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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between China's soft power and the international branch campuses (IBCs) established overseas by Chinese universities, and to identify which aspect of China's soft power has the greatest impact on these campuses. We adopted a qualitative research design that involved interviews with managers, faculty and staff at three Chinese international branch campuses in Laos, Malaysia and Thailand. Our findings suggest that China is leveraging its existing soft power to assist or promote its education export, and China's soft power is returning to South East Asia. Although each of the three IBCs contributes to disseminating China's soft power to a certain extent, their effort is still quite limited. The aspect of China's soft power that has the greatest influence on the Chinese IBCs is the necessity of the Chinese language, as well as Chinese cultural history and heritage. Another important factor is the economic power of China, albeit a type of hard power. It is China's rapid economic development that is driving students' desire to take

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courses delivered in Chinese, and to learn the Chinese language at these branch campuses. The study's findings have implications for policy makers, educators and researchers with an interest in IBCs.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)