per cent of the Thai successor generation say that they know the UK 'very well', while a further 47% know 'a fair amount' about us. One in twenty, on the other hand, say that they know almost nothing about the UK. While this is a higher figure than is recorded in other South East Asian countries, it is below the all country average score. On a scale of 0 ('know almost nothing about') to 4 ('know very well') the mean score for the UK in Thailand is 2.56, a little below the all-country average of 2.7.

By way of contrast, the Thais claim to know rather more than those in many other countries about the USA and Japan. More than four in five (83%) say they know at least a fair amount about the USA, while three-quarters say the same about Japan. The all-country average scores place the UK second behind the USA, but given Thailand's geographical position it is hardly surprising that Japan is rather better known. France and Germany make up the five countries tested, a little way behind the UK.

*We have been more exposed to
American style from watching
movies*

Aged 22-28

As would be expected, those who have visited the UK feel rather more knowledgeable than others about this country. Although this is a small sub-group, the difference between 60% of previous visitors saying that they know the UK very well, and 11% of others is clearly significant.

Despite knowing rather more about the USA than the UK, Thais are more favourable towards us, or at least, less unfavourable. Seven in ten (69%) describe themselves as favourable towards the UK (20% 'very favourable'), while just 5% are unfavourable. While 66% also say they are favourable towards the USA, fully 13% are unfavourable towards that country - a higher proportion than for Japan,

Germany (both 8%) and France (4%). Japan is, in fact, the country with the highest mean score (on a scale of -2, 'very unfavourable', to +2, 'very favourable'), at +0.85, just ahead of the UK, on +0.82.

As well as being more knowledgeable, Thais appear to be rather more positive towards the UK than other Asian countries. Only Japan (mean score +0.8) comes close on the favourability ratings.

Women, younger respondents, and previous visitors are all more likely than others to describe themselves as 'very favourable' towards the UK. (The younger generation is also more likely to be favourable towards all five countries tested, however.)

The chart below shows overall familiarity (on the horizontal scale) and favourability (on the vertical scale) towards the five key countries. The further to the right a country is, the better it is known, while the higher up it is, the more favourable people are towards it. The diagonal line is known as the 'line of best fit'. If there were an exact linear relationship between these two variables, all the plotted points would lie on a straight line. This almost never happens with real data, but a line can be calculated which comes closer to the plotted points than any other. Japan and the UK, sitting clear above the line, show high favourability for their levels of awareness, while the situation for Germany and the USA is the opposite.

The chart opposite shows how familiar and favourable towards the United Kingdom each of the participating countries are. The top right (most knowledgeable and favourable countries - Nigeria, Bangladesh and Kenya) are all former colonies, which evidently retain a degree of affection for the UK. Those in the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan clearly consider themselves to be very knowledgeable, but might be expected to be a little more favourable towards us. It is clear that people in Hong Kong, on the other hand, like several other Asian countries, are neither particularly familiar nor favourable towards us. In this respect, Thailand is the closest country to the all-country average score.

Images of the United Kingdom

Despite the high favourability scores, Thais have among the lowest scores for recognising the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. In fact, at 58% the score for Scotland is the lowest recorded around the world this year. While England (79%) is relatively well-known (against an all-country average of 85%), Wales (55% vs. 67%) and Northern Ireland (51% vs. 72%) also fare poorly. Thais also record some strange additional ideas about countries in the United Kingdom – 3%, for example, evidently think that the sun never set on the British Empire and that Australia is still part of the UK, 1% say the same about the USA, and perhaps most curiously of all, 2% believe that Germany is a member country.

Just one per cent of respondents spontaneously say that the UK is the same thing as Great Britain (although this does not mean that they would not think so if we asked them directly about the two terms). A further seven per cent do not know which countries are in the UK, which perhaps

¹ The familiarity scale runs from 0 to 4, based on a score of 0 for 'know almost nothing about' to 4 for 'know very well'. The favourability scale is from -2 to +2, based on -2 for 'very unfavourable' to +2 for 'very favourable'

indicates that it is simply not a term which is used widely in Thailand.

As might be expected, previous visitors are more likely than others to be able to name the constituent countries of the UK. Men, those with a degree (rather than a masters or PhD), and those living in Chiang Mai are also more knowledgeable than average.

Whereas around the world the most popular image of England is the Royal Family, in Thailand the monarchy is surpassed by football, showing the popularity of the English Premiership. One in four respondents cite football as their immediate image of England, while one in five mention the Royal Family (and a further three per cent mention the Queen specifically). Nothing else comes close, with the Houses of Parliament/Big Ben (8%) the next most popular image.

As might well be expected, men (36%) are more likely than women (12%) to mention football. There are, however, no images with which women are significantly more likely than men to associate England. Those who have visited the UK are more likely than others to associate England with London or the Houses of Parliament (both 20%).

As elsewhere, kilts (33%), whisky (27%) and bagpipes (25%) dominate images of Scotland. All three are more strongly associated with Scotland in Thailand than elsewhere, so as a result, no other image is mentioned by more than 3% of respondents. Women are significantly more likely to mention kilts (43%), while men tend to associate Scotland with whisky (37%).

One in six Thais (17%) have no image at all of Northern Ireland, which is rather higher than the all-country average of 10%. (This is especially high among younger respondents – aged 22-29 – at 20%.) Curiously, violence and the Troubles appear to be less widely publicised in Thailand. While IRA/Sinn Fein are mentioned by 19% of respondents (the same as the world-wide average), only 12% mention the Troubles as their prime image of Northern Ireland, compared to the global average of 34%. Rather higher than the world-wide average scores are the cold and rainy weather (15% vs. 6%), and the scenery (13% vs. 6%).

Perhaps lacking any clear images of its own, Wales is dominated by thoughts of the Royal Family, with more than half of all Thai respondents citing some form of royal imagery. Two in five mention Princess Diana specifically (double the world-wide score). Football, castles, rugby and beautiful landscapes are the most popular non-royal images, but each are cited by between 4-8%. (As elsewhere, 15% of Thais have no image at all of Wales.) Women are decidedly more likely than men to come up with royal

images, especially Princess Diana (45% vs. 32%), while despite the lack of success or publicity at international level, one in eight Thai men (12%) associate Wales with football.

Images of UK Countries (*unprompted*)

Q16-19 What one image best sums up
to you ?

Scotland	%	Northern Ireland	%
Kilts	33	IRA/Sinn Fein	19
Whisky	27	Cold/rainy weather	15
Bagpipes	25	Scenery	13
Highlands/mountain s	3	Violence/religious conflict	12
		Football	6
		Greenery/green fields	3
Nothing	2	Nothing	17
England	%	Wales	%
Football	24	Princess Diana/Princess of Wales	39
Royal Family	21	Prince Charles/Prince of Wales	10
Houses of Parliament/Big Ben	8	Football	8
Music/arts/culture	5	Royal Family	7
London	5	Castles	6
'High class'	4	Rugby	5
Tradition/conservatis m	4	Beautiful landscapes	4
Bad weather	3		
The Queen	3		
Nothing	1	Nothing	15

All other answers 2% or less

Base: All successor generation in Thailand (260), May 2000

United Kingdom's Strengths & Weaknesses

In many countries, tradition is regarded both as the UK's major strength, and its worst weakness. While Thais also see tradition and heritage as being our greatest strength, just ahead of our education system, tradition and conservatism are less widely regarded as a weakness.

One in five Thais cite tradition as a strength of the UK (compared to 15% world-wide). This is consistent among different sub-groups, although, if anything, those who have visited the UK are even more likely than others to mention it. Our education system is particularly well-regarded, with 17% spontaneously mentioning it as our key strength – the highest proportion recorded around the world this year. On the negative side, only 5% of Thais think of our economy as our greatest strength, compared to an all-country figure of 12%.

In many countries, tradition and stability emerged strongly in the focus group discussions. While modern imagery was at a premium in Thailand, and people tended to have a relatively old-fashioned perception of different aspects of our society, this was not actually a subject which was dwelt on. A general lack of awareness about the UK seemed to pervade the discussions, so that images were very much in the abstract, and unfocused. It seems unlikely, therefore, that many Thais would be able to put their finger on particular ‘traditional’ aspects of British society.

Fifteen per cent of Thais believe that the greatest weakness of the UK is our monarchy – either through the influence which it is perceived to have on our society, or the scandals of recent years. This makes it the most-mentioned weakness in Thailand (and compares to a 10% score world-

wide). Women (22%) are especially likely to cite the monarchy as a weakness.

One in ten cite racism or an intolerant attitude towards foreigners as being the biggest weakness of the UK, while a further 9% say that the British are arrogant and aloof, and 5% say we are proud or self-important. (Younger respondents tend to focus on the racist attitude, while older Thais concentrate more on arrogance.) Clearly, the British people themselves are not regarded particularly well in Thailand, with the Thai attitude mirroring that expressed in African countries rather more than the other Asian nations. As a result, the 9% figure of people citing that British society is traditional or out of date starts to pale into insignificance (especially in comparison to the world-wide score of 19%), as it is the lowest score of any of the Group One countries taking part in the survey this year.

The racist and arrogant attitude of the British people was mentioned regularly in the focus group discussions (especially in Asia). Thais were no exceptions to this, and spoke frequently about how they felt that the British tended to look down on everyone – not just Thais, but even Americans.

*I think British people and Americans
are quite the same. But both of them
look down on the Asian community*

Aged 29-35

In the city, people usually look arrogant, distant, and not friendly, while people in the countryside look nicer. And their reaction to Asian people is also different

Aged 29-35

British people seem to be cold, not warmly welcome and look down on Asians

Aged 22-28

They are so nationalistic. They look down on US as they think their culture is more superior

Aged 22-28

British Society

Seven in ten Thais feel that British society is generally modern, while just two per cent describe it as traditional. On a mean scale of +2 ('very modern') to -2 ('very traditional'), Thais rate the UK as +0.88, which is the second highest score recorded this year, after Bangladesh. The all-country figures are very different, with almost half of all respondents regarding the UK as a traditional society (giving a mean score of -0.17). Viewpoints tend to vary by the degree of advancement within respondents' own countries, although this is not automatically the case. Within South East Asia, the Thais are fairly similar in attitude to those in Singapore and Vietnam, but diametrically opposed to the Japanese and South Korean views.

Thai men, and older respondents are more likely than women and young people to regard British society as modern. None of those who have been to the UK, however, rate our society as 'very modern'.

In fact, Thailand stands out this year among the different countries taking part in the survey, in terms of its views of the modernity of British society. While Thais regard the UK as modern, they actually know very little at all about specific modern aspects of life in the UK. Unlike many other Asian countries (especially the more advanced 'Tiger Economies') which tend to regard British society as extremely traditional, the Thais seem willing to believe that we are modern, despite a paucity of information pointing them in that direction. While the process of educating people in Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong about the vibrant modern life of the UK would therefore appear to be fraught with problems, it should surely be easier to put this message across in a country like Thailand.

British Society Overall

Q26 I am now going to read out some statements that have been made about British society. I would like you to tell me to what extent you personally agree or disagree that they represent the UK.

	Strong ly agree	Ten d to agre e	Neithe r/nor	Disagre e		Thai Mean score *	Worl d- wide mea n score *
The British system is a good example of democratic government	24	52	15	7	%	+0.9	+0.7
Britain has a good national health service	20	50	20	3	%	+0.9	+0.9
The British legal system ensures that everybody gets a fair trial	20	45	20	5	%	+0.9	+0.7
Britain is committed to protecting the environment	15	52	22	4	%	+0.8	+0.8

Women are discriminated against in Britain	2	12	33	46	%	-0.4	-0.6
British society is truly 'multicultural'	7	28	29	32	%	+0.1	+0.5
British people are very welcoming towards foreigners	2	18	42	32	%	-0.2	-0.2
British people are racially tolerant	2	8	41	38	%	-0.4	-0.1
Britain is now a 'classless' society	2	12	20	62	%	-0.7	-0.8

* Mean score calculated on a scale of +2 ('strongly agree') to -2 ('strongly disagree')

Base: All successor generation: Thailand, (260), world-wide (3,505),
January-June 2000

This dichotomy between overall modernity and generally traditional images is illustrated by responses given to questions about specific aspects of British society. Our institutions are particularly well regarded in Thailand, while our social structure and people tend to be a little less positively looked upon than average. For example, Thais are decidedly less likely than others around the world to believe that British society is multicultural. In fact, they are almost equally split on this issue, compared to the world-wide average score of 55% agreement and 22% disagreement. Similarly, although Thais on balance do not think that women are discriminated against in Britain, they are a little more likely than average to think this might be the case, and are less likely to look upon British people as racially tolerant (although this figure is in line with other Asian countries).

Thailand is roughly in line with other countries on the subject of class in British society. As elsewhere, the majority (62%) believe that the class system is still alive and well in the UK.

On the positive side, Thais rate our democratic system as a good example of government, they feel that our legal system ensures fair trials for all, and that we have a good national health service. In each case between 66-70% agree, and all score more positively than average in

Thailand. Thai men, and those working in the government sector are particularly positive about British institutions.

As in many countries, in the qualitative research, British decision making, and our democracy in general, were thought to be based on the principal that the population are considered when decisions are made. What is more, the British themselves were thought to be interested in the political process. The American system of government, on the other hand, was perceived to be media-led, run by big business, and with just a show of interest in what people want.

The British are interested in politics - not using EU currency..... It shows serious democracy and respects of others' point of view, which means it is people empowering

Aged 22-28

British people usually listen and sometimes protest. But Thai people usually believe

Aged 29-35

In many countries, the main perceived fault of our decision makers was that they tend to take too long over decisions. British people are apparently renowned for not making decisions until they have mulled over the idea for a considerable period. This did not come through strongly in Thailand. In fact, the older age group seemed to feel that the British were quite dynamic in that regard.

'Dare to make decision' style

Aged 29-35

Gender discrimination was played down in the focus groups. Most felt that in comparison with Thai society, the UK is extremely progressive.

Women have more participation in British society than in Thai society

Aged 22-28

While it is clear from the quantitative results that Britain is still perceived to be divided along class lines, one focus group participant evidently felt that we have one thing which creates even more important divisions – football!

*They seem united, as we can see
from football leagues; they would
come and support their beloved
team*

Aged 22-28

Education

Two in five respondents (43%) feel that the quality of the British higher education system is ‘very good’. A further 50% describe it as ‘fairly good’, while just 1% believe it to be poor. On a scale of –2 (‘very poor’) to +2 (‘very good’), the mean score for British higher education is therefore 1.4, which is marginally higher than the world-wide score of 1.3. (In no country taking part in the survey is our higher education believed to be poor by more than four per cent of respondents.)

While 43% may rate our education system as very good, just 17% say that the British themselves are very well educated, which might indicate that there is a perception that the British people themselves do not all take advantage of the services on offer. However, 72% say that the British are 'fairly well educated', and none of the respondents feel that we are poorly educated (compared to 4% world-wide).

Level of Education in Britain

Q24 And thinking about the British themselves, how well or poorly educated do you think that they are generally?

	Thailand	World- wide
	%	%
Very well educated	17	22
Fairly well educated	72	53
Neither well nor poorly	10	18
Fairly poorly educated	0	4
Very poorly educated	0	*
Don't know	1	2

Base: All successor generation: Thailand (260), world-wide, (3,505), January-June 2000

The fairly high regard for the British system of education means that we are the second most popular choice for studying overseas. While 47% of respondents say that they would prefer to study in the United States, 25% would opt for the United Kingdom. This is virtually identical to the world-wide scores (and also to those recorded in 13 other countries last year). Given the relative geographical proximity, one in ten would opt to go to Australia, while 6% would opt for Japan – both slightly higher than average. Other European countries account for 7% of the choices.

As is generally the case elsewhere, women are a little more likely to choose to study in the UK, while men are marginally more likely to opt for the United States. Encouragingly, half of those who have been to the UK say that they would come here to study. In contrast, younger

people are a little less likely than older respondents to opt for the UK.

(In contrast to the Thai figures, the successor generation in Hong Kong make the UK their first choice for education overseas, so there is clearly some way to go in building up the popularity of our education product.)

*If you intend to study abroad, you
should head to United States of
America rather than to UK*

Aged 22-28

In most countries, the idea of a distance learning course based in the UK is more popular than actually coming here to study (reflecting the fact that people seem to be less keen on our society than our education system). This is not the case in Thailand. Compared to a world-wide figure of 32% choosing a UK-based distance learning course, just over half that amount – 18% - would do so in Thailand. The USA is the clear favourite on this score, with 59% (44% world-wide). Again, women, and older respondents are more likely than others to choose a UK-based course, as are those who live in Chiang Mai.

This lower level of interest in UK distance learning could be attributed to several factors. Perhaps the USA is simply so strongly linked with new technology that it dominates perceptions of the field. (Certainly, awareness of British science and technology is very low, so it is quite possible that Thais simply do not associate the UK with the ability to run such courses.) On the other hand, perhaps this should be looked upon as a sign that Thais would like to come to the UK to study, and to experience our education first-hand.

In the focus groups, the British style of teaching tended to be thought of (like last year) as being traditional, based at a high-level, old-fashioned, academic institution like Oxford or Cambridge, given by an older man who, although extremely knowledgeable about his subject, tends to talk down to the students and to discourage interaction.

*I think it's quite a traditional and
long time established institution*

Aged 29-35

*A British lecturer seems to adhere to
the textbook content, not flexible
like in US*

Aged 22-28

American lecturers, on the other hand, were often preferred because they apparently encourage students to think for themselves, and because they were considered to be more up-to-date in their knowledge.

*An American will dress up casually
and always insist students believe in
their reason, also they will encourage
students to do research. They make
us feel equal to the lecturer and that*

the lecturer is not always right. On the other hand, British lecturers will always come up with a trustworthy character, and always put up references from textbooks

Aged 22-28

I think British teachers play an important role in leading student's thoughts, while American teachers usually give freedom to students to think

Aged 29-35

I think American teachers are better, because they usually update their new knowledge to match changes in students. And they are also more open-minded to accept new things

Aged 29-35

One factor contributing to the traditional image of British education is a lack of up-to-date knowledge. Focus group participants commented on how they heard a lot about the USA and Australia, but little about British educational institutions.

We always get brochures of study in America, study in Australia, but we have never heard of English brochures

Aged 22-28

The relatively strong regard for the UK system of higher education is emphasised by the fact that 30% of respondents feel that a qualification from the UK would have the most credibility with potential employers. Again a qualification from the United States would most preferable – selected by 55% of respondents. Both these figures are almost exactly in line with the global average (see the table below). People working in the private sector are a little less likely than others to rate a UK qualification most highly, as are people living in Bangkok.

Despite the popularity of studying in the UK, this would appear to indicate that there is a small proportion of people who feel that, while a qualification from a UK institution would give them the most credibility, they still feel that they would rather not come here personally to study.

Credible Qualifications

Q8 Thinking specifically about educational qualifications, a qualification from which one of these countries do you think would have the most credibility with potential employers ?

	Thailand	World-wide
	%	%
USA	55	55
UK	30	31
Thailand/Home country	6	4
Japan	2	4
Canada	2	3
Australia	2	2
Don't know	3	2

Base: All successor generation: Thailand (260), world-wide, (3,505),
January-June 2000

British Business

Out of five countries measured, the UK is ranked as the third most likely country to be regarded as a major financial trading centre. Although ahead of France and Germany, the UK is a long way behind the USA (70% 'strongly agree') and Japan (57%), with just 15% strongly agreeing that we could be thus described. Overall, however, 64% agree with this statement, compared to just 9% who disagree. The agree score is somewhat lower than the world-wide average of 76% (further reinforcing the notion that Thais do not necessarily know a great deal about 'modern Britain'). However, in Thailand, only Japan scores more highly than the global average.

The UK slips to fourth place in terms of whether or not it has many world beating companies. Although 18% of respondents strongly agree that this is the case (and a further 46% tend to agree), 5% disagree. In contrast, 96%

believe that the USA has many world-beating companies, 95% think the same of Japan, and 70% of Germany.

Although a mean score (on a +2: 'strongly agree' to -2: 'strongly disagree' scale) of +0.8 is below the world-wide average of +1.0, it is slightly higher than that recorded in most other Asian countries this year.

Women, students, those in the government sector, and people who have visited the UK are all more likely than average to agree that the UK could be described as having many world beating companies.

World-beating Companies

Q4 Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree that has many 'world-beating' companies.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Disagree		Mean score*
USA	77	19	2	%	+1.7
Japan	69	26	2	%	+1.6
Germany	23	46	7	%	+0.9
UK	18	46	5	%	+0.8
France	15	48	9	%	+0.7

* Mean score calculated on a scale of +2 ('strongly agree') to -2 ('strongly disagree')

Base: All successor generation in Thailand (260), May 2000

British companies were generally thought of in focus groups in Thailand, as around the world, as very trustworthy, and good to do business with, but perhaps holding on to rather dated notions of how to do business. Certainly, in comparison with American companies, the British are seen as not nearly so competitive, or successful. As a consequence, few people had any strong impressions of the state of British companies – images tended to be vague, and decidedly dated.

[American businesses] are successful for sure, it's very clear. For example Microsoft, IBM or Apple. But there is no outstanding product from Britain. I can't imagine about it

Aged 29-35

They are neither harsh nor aggressive. They won't make people lose face

Aged 22-28

The UK retains a very strong reputation in Thailand for producing quality goods and services. They are thought by 67% of respondents to be of better quality than those produced in 'other countries' (compared to a 55% score world-wide). One in five (21%) describe them as being of 'much better quality'. Just one per cent, on the other hand, think that other products and services are of better quality. This is among the most positive scores recorded this year, and is clearly the best among the Asian countries.

I think British business people usually sell premium products more than the Americans

Aged 29-35

In terms of value for money rather than quality, the gap between British products and services and those from elsewhere is narrower. This indicates that, while our products and services are regarded as being of good quality, perhaps that quality comes at a price which is not always considered to be justified. Despite this, however, five times as many people think that British products and services are better value than those from other countries (51%) as think the opposite (10%). Again, this is among the best scores recorded world-wide (mean score: +0.6, vs. +0.3).

Women tend to be a little more likely than men to rate the quality and value of British products and services highly. In terms of quality, there is nothing to separate older and younger respondents, but older people are clearly more likely to rate British products and services as being good value for money.

Perceptions of British Products and Services

Q28 How do you view British products and services compared with those of other countries in terms of...?

	Much better	A little better	The same	Worse	
their quality	21	46	30	2	%
their value for money	15	37	35	10	%

Base: All successor generation in Thailand (260), May 2000

As a consequence of this high regard, almost half of all Thais (47%) say that knowing a product or service is British makes them more likely to buy it. Just six per cent of Thai respondents are inclined to buy products or services from other countries rather than those from the UK. Once again, this is rather more positive than the global average, and is clearly the best score among the different Asian countries surveyed. As might be expected given the quality and value ratings, older respondents are the most likely to say that they would opt for a British product or service if given a choice.

Unfortunately, the high regard for our products does not transfer smoothly to our managers or workers. While overall scores are positive, this tends to be through 'fairly good' scores rather than 'very good'. As is the case elsewhere, managers tend to be looked upon a little more favourably than British workers. This replicates, to a certain extent, findings in other Asian countries, where there appears to be a rather dated perception of a strike-bound society, as in the mid/late 1970s.

It should be stressed that, despite the products being rated more highly than the people who produced them, favourability for both managers and workers far outstrips negative comments. In Thailand, 18% rate British managers as 'very good', while a further 65% describe them as 'fairly good'. Only one per cent of respondents feel that they are poor. Although the world-wide 'very good' rating of 25% is a little more positive, the mean score is, in fact, a little higher in Thailand (+1.1 compared to +1.0). (Men - 24% - are significantly more likely than women - 12% - to give British managers a 'very good' rating.)

The score for workers, on the other hand, is a little below the global average. Just over half (54%) rate them as good, with only 6% describing British workers as 'very good'. Again, however, this compares to a total of 3% who think of British workers as poor.

Perceptions of British Business

Q30 And taking your answer from this card, how do you perceive ...

a) the British workforce ?

b) British management ?

	Workforce %	Management %
Very good	6	18
Fairly good	48	65
Neither good nor poor	36	12
Fairly poor	3	1
Very poor	0	0
Don't know	8	5
Mean score*	+0.6	+1.0

* Mean score calculated on a scale of +2 ('very good') to -2 ('very poor')

Base: All successor generation in Thailand (260), May 2000

The focus groups suggested that the respect for British managers seems to stem largely from the ethos of fair play and honesty that is thought to pervade our business life.

*Loyalty, strict to rules and
regulations, straightforward,
punctual, cares for the organisation*

Aged 22-28

The lack of a killer instinct and drive to sell, however, led to a perception that British businesses are uninterested in the needs of their customers.

American people are usually active because they have to compete with others all the time, then they tend to provide us better service, while British people tend to be more relaxed, not so active. So it makes us feel that they do not intend to provide service to us

Aged 29-35

For focus group participants British workers were regarded as solid employees, but not really outstanding. Seniority and longevity were thought to be valued above actually doing a good job.

I know one man; he told me that he did not worry about the uncertainty of his job; no one would fire him because he was old

Aged 29-35

The concept of afternoon tea cropped up in the focus groups (as in many other countries). Whereas elsewhere this was often associated with negative connotations of tradition, this was not necessarily the case in Thailand.

I think they are the community that knows how to live very well, I mean better than Americans. They do not work too hard; they still have time to rest or to have teatime

Aged 29-35

British Science & Technology

The UK is ranked a distant fourth out of the five countries tested in terms of its reputation for scientific and technological innovation. One in ten respondents 'strongly agree' that we have a strong reputation in this area (compared to 21% world-wide), while a further 46% 'tend to agree'. The 'strongly agree' scores for the USA, Japan and Germany are 77%, 74% and 31% respectively.

Once again, the positive regard for the UK is reflected in the fact that these scores are rather higher than the average scores across all Asian countries this year. In Thailand a total of 57% agree that the UK has a strong reputation for scientific and technological innovation. Excluding Thailand, the average 'agree' score in Asia is just 47%. (Only in Hong Kong is the score higher than in Thailand.) Thai women are more likely than men to rate British scientific achievements highly, while students, those in the government sector, and people living in Chiang Mai are also positive.

Scientific and Technological Innovation

Q5 Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree that has a strong reputation at the moment for scientific and technological innovation.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Disagree		Mean * score
USA	77	18	2	%	+1.7
Japan	74	23	2	%	+1.7
Germany	31	43	5	%	+1.0
UK	10	46	4	%	+0.6
France	5	33	12	%	+0.3

* Mean score calculated on a scale of +2 ('strongly agree') to -2 ('strongly disagree')

Base: All successor generation in Thailand (260), May 2000

British scientists were clearly thought of in the focus groups as concentrating exclusively on theory, at the expense of any practical outcomes of their work. A British scientist was thought of as stuck in routines, with little or no creative thought. As elsewhere, this image contrasts entirely with that of American scientists, who were thought to do research purely with a view to exploiting the findings for financial gain.

*Kind of routine habit, an inflexible
way of thinking*

Aged 22-28

*I think British scientists set or
discover the theories. While
American scientists apply those
theories*

Aged 29-35

*British scientists usually think or
work in technical details, not much
relying on commerce. While
American scientists usually think of
how to apply it to make value or cut
costs and try to create business*

Aged 29-35

*Americans are dedicated to R&D, and
have lots of research activity.
Scientists are so dedicated and open
minded. Value added development,
compared to British*

Aged 22-28

Thai respondents did at least appreciate that in comparing the UK to the USA, it is hardly surprising that we appear to be more traditional and old-fashioned.

*They are in the top five. But if we
compare them with America, they
still follow America, about half or
one step behind*

Aged 29-35

*Americans are innovative. In
Thailand, we receive more influence
from America*

Aged 29-35

The overall lack of knowledge about British involvement in technological breakthroughs is clearly demonstrated when respondents are asked from which countries they think that certain twentieth century inventions emanated. This is a world-wide phenomenon, but is exaggerated in Thailand. Taking the world wide web as an example, despite its British origin, around the world 81% assume it is American, while just 5% ascribe its invention to the UK. In Thailand, the figures are 91% for the USA, and just 2% for the UK. In a similar fashion, while the Japanese are assumed by 70% of respondents world-wide to have invented the pocket calculator (compared to 6% who think it is British), in Thailand the scores are 78% and 3% respectively. (In fact, this is actually an American invention.)

The strong regard in which Japan is held in Thailand is reflected in the fact that 47% believe that television was invented there. The global favourite is the United States. As elsewhere, however, the UK is ranked the fourth most likely country to have invented TV.

In all four cases, women seem more willing to ascribe inventions to the Japanese, while men tend to associate them with the USA.

The one example of scientific innovation with which most people world-wide associate the UK is cloning. Globally, almost half (47%) know that it was invented here. In Thailand, this figure is 20%, way behind the 63% who assume it is an American invention. Only in Pakistan is the figure nominating the UK lower. Whereas elsewhere it is possible that Dolly the Sheep could become an 'ambassador' for British science, such an approach would be unlikely to meet with success in Thailand. Clearly, Thais simply do not associate the UK with science or technology, which again reinforces the perception that, although they like to believe that we live in a modern society, they know extremely little about it.

These findings back up the regularly cited impression in the group discussions that the British are poor marketers. Even in those cases where people appreciate that an invention might have come from the UK, they feel that the technology is far more likely to be adapted elsewhere (notably Japan or the USA), and converted into something profitable. Evidently this poor marketing even goes as far as the origin of the invention itself, and even the scientists involved – among those who have heard of him (one in four of the Thai successor generation), just 20% know that Stephen Hawking is British!

British Personalities

Around the world, Tony Blair is the best known British personality from a list of 22 individuals, recognised by 90%. In Thailand, this figure is 76%, which makes him the second-best known figure, behind the Spice Girls. In fact, this pop group, the film stars Hugh Grant and Kate Winslet, and Tim Henman are the only four personalities on the list who score significantly more highly in Thailand than the world-wide average score. In many other cases, the scores are rather lower. This shows that knowledge levels about various aspects of our society (design, art, business, politics etc.) are all below average.

As elsewhere (and reinforcing gender stereotypes), women tend to be more knowledgeable about film stars, while men are clearly more likely to recognise sports people. Younger respondents (aged 22-29) and people who have visited the UK are generally more aware of all different British personalities.

Well-known Britons

Q22a Which, if any, of these people have

Q22b you heard of ?

Which, if any, were you aware were British ?

	World- wide Heard of %	Heard of %	Thailand British %	Proportion recognised as British %
Spice Girls	86	93	66	71
Tony Blair	90	76	64	84
Hugh Grant	56	66	36	55
Kate Winslet	48	62	23	38
Naomi Campbell	76	61	13	22
Steve Martin	47	48	16	33
Stephen Hawking	46	26	10	37
Linford Christie	33	25	10	42
Vivienne Westwood	22	21	8	38
Tim Henman	13	21	11	52

William Hague	18	20	4	21
Richard Branson	20	19	7	37
David Hockney	12	15	6	38
Rowan Atkinson	35	13	7	50
Liam Gallagher	21	12	5	45
John Galliano	24	10	2	20
Anita Roddick	7	8	2	19
Delia Smith	8	6	2	40
James Dyson	10	5	*	8
P D James	11	5	2	42
Damien Hirst	6	4	2	40
Firzana Perveen	3	2	1	33
Don't know	*	0	12	-

Base: All successor generation: Thailand (260), world-wide (3,505),
January-June 2000

In many cases, as well as being less likely than others to recognise the personalities, Thais are even less likely to recognise that they are British. Among those who know of him, for example, 94% of people world-wide know that Tony Blair is British. Despite a lower knowledge base, only 84% in Thailand are aware of his nationality. Similarly, the figures for Hugh Grant are 67% and 55% respectively. The only other personalities who are recognised as being British by more than half of those who know of them are the Spice Girls, Tim Henman and Rowan Atkinson.

As a word of caution, it should be noted that two red herrings were inserted into the list – Steve Martin, the American actor, and Firzana Perveen from the British Council in the UK. Steve is recognised by 48% of respondents, while one in three of those who know of him think that he is British. Firzana achieves a 2% recognition factor with two of those people (i.e. 33%) claiming to know that she is British. This is in contrast to last year, when another British Council employee – Steven Shaw - was added onto the list, and achieved higher recognition than several ‘genuine’ personalities, including William Hague. Despite Steven’s globe-trotting exploits, this year’s results appear to indicate that people simply felt that he had a familiar-sounding (and British) name, so that they assumed they knew of him. In turn, this might mean that British personalities with less typical names might struggle to achieve that recognition factor.

British Art

Opinions about the Arts once again reinforce the notion that, although Thais look favourably upon the UK, they are more likely than average to have a traditional perspective. Favourability towards our creativity and innovation in the arts, and the renown of our design is higher than average. Despite this, however, so too (marginally) is the perception that Britain's reputation in the arts is based more in the past than the present.

A total of 79% believe our reputation is more based on its historical roots, while only 2% think otherwise (11% world-wide). This response is remarkably consistent across all sub-groups.

Despite this, 56% of Thais agree that Britain is renowned for its creativity and innovation in the arts (compared to a global score of 51%), with one in ten agreeing strongly. Only 12% do not think that this is the case. Similarly, 55% agree that British design is renowned around the world (48% world-wide), while just 7% disagree. Women and young people are particularly likely to think positively of our reputation in both these fields.

An indication of why British art is generally thought to be traditional was evident in the focus groups. Many

respondents struggled to think of any examples of British artists, while Shakespeare, the Beatles, and Beatrix Potter were among the few to receive a mention.

I can think only of the Beatles

Aged 29-35

*I think there are not many artists in
Britain when compared with
American artists*

Aged 29-35

As elsewhere, one or two respondents, however, showed a little more awareness about modern British music. The scarcity of such mentions around the world, however, show clearly that this is very much an ‘underground’ knowledge base.

*If we talk about music, it's very
much out of the world like "Techno"
"Pure science" (alternative) music*

Aged 29-35

British Media

The British media are particularly well regarded in Thailand (although on the evidence of other factors, this is possibly more an abstract positive feeling than something based on hard evidence). Two in five Thais agree that the British media can be relied upon to tell the truth, while 17% feel otherwise (compared to 23% world-wide). Men, professionals, and those working in the private sector all appear to be marginally more likely than others to regard the British media as truthful.

The focus groups revealed a general lack of trust in media, wherever they are from. Although clearly intended to sound positive, the comment below sums up comparisons of British and Thai press.

Most parts of the news are based on true stories. There are only 25-30% made-up stories. But for Thailand, they report true and made-up stories quite equally

Aged 29-35

More than half (53%) also believe that the British media are more honest than those in Thailand, while only 2% believe the opposite to be true. (The world-wide figures are 57% and 8% respectively.) With regard to quality, impressions are even more favourable. One in three Thais think that the quality of the British media is 'much better' than their Thai equivalents, while a similar proportion rate them as 'a little better'. Only four per cent think that Thai media are of better quality than those in Britain. Older respondents, and those who have visited the UK are more likely than others to think of the British media as being of 'much better' quality.

*If I want an insightful story, I will
read British newspaper. But when I
want to get more ideas, I will read
American newspaper*

Aged 29-35

Thai focus group participants showed a relatively high level of knowledge about the British tabloid press. Whereas in many countries a British paper was thought of as a large newspaper, with lots of black and white print, few pictures, and thoroughly researched articles, many Thais tended to think of tabloids.

*They usually report more about the
Royal Family, and people also like to
read about them*

Aged 29-35

Gossip, soft news, sports

Aged 22-28

*They have more freedom in
reporting. You will see that they can
criticise the Royal Family*

Aged 29-35

[What country does the Times come from?] America

Aged 22-28

At least partly as a consequence of this, British broadcast media were clearly more favourably regarded in Thailand than our newspapers.

The BBC is informative and reliable. More for adult and variety. CNN emphasises the current situation, hot issues, more focused

Aged 22-28

[The British media] sounds reliable for the BBC, but not the newspapers

Aged 22-28

Britain's Relationships with other Countries

World-wide, there is a clear perception that Britain places most value on its relationship with the United States. Almost half of respondents (45%) believe that Britain values its relationship with the USA 'very much', while 36% say the same about Europe, and 10% feel we place that much value on our relationship with their own country.

Thais clearly feel that Britain is rather more self-sufficient, with lower scores for each of these relationships. In addition, the positions of the USA and Europe are reversed – Thais feel that Britain places more value on its relationship with its continental neighbours. A total of 33% think that Britain values its relationship with Europe 'very much', while 25% say the same about the USA. In each case 20% say there is not a lot of value or none at all placed on these relationships. With regard to Britain and Thailand, half (52%) feel we do not value this relationship a lot, and 15% go further, saying we place no value at all on it. Not only is this lower than the world-wide average, it is also lower than that recorded in other Asian countries.

Men are a little more likely than women to believe that Britain places a great deal of value on all three relationships.

British involvement in international affairs was not widely remarked upon in the focus groups. Participants in Thailand were largely unable to comment, seemingly because their attention is focused so much on the United States, and its international policies. If the British do get involved, Thais tended to think that we would follow in American footsteps.

*Minor action, always a step after the
US*

Aged 22-28

The European Union

The high regard which Britain is perceived to place on its relationship with Europe is reinforced by Thai attitudes towards Britain's role within the European Union. One in eight (12%) strongly agree that we play a leading role in the EU. A further 47% tend to agree, while just 7% do not think so. This is in line with the world-wide scores.

Despite this, however, when asked about which countries make up the European Union, the score for the UK in Thailand is among the lowest recorded world-wide – 73%, some way behind France and Germany, and on a par with Italy. In fact, awareness of all the EU members tested is lower than the world-wide average, while the proportion of Thais who believe that Switzerland and Poland are also

members is higher! (This might indicate a general lack of clear perceptions about what the European Union actually is.)

Languages & the English Language

Virtually all members (97%) of the Thai successor generation speak English, which makes it by a huge distance the most widely-spoken foreign language. The next most popular is Chinese, on 13%. This is a higher score than the world-wide average of 90%.

Among those few Thais who do not speak English, most would like to be able to do so. Japanese, though, is the language which most would like to speak. At present, just 8% can do so, but 72% say that they would like to be able to learn it. Chinese is also popular, with 48% saying they would like to speak the language.

The widespread knowledge of English in Thailand is evidently driven by business needs. A total of 87% of Thais consider the ability to speak English to be ‘crucial’ for international business – the highest score recorded world-wide this year. (The average score is 70%.) A further 12% consider English to be ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ important for conducting international business, while hardly any say it is not important. Women, students, and academics give

English the largest 'crucial' scores for international business.

Education (domestic and overseas), too, is clearly a significant factor. Two-thirds (65%) feel that the ability to speak English is crucial, which is the third highest score recorded (behind Pakistan and Bangladesh), and is some way ahead of the global average of 45%. Even for travel overseas, the Thais tend to look on the ability to speak English as rather more important than many of those elsewhere. Three-quarters (76%) regard it as crucial or very important, compared to 64% world-wide.

Sources of Information about the UK

As elsewhere, local media are among the most cited sources of information among members of the successor generation, when forming an opinion about the UK. In particular, national TV news (59%) is regarded as key. (This is almost twice as high as the world-wide average score of 31%.) In many respects, however, the Thais seem to rely on rather different sources of information than people in other countries. In fact, Thailand records the highest scores of all for four different information sources: books (48%, vs 25% world-wide), academic sources (25% and 8%), films (23% and 12%), and 'other international TV'

(19% and 8%). (This last source is perhaps how the Thais manage to find out so much about English football ?)

In addition, Thais are among the most likely nations to cite the internet as a source of information about the UK – three in ten do so, compared to 21% world-wide.

Of course, this means that there must be other sources which the Thais are less likely to make use of. One is evidently the British media (despite its high regard), with the proportions citing the British press and BBC World Service a little lower than average. Similarly, Thais are less likely than others to rely on personal experience as an information source. They are less likely, for instance, to mention visiting the UK personally (as might be expected, given the proportion who have done so – see below), or getting information from others who have visited.

Women tend to rely more than men on books, films and word of mouth. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to cite the internet, academic sources, and the British media. Older respondents are also more likely than their younger counterparts to use the British media to find out about this country.

Sources of Information About the UK **(unprompted)**

Q3 Please tell me which two or three sources of information are most important when forming an opinion specifically about the United Kingdom.

	Thailand	World-wide
	d	
	%	%
National TV news	59	31
Books	48	25
Local press	42	37
Internet	30	21
Academic sources	25	8
Films	23	12
BBC World TV	22	23
Other international TV	19	8
Word of mouth - friends & family	12	14
People who have visited the UK	12	16
British press	12	16
Word of mouth - work colleagues	11	6
Know people from the UK	10	7
Local radio	10	5
Other international press	8	11
BBC World Service	7	13
Embassies/consulates	6	6
Visiting the UK personally	5	16
Other official UK sources	3	1
Other international radio	2	2

Tourist authorities from the UK	2	2
Magazines	1	2
Magazines	1	-
Music	0	1
Other	2	2
Don't know	*	1

Base: All successor generation: Thailand (260), world-wide
(3,505), January-June 2000

*It makes me know about each
country more from movies*

Aged 29-35

*TV is also able to communicate
about Britain. But it should be
"edutainment" style*

Aged 29-35

Visiting the UK

Just eight per cent of Thai respondents have made at least one visit to the UK. Among the 17 countries tested this year, the average figure is 31%. In fact, only Vietnam and Bangladesh record lower figures than Thailand. This must surely go some way to explaining the lack of knowledge about various aspects of our society – time after time in the global results those who have been to the UK (especially those who have done so on several occasions) show more knowledge about the UK than those who have not been here.

Among those who have visited the UK, half have done so on one occasion only, while just six respondents (out of 260) have visited more than two times. These visits have been spread out over time. For three in ten the most recent visit was within the last two years, while 35% last visited more than five years ago.

Most of those who have been to the UK have stayed for a while. Just 15% of previous visitors (9% of women) have not stayed in the UK for more than two weeks at a time,

with education and holidays being more likely reasons for such a long stay than work.

Very few of those taking part in the focus groups expressed any desire to live in the UK. Although there were comments about racism, or British people not welcoming people from overseas, this seemed largely to be because they are happiest in their own communities. In addition, British society, bound up in its traditions and stability, was thought to appeal more to an older generation.

It depends on my age. If we are in a young working age, we may want to live in America most. But if we are married, aged 40 years and older and have children, we may want to live in Britain

Aged 29-35

I want to go to Britain because it's the origin country of culture and evolution. And I want to go to America because it's the country that can bring out the efficiency of humans. But I want to live in Thailand

Aged 22-28

It doesn't tempt me at all

Aged 22-28

Implications

Thais show a great deal of favourability towards the United Kingdom, despite the fact that in many ways they know very little about our society. In fact, on a series of questions regarding more up-to-date images of the UK, Thais score the lowest of all 17 countries tested this year. They are also among the least likely to have actually visited this country. Despite this, they are more willing than most to accept that the UK is a modern society. While this will be at least partly explained by a comparison with their own country, this does not account for why countries like Pakistan, Nigeria and Vietnam should be less likely to feel this way. (Another explanation may be that for many Thais, the most common

image of England is Premiership football on television, with its fast pace, new stadia, and reliance on big sponsorship.)

Overall, Thais tend to be rather more positive than members of the successor generation in many other Asian countries taking part in the survey. On many matters, respondents in Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Vietnam and Singapore are rather more likely than Thais to look unfavourably on aspects of British society.

Perhaps their impressions have been affected by relying on rather different information sources. They are more likely than respondents in any other country taking part in the survey this year to make use of books, films, academic sources or international TV stations (excluding BBC World) when finding out information about the UK.

In fact, there is a strange dichotomy between the general belief that British society is modern, and awareness of different aspects of our society. For example, Thais regard the key strength of the UK as being our tradition and heritage, and are certainly no less likely than others to associate the four countries within the UK with traditional images. Another clear instance of this is in the attitudes towards our education system.

British education is very well thought of in Thailand. Nine in ten describe the system as being good, while one in four would choose to come here to study if going anywhere overseas. Even more positively, three in ten Thais feel that a qualification from a British institution would offer the most credibility to potential employers. Clearly, therefore, British education is holding its own against competition from nations, like Australia and Malaysia, which are strongly promoting themselves to overseas students.

The major attraction of British education, however, seems to be its traditional qualities, especially the perceived knowledge of the lecturers, and the long-standing traditions of the institutions. The atmosphere of the institution itself is evidently decisive. This is perhaps reflected by the fact that (in contrast to responses around the world) Thais are less likely to consider a distance learning course from the UK than to actually come here. American distance learning courses are more popular, possibly because of their perceived grasp of new technologies.

Certainly Thais show very low levels of knowledge about British science and innovation. Respondents in no other countries were less aware of the fact that cloning is a UK-based invention. Familiarity with the scientist Stephen Hawking, and awareness of his British origins, are also much lower than average. Focus group participants portrayed an image of a British scientist as someone devoted to theory at the expense of any practical implications of the findings. Despite this, when asked whether the UK has a strong reputation in the field of science and technology, Thais are decidedly more likely than those in other Asian countries (with the exception of Hong Kong) to agree that we do.

It is almost as if Thais are keen to think positive thoughts about the UK, with little solid ground for doing so. This would certainly indicate that any efforts by the British Council, and other UK agencies working in Thailand, to project a more modern image, and to provide concrete examples of what is going on in our society will be positively received.

A further example of how Thais have a slightly odd view of Britain concerns our media. The groups revealed that Thais tend to be more knowledgeable than many others about our tabloid press (and less aware of our broadsheets). As a consequence, whereas in other countries British papers tended to be thought of as boring and dull, in Thailand they are regarded as being full of gossip (mostly about the Royal Family), and low in quality. Despite this, however, our press are still better regarded than their domestic Thai counterparts.

Similarly, although the British economy is less likely than average to be spontaneously cited as one of our key

strengths, British products and services are very well regarded in Thailand, with almost half saying that they would select something from Britain if given the choice. British products are perceived to be of better quality to those produced elsewhere, and their value for money is also well thought of. British businesses, however, are not particularly well-known, but are assumed to operate along fairly traditional lines, to be reliable and trustworthy, and to be managed by people more concerned about the welfare of their employees than making a profitable deal.

Thais are unlikely to think of British society as being multi-cultural, once again demonstrating that knowledge of our society is limited. As in many other countries (especially in Asia and Africa), they also think of British people as being not particularly welcoming to foreign visitors, and even racist in their attitudes.

*British people seem so cold. I think,
they're proud for being an origin of
civilization*

Aged 22-28

Overall, therefore, Thais display a rather confused image of the UK. They are clearly positive towards this country, but there is a danger that this is based on an image of something which doesn't really exist. Anyone operating in Thailand, therefore, needs to be aware of this dichotomy. It would appear that this represents a great opportunity for the British Council to make quite significant inroads into increasing awareness of our society, and enhancing our reputation further. The positive general feeling would appear to indicate that messages about a variety of aspects of the UK, from the British Council and others, will be well received and accepted. (This is in contrast to a country like Singapore, where people are so convinced that British society is utterly traditional, that they will have difficulty coming to terms with more modern imagery.) Perhaps even more than for the other Group One countries, dealing with Thailand definitely requires a tailored approach, taking account of the various attitudinal idiosyncrasies, but there is certainly great potential to be exploited.

MORI/ 12648

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Appendices

Topline Results	A2
Topic Guide	A13
Statistical Reliability	A5

Topline Results

Base is all (260) unless otherwise stated:

Fieldwork took place between 12 – 17 May 2000

All figures are expressed in percentage terms. Where they do not add to 100%, this is due either to computer rounding or to multiple answers.

An asterisk denotes a figure smaller than 0.5% but greater than zero.

- Q1. SHOWCARD A (R) I would like to ask your opinion about five different countries. You probably know some of these better than others. Using the categories on this card, I would like you to tell me how well you feel you know each country. In making your choice, take into account any of the ways you have learned or heard about each country.

	Know almost nothing about	Know just a little	Know a fair amount	Know very well	Don't know/no answer	
France	5	43	43	8	*	%
Germany	8	53	34	5	*	%
Japan	2	23	59	16	0	%
United Kingdom	5	33	47	15	1	%
USA	1	16	57	26	0	%

- Q2. SHOWCARD B (R) Now, using the categories on the card, please tell me how favourable or unfavourable your overall opinion or impression of each country is. Take into account any of the things that you think are important. Remember that it is your overall opinion or impression that we are interested in.

Base: All who know at least a little about each country

	Very favour- able	Mainly favour- able	Neither/ nor	Mainly unfavour- able	Very unfavour- able	Don't know/no answer	
France (246)	11	42	43	3	1	*	%
Germany (237)	8	33	50	8	*	*	%
Japan (254)	23	48	21	7	1	0	%
United Kingdom (245)	20	49	26	4	1	0	%
USA (258)	24	41	20	11	2	1	%

- Q3. SHOWCARD C (R) Now I am going to read out some statements about the same five countries. For each country and each statement, taking your answer from this card, please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree.

First (country name) is a major financial trading centre

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither/ nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ no answer	
France	2	35	37	18	6	2	%
Germany	5	32	42	18	3	*	%
Japan	57	35	6	2	*	0	%
UK	15	49	24	7	2	3	%
USA	70	25	3	2	*	*	%

Q4. SHOWCARD C (R) AGAIN **Next, (country name) has many 'world-beating' companies**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither/ nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no answer	%
France	15	48	28	7	2	*	%
Germany	23	46	23	5	1	1	%
Japan	69	26	3	2	*	*	%
UK	18	46	28	5	*	3	%
USA	77	19	2	1	1	*	%

Q5. SHOWCARD C (R) AGAIN **And (country name) has a strong reputation at the moment for scientific and technological innovation.**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither/ nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no answer	%
France	5	33	49	9	3	1	%
Germany	31	43	21	3	1	1	%
Japan	74	23	2	2	*	0	%
UK	10	46	37	3	1	2	%
USA	77	18	3	1	1	0	%

Q6. SHOWCARD D (R) **I am now going to read out a number of inventions from this century. I'd like you to tell me in which of the countries on this card you think they were invented.**

	a) The World- wide web	b) The pocket calculator	c) Television	d) Viagra	e) Cloning
	%	%	%	%	%
France	*	1	1	4	2
Germany	*	5	17	3	5
Japan	3	7 8	4 7	3	2
UK	2	3	5	8	20
USA	9 1	9	21	7 2	6 3
Other	0	0	*	0	0
Don't know	3	4	8	10	8

Q7.a **Now I'd like you to think about education. If you personally were considering going overseas to any country at all to study, which one country do you think you would prefer to go to ?**

Q7.b **And if you were considering a distance learning course, where you would remain in your own country, which country's courses do you think you would prefer ?**

	Study abroad	Study at home
	%	%
USA	47	59
UK	25	18
Australia	10	5
Other Europe	7	5
Japan	6	7
Canada	3	1
Elsewhere	3	2
Other Asia	0	1
Don't know	0	2

- Q8. SHOWCARD E (R) Thinking specifically about educational qualifications, a qualification from which one of these countries do you think would have the most credibility with potential employers ?

	%
USA	55
UK	30
Japan	6
Australia	2
Canada	2
Thailand	2
Don't know/ no answer	3

- Q9.a Which of the following languages do you speak ?

- Q9.b And which would you like to be able to speak ?

	Q9a Speak	Q9b Like to speak
	%	%
English	97	2
Chinese	13	48
Japanese	8	72
French	8	35
German	3	27
Spanish	0	18
Don't know/no answer/none of these	2	1

- Q10. SHOWCARD F (R) Taking your answer from this card, how important, would you say, is the ability to speak English for the following activities:

- a. international business
b. education (domestic and overseas)
c. travel abroad

	a Business	B Education	c Travel
	%	%	%
Crucial	87	65	44
Very important	10	27	32
Fairly important	2	8	21
Not very important	*	*	3
Not at all important	0	0	0
Don't know/ no answer	0	0	*

Q11. SHOWCARD G (R) Moving on now, I'd like you to tell me which, if any, of the countries on this card are part of the European Union. Just read out the letter or letters that apply.

	%
France	88
Germany	84
Italy	74
UK	73
Switzerland	57
Spain	53
Poland	34
Greece	23
None of the above	*
Don't know/ no answer	2

Q12 I would now like to concentrate the discussion on the United Kingdom. Firstly, what countries, do you think, go to make up the United Kingdom (or 'UK')?

	%
England	79
Scotland	58
Wales	55
Northern Ireland	51
Australia	3
Germany	2
USA	1
Same as Great Britain	1
Other	7
Don't know/ no answer	7

Q13. In fact, the UK comprises England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. How many times, if at all, have you ever visited the UK ?

	%
1	4
2	2
3	1
4	1
5+	*
None	92
Don't know/can't remember/ no answer	0

Q14. SHOWCARD H (R) And when was your most recent visit to the UK?

Base: All who have visited the UK (20)	
	%
Under 2 years	30
2 to under 5 years	35
5 to under 10 years	30
10 years or more	5
Don't know/no answer	0

Q15. And have you ever spent at least two weeks in the UK, for the following reasons?

Base: All who have visited the UK (20)

	%
Work	10
Study	60
Holiday	55
None	15
Don't know/no answer	0

Q16. I'd like you to think about each of the four countries which go to make up the United Kingdom. First, what one image best sums up Scotland to you ?

	%
Kilts	33
Whisky	27
Bagpipes	25
Highlands/Mountains	3
Cold/wet weather	2
Scenery/landscapes	2
Edinburgh	2
Loch Ness/ monster	1
Football team/football/soccer	1
People/Scottish	1
Other	2
Nothing/don't know/ no answer	2

Q17. And what is the first thing you think of when imagining Northern Ireland ?

	%
IRA/Sinn Fein	19
Cold & rainy weather	15
Scenery	13
Violence/religious war/conflicts	12
Soccer/football	6
Greenery/green fields	3
Peace process	2
Music	2
Clover/4-leaf clover/green clover	2
Whisky	1
Other	10
Nothing/don't know/ no answer	17

Q18. What about Wales ?

	%
Princess Diana/Princess of Wales	39
Prince Charles/Prince of Wales	10
Football/football team	8
Royal family/British monarchy	7
Castles	6
Rugby	5
Beautiful landscapes	4
Mountains	1
The valleys	1
Sheep	1
Cardiff	*
Welsh/Celtic dialect	*
Male voice choirs	*
Fishing boats/fishing port	*
Other	3
Nothing/don't know	15

Q19. And finally, what image best represents England ?

	%
Football	24
The Royal Family	21
Houses of Parliament/Big Ben	8
London	5
Music/arts/culture	5
Colleges/Oxford/Cambridge/Education	5
Tradition/conservative	4
High class (status)	4
Bad/grey weather/rain/fog	3
The Queen	3
Buckingham Palace/the guards at Buckingham Palace	2
Arrogant people	2
Discipline	2
Margaret Thatcher	1
Red buses	1
The pound/currency	1
Powerful economy/ industry/industrial areas	1
River Thames	*
Red phone boxes	*
Other	6
Nothing/don't know/ no answer	1

Q20. SHOWCARD I (R) **Thinking about British society generally, taking your answer from this card, how modern or traditional would you say that it is ?**

	%
Very modern	19
Fairly modern	51
Neither modern nor traditional	27
Fairly traditional	2
Very traditional	0
Don't know/ no answer	1

Q21. SHOWCARD J (R) **I am now going to read out some statements that have been made about British arts, which is not only paintings and sculpture, but also performing arts (music, cinema or theatre), design and literature. I would like you to tell me to what extent you personally agree or disagree that they represent the UK.**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion	%
Britain is renowned for creativity and innovation in the arts	10	46	31	10	2	1	%
Britain's reputation in the arts is based more in the past than the present	30	48	17	2	*	2	%
British design is renowned around the world	15	40	36	6	1	1	%

Q22.a SHOWCARD K (R) **Which, if any, of the people on this card have you heard of ?**

Q22.b SHOWCARD K (R) AGAIN **Which, if any, were you aware were British ?**

	Heard of %	Aware British %
Spice Girls	93	66
Tony Blair	76	64
Hugh Grant	66	36
Kate Winslet	62	23
Naomi Campbell	61	13
Steve Martin	48	16
Stephen Hawking	26	10
Linford Christie	25	10
Tim Henman	21	11
Vivienne Westwood	21	8
William Hague	20	4
Richard Branson	19	7
David Hockney	15	6
Rowan Atkinson	13	7
Liam Gallagher	12	5
John Galiano	10	2
Anita Roddick	8	2
Delia Smith	6	2
James Dyson	5	*
P D James	5	2
Damien Hirst	4	2
Firzana Perveen	2	1
None of these	1	0
Don't know/ no answer	0	12

Q23. SHOWCARD L (R) **Coming back now to the subject of education, which of the answers on this card best fits how you would describe the overall quality of British higher education ?**

	%
Very good	43
Fairly good	50
Neither good nor poor	6
Fairly poor	1
Very poor	0
Don't know/ no answer	0

Q24. SHOWCARD M (R) **And thinking about the British themselves, how well or poorly educated do you think that they are generally?**

	%
Very well educated	17
Fairly well educated	72
Neither well nor poorly	10
Fairly poorly educated	0
Very poorly educated	0
Don't know/ no answer	1

Q25. SHOWCARD N (R) **Now I would like to ask you about Britain's relationships with different countries. To what extent do you think Britain values its relationships with...**

- a **Europe ?**
- b **The United States ?**
- c **Thailand?**

	Europe	USA	Thailand
	%	%	%
Very much	33	25	6
A fair amount	44	51	24
Not a lot	17	17	52
Not at all	3	3	15
Don't know	3	4	4

Q26. SHOWCARD O (R) I am now going to read out some statements that have been made about British society. I would like you to tell me to what extent you personally agree or disagree that they represent the UK.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither/ nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion	
The British system is a good example of democratic government	24	52	15	5	1	2	%
Britain plays a leading role in the European Union	12	47	30	6	1	4	%
Britain has a good national health service	20	50	20	3	0	7	%
Britain is now a 'classless' society	2	12	20	43	19	4	%
British society is truly 'multicultural'	7	28	29	27	5	4	%
The British legal system ensures that everybody gets a fair trial	20	45	20	5	*	9	%
Britain is committed to protecting the environment	15	52	22	3	*	7	%
The British media tells the truth	12	29	35	14	3	7	%
Women are discriminated against in Britain	2	12	33	33	12	7	%
British people are very welcoming towards foreigners	2	18	42	26	6	6	%
British people are racially tolerant	2	8	41	28	9	11	%

Q27. SHOWCARD P (R) Thinking about the British media, how does it compare with the media in this country in terms of its....

a honesty?
b quality ?

	Honesty %	quality %
Much better	22	32
A little better	32	35
About the same	40	26
A little worse	2	2
Much worse	*	2
Don't know/ no answer	4	3

Q28. SHOWCARD P (R) AGAIN How do you view British products and services compared with those of other countries in terms of...?

	Much better	A little better	About The same	A little Worse	Much worse	Don't know/no opinion	
their quality	21	46	30	1	*	2	%
Their value for money	15	37	35	9	1	3	%

Q29. SHOWCARD Q (R) Knowing that a product or a service is British, does it make you more or less likely to choose to buy it, rather than a similar product or service from another country, or does it make no difference at all ?

		%
	Much more likely to buy it	13
	A little more likely to buy it	34
	No more or less likely to buy it	41
	A little less likely to buy it	4
	Much less likely to buy it	2
	Don't know/depends	6

Q30. SHOWCARD R (R) And taking your answer from this card, how do you perceive ...

A
B the British workforce ?
British management ?

	Workforce	Management
	%	%
Very good	6	18
Fairly good	48	65
Neither good nor poor	36	12
Fairly poor	3	1
Very poor	0	0
Don't know/ no answer	8	5

Q31. What would you say, overall, is the United Kingdom's one major weakness?

	%
Monarchy/influence of royal family/scandals	15
Racial discrimination/racism/ anti-foreigners /narrow-minded/intolerant/ unfriendly	10
Traditional/conservative/out of date/against innovation/not flexible	9
Snob/arrogant/alooof	9
Class society	8
Conflict in Northern Ireland/religion wars/internal conflicts/terrorism	6
Social system/welfare/social discrimination	5
Proud/self-important/self-centred people	5
Political system	4
Bad weather/fog/rain	3
High cost of life	3
Cold/reserved/inaccessible people	2
Rest too much on their laurels/past glories/ lost its international strong position/illusion that it is still a world empire/long history	2
Disinterest in Europe/Euro	1
Geographical situation/island/isolated/ insular	1
Other	3
None	5
Don't know/no answer	8

Q32. And what do you think is the United Kingdom's one major strength ?

	%
Tradition/culture/heritage/conservatism	20
Education system/highly educated	17
Glorious past/British colonies/colonial history	7
Good business administration/management/disciplined	7
English language/universal language	6
Monarchy/Royal family	6
Democracy/freedom of speech	5
Stable economy/economic power	5
Stable political power/strong government	3
Strong/steady currency	3
People determination/endurance/self-confidence	2
Geographical situation/islands	2
Creativity/innovation/discoveries/advanced technologies	2
Industrial power	1
Army/military power	1
Multi-cultural society/good integration/co-existence of races	1
Cohesion/patriotism/united country/proud nation	1
Other	6
Don't know	2
None/no answer	1

Q33. Can you please tell me now which two or three sources of information are most important when forming an opinion specifically about the United Kingdom.

	%
National TV news	59
Books	48
Local press	42
Internet	30
Academic sources	25
Films	23
BBC World TV	22
Other international TV	19
British press	12
People who have visited the UK	12
Word of mouth - friends & family	12
Word of mouth – work colleagues	11
Know people from the UK	10
Local radio	10
Other international press	8
BBC World Service	7
Embassies/consulates	6
Visiting the UK personally	5
Other international radio	3
Tourist authorities in the UK	2
Other official UK sources	2
Magazines	1
British Council	*
Other	2
Don't know/no answer	*

Topic Guide

Introduction – 5 mins

Name, job etc.

Communities

What I want to do this evening is to explore your perceptions and feelings about three different countries. To do this we're going to play a game - it might sound a bit odd but bear with me. The reason for this approach is that we need to focus on general characteristics about the countries and the people who live there, without getting drawn into discussions such as 'oh when I was in such and such a place.....'.

In the game we are going to pretend that there are three communities, and each one represents one of three countries - The United States, Great Britain, and Thailand. Each of the three communities is meant to encompass EVERYTHING about that country to you.

PART A – THE PEOPLE mins

10

So to start us off, I'd like you to tell me about the people who live in each of the communities - what are the people like ? For example, if you were to visit the British community, how would the people welcome you ? Why do you think that ? And what would the welcome be like in the Thai community? And in the American community ?

And, within the same community, how do the people relate to each other?

Imagine the British community. Is this community united? Do the people live in harmony? Do they support and respect each other? IF NOT, ASK Why not?

PROBE FOR: Is there any discrimination e.g. between ethnic groups, or between men and women?

And what about the Thai community? How does it compare with the British community? And in the American community?

PART B – HIGHER EDUCATION mins

10

Now I'd like you to think about some specific individuals who might live in the three communities. Firstly, imagine that there

is a person living in each community who represents **higher education**. When you think of the person who represents British higher education, what sort of person do you think of ? (*PROMPT IF NECESSARY: male or female ? young or old ? traditional or modern ?*)

What kind of educational establishment do they teach at ?

What kind of teacher are they ? What is their teaching style ?

What are that person's good and bad points ?

What about an American who represents education - what sort of person do you think of? What kind of teacher are they ?

What kind of educational establishment do they teach at ?

And the educationalist in the Thai community. What are they like?

Overall, who would you choose to be your 'teacher' ? Why ?

What are the best points about the educationalist in each country ? And what are their worst points ?

PART C – BUSINESS

10

mins

Now I'd like to move on to thinking about businesses in each of the three countries, so continuing to use the community analogy, I'd like you to think about typical **business-people** who might live in each of those communities. How would you describe the British business-person? Is he/she a good manager? What makes them good or bad ?

How does the British businessman differ from the others?

What kind of **business** is it that the British business-people work for ? (*PROMPT IF NECESSARY: services or manufacturing ? what does it produce ? big or small ? socially responsible or cut-throat ? efficient ?*) - Is it successful at what it does? Where does it sell its products/services - in the community or elsewhere (more to the American or Thai community ?) Describe its management and **workers**.

Are its products/services of good quality? Why?/Why not? In what ways are the British business's products/services better or worse than those produced by the Thai business ?

What about the American business - what does it do ? How are the American business's workers and managers different to their Thai counterparts ? Where does it sell its products ? In what ways are the American business's products/services better or worse than those produced by the Thai business ?

And how does the business run in the Thai community differ from the other two ?

What are the particular strengths of the British business? The American business ? The Thai business ?

PART D – SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

10

mins

And finally, there is someone who represents **science and technology** living in each community. What would the British scientist be like? What kind of things would he/she work on? And what kind of working habits would they have? What is the best thing about the British scientist? And the worst?

How does that compare with the American scientist?

And the Thai scientist?

Turning now to new technologies, would you say that the British community is very innovative? In which areas? ASK FOR Internet, medicine How does it compare to the American community? What about the Thai community?

PART E – THE MEDIA

10

mins

Imagine now that each community produces a **newspaper**. Describe the newspaper in the community representing Britain. What does it look like? What kind of coverage does it have? Is it well-read? Do you believe its contents? What is the best thing about the paper?

What about the American newspaper - how is that different?

And the Thai paper - what is that like? Do the people in the community read it and like it, do you think? What are the paper's qualities?

Which of the papers would you prefer to read? Why?

PART F – ART

10

mins

Moving on now to another character in the communities. I'd like to get your impression of the Arts in each of the three countries. So please try to imagine a character in each community who represents **the Arts** (not necessarily someone who paints). When you think of someone in the Thai community, what kind of artist would they be?

What about the person in the American community - what kind of art would they produce?

And the British person who represents the Arts?

Thinking about the British 'artist', describe that person to me.

What is the quality of their work?

How well regarded do you think that person is in their own community, and elsewhere?

What are that person's major strengths?

Which of the three 'artists' would you most admire? And why?

PART G – DECISION-MAKER

10

mins

I'd like to think now about the **person in charge** of the community, and how they run the community. How do you think the British community is run ? How involved are the community occupants in the **decision-making** ? Is it a good way to run a community ? And what is the person in charge like? (Please try not just to describe your impression of the current British Prime Minister - it's a general picture of a typical British leader I am looking for. (*Unless Tony Blair encapsulates British leadership - in which case, why?*)) Overall, what are the best points about the running of the community ?

How do these issues differ in the Thai community: the running of the community and the person in charge ? In what ways is this community different to the British community ?
And what is the running of the American community like ?

PART H – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS 5 mins

To what extent do you think the occupants of these communities would take an interest in what is going on elsewhere ? How much is the American community, for example, involved in affairs which affect the other communities ? Are they getting more or less involved in such affairs ? And how much do people in the other communities listen to what the American community has to say ? How is the British community different ?

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

5 mins

Could you describe in three words each of the communities ?
Would you live in the British community? Why/Why not?
And now thinking about your ideal community - how would you describe that in three words ?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT BRITAIN 10 mins

To conclude, now, I'd like to focus for a short while specifically on Great Britain, and how you have come to have the impressions that we have just been discussing.

Have you ever travelled to Britain? (IF NOT, ASK Why not?)

What was the purpose of your visit? PROMPT – Business trip, holidays, studies...

What source(s) of information has been the most valuable when you looked for some information about Britain? PROMPT magazines, newspapers, programmes on TV/radio, Internet, friends, travel agencies... holidays, studies, business trips

What do you think are the things which have most influenced your impressions of Britain ? Why? PROMPT: holidays, studies, business trips, magazines, newspapers, programmes on TV/radio, Internet, friends, travel agencies...

How else have you found out about Britain ?

Overall, have your experiences of Britain been positive/negative?

Statistical Reliability

The sample tolerances that apply to the percentage results in this report are given in the table below. This table shows the possible variation that might be anticipated because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed. As indicated, sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results.

For example, on a question where 50% of the people in a weighted sample of 206 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than seven percentage points, plus or minus, from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures.

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Size of sample on which survey result is based	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50 % ±
3,400	1.0	1.5	1.7
1,000	1.9	2.8	3.1
260	3.6	5.6	6.1

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different parts of the sample. A difference, in other words, must be of at least a certain size to be considered statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons.

Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels*

Size of the samples compared	10% or 90 % ±	30% or 70 % ±	50 % ±
200 vs 3,200	4.3	6.5	7.1
200 vs 200	5.9	9.0	9.8
100 vs 100	8.3	12.7	13.9
150 vs 50	9.6	14.7	16.0