

# Development of Nora Performance and Management System for Creative Economy

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**Abstract** – *This research study on “Development of Nora Performance and Management System for Creative Economy” is a qualitative research that aims to study 1) historical background, popular traditions, beliefs and management system of Nora performance; 2) problems encountered pertaining Nora performance and its management system; and 3) an appropriate model for development of Nora performance and management system for the creative economy. The target area of the research is a selection of 6 Nora performance teams in 3 provinces – Pathalung, Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Trang. The research methods are comprised of documentation studies, observations, interviews, group discussion and workshop. Data analysis was performed through a descriptive analysis. The research findings show that historical background of Nora ensembles are mostly derived and promoted from the families, relatives and other interested group of people. The research also finds that there are 9 elements of Nora performance, which comprise 1) the theater and scenes to be used for Nora performance; 2) the outstanding costumes to be used; 3) the musical instruments; 4) light and sound decoration; 5) the number of performers (20-70); 6) the stories to be performed; 7) the manager; 8) the popular traditions of performance; 9) Nora traditional beliefs. In terms of problems encountered, it was found that the popularity of Nora performance has decreased, since nowadays there is more technological media, thereby decreasing the amount of revenue and the degree of Nora inheritance. The research found that in developing Nora performance and management system for creative economy, the local curriculum should be developed for school use or educational academies. Besides, it may be developed in the form of a website database, books and videos, all of which should be aimed to meet public relations targets and distribution as well as to increase revenue. The local institutions should render cooperation and frequently promote the support of Nora performances.*

**Keywords** – *Creative Economy, Management, Nora, Performance, System.*

## INTRODUCTION

Folk plays are regarded as Thai cultural art, being initiated with the purposes of providing fun, knowledge and entertainment to the general public as well as developing the profitable use of leisure time, physically and mentally. Folk plays also provide mutuality and relationship among groups of people which reflects their local lifestyle and finally continues to be their own local identity.

“Nora” is a local folk play of the Thai southern region with a long historical background and remains a very popular folk play among people in the southern region. Nora performance has 2 principal aims, one of which is entertaining the people, while the other is for belief of ceremonial worship. This ceremonial worship is mostly performed in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Trang,

Patalung and Songkla provinces, where the most popular Nora performances can be found [1].

At present, social changes in Thailand are widespread by the international media, causing traditional performances to hold less significance and interest among young generations. Other causes of change are educational expansion, which makes people develop their knowledge and skills in new varieties of occupations, changing the marketplace from rural society to urban society. Besides, the rapid changes of a more convenient communication system also affect the development of new, modern and exotic performances, such as folk music, Pong Lang bands, Mor Lam and Likay folk dances from other regions. These hold more interest for younger generations.

Due to the aforementioned causes of change, the researchers realised the need to find appropriate ways to promote development of Nora performance and other compositions in order to comply with the rapid changes in society. This is particularly important in terms of the art of performance and management system of Nora organization, which should be concentrated in terms of the developmental approach through creative economy and brought into the mainstream for increased revenue.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study is a qualitative research aimed at studying the historical background, popular traditions, beliefs and management system of Nora performance, as well as studying the problems pertaining to Nora performance and its management system and discovery of an appropriate model for development of Nora performance and management. The researchers selected the target area through sampling selections at 3 southern provinces where Nora is an outstanding performance. These 3 selected provinces were Pathalung, Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Trang where 2 Nora performance teams were selected per province, making 6 Nora teams all together as the target groups. The research methods were documentation studies, observations, interviews, group discussion, workshop and data analysis. The results are presented as a descriptive analysis.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Cultural inheritance of Nora performance was found to be passed down by relatives from generation to generation and the performance has had a similar identity through time. This is in accordance with Brown's Theory, which stated that the recognition of new attitudes of the people in a society may have to rely on many significant factors [2]. These factors include the positive belief or trust in the capacities of people to promote environment and social development, readiness for the open-minded acceptance of new things or new experiences and strong intentions to walk through their own and their descendants' final goals successfully. Besides, upon the establishment of Nora performance troupes, the cultural heritage of old generation Nora teams continues to spread into the new groups. This is regarded as a significant factor in stimulating the new generation of Nora groups to develop successful management systems. This is in compliance with the

cultural diffusion theory of Franz Boas, who stated that cultural heritage will be sustained if new communities adopt other cultural heritage with an aim to respond to the needs of the society [3]. This statement is also in accordance with the research of Pattaya Saihoo, who found that cultural plays or folk arts are the blueprint model of local groups of people or societies, which are established through their knowledge and understanding of creative thinking skills and desirable attitudes [4]. When these management systems are put together into practice, it will yield culture, which is the only single model for best sharing practices among people in the society. These best practices will respond to their needs given local conditions and factors.

It was found that past problems and situations of Nora performances were concentrated mainly on the catchphrases of Nora singing and delicacy of Nora dancing. However, at present fewer people are interested due to the opinion that Nora performance is not as amusing as watching modern music bands. This opinion is confirmed by the statement made by Jintana Noona, who argued that the decrease of Nora popularity has been caused by the opportunities of people in selecting other types of more interesting media, such as radios and television broadcasts, movies and other entertainment forms [5]. Noona proved that people now have more alternatives in terms of selecting their recreational and entertainment activities.

In terms of the impact caused by the more significant role of modern media, it was found that this impact has turned Thailand into a society dependent on new information and all types of technological media play a role in transferring new cultural practices into Thai society. This has particularly impacted the young teenagers, who always undertake the fast track of preferences in new cultural performances. This situation is in accordance with the research of Sutthiwong Pongpaiboon who stated that the folk cultural degeneration in the past decade is due to three principal causes: 1) Every technical field is developed based on Western theories, with a lack of basic knowledge and understanding in terms of self esteem, 2) Technological development has physically stimulated the needs of rural people, thereby making them change their actual status from producers in the workforce to consumers instead, 3) The social value of urban society is found to have spoiled or broken away the original value of the rural society, thereby making rural people lack generosity and harmony, as well as unity among themselves [6-8]. Modern generations

have become concentrated on materialism rather than psychological awareness and this is seen by Pongpaiboon to be a cause of disunity among the people, as well as causing great loss of cultural heritage, which is very dangerous to the country as a whole.

In terms of the inheritance of Nora cultural performance, it was found that the new generations have less interest due to their opinion that Nora is an ancient art. Besides, it is too difficult to learn and needs dedication or interest to practice. For these reasons, most young people fail to continue with their professional Nora practice. This has been confirmed by Dusit Numfon who described his feeling of anxiety towards the rapid decline in popularity of local old songs [9]. He believes that this situation may have been caused by the old age of the original singers, who have less opportunity to perform the shows and have not trained their offspring to inherit their skills. Moreover, it may have been caused by the people themselves who have their own opportunity to choose particular entertainment. It may also have been caused by the current social situation in which international culture has a more significant role than Thai culture. These reasons confirm the position of Jintana Noona, who believes the limitation of local art performances is caused by narrow cultural transfer among relatives or neighbors [5]. Therefore, there is a lack of inheritance opportunity outside the family unit. Besides, this kind of art is deemed very difficult and needs particular skill to be performed professionally.

In terms of revenue, the present economic situation may cause the decline of employers who bargain for low cost of hiring Nora performers and this has reduced the earning potential of every Nora group. This is in accordance with the New Adoption Theory of Roger [10, 11]. Rogers identified five stages in the new adoption process: 1) Step of awareness, 2) Step of interest concerning details of new things, 3) Step of evaluation for making decisions on which new things are good and of interest, 4) Step of trial for making decisions to find out whether it would be worth doing, 5) Step of adoption to see whether the new things being evaluated beforehand should be adopted.

According to the recommendations of the key informants regarding the model for Nora Performance and Management System for Creative Economy, it was concluded that Nora clubs or councils should be established in order to organize the teaching and learning activities according to the educational

curriculum. In doing this, video tape recordings through DVD may be developed and public relations through several media channels should be set up, especially with local newspapers, information boards and on the internet. There should also be social media promotion. Besides, some souvenirs should be produced to supplement the income of Nora performers. These recommendations conform to the conclusions of Seree Pongpit who described promotion of folk art development as an outstanding way to manage and increase the value of cultural performances [12]. These cultural performances can be adapted so as to be in compliance with rapid social changes. The adaptation and adoption of folk cultural performances should be done frequently and continuously, no matter how fast or slow. On the other hand, Kanjana Kaewtep has described the initiation of the audience market for folk cultural performance [13]. Kaewtep deems it necessary to first understand what is going to be built in the market place. She argues that audience markets are now being promoted unexpectedly and unsystematically. For example, in some local educational institutes Nora, Mor Lam and Likay courses have been founded, all of which are seen to increase the number of folk cultural audiences. However, teaching and learning in educational institutes may not identify with the real situation in society and may not help to build the number of artists. Regardless, this method proves that interest in Nora performances can be successfully developed.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The historical background of Nora folk performance is promoted in terms of Thai southern identity which has been inherited from relatives. The dissemination of knowledge has continued from generation to generation. There are several elements and compositions of Nora performance. For example; the stage or theater, the scene and decoration of light and sound, the number of responsible skilled performers, the traditional beliefs and the performance practices.

In terms of management system of Nora performance, there are 4 things to be considered:

1. Financial and payment system - working performances and payment should be managed systematically, be of an appropriate standard and equitable to all concerned.
2. Public relations - public relations should be done through modern media with appropriate costs to

reach a variety of target groups through various channels.

3. Personnel development - Nora performers should promote their professional skills and development and be capable of valuable performances for the audience.
4. Revenue development - Revenue should be developed in terms of creative economy through income generating activities. These include development of media or performance equipment such as costumes, embroidery, souvenirs and videos and DVDs of Nora performances, all of which may raise additional income for the Nora teams.

It was found that the new generations consider Nora performances boring and outdated. On the other hand, some contemporary Nora performances have integrated folk music, singers and dancers into the show and are deemed more attractive as a result. Moreover, the audiences nowadays have adopted new cultural preferences from technological media, including movies, TV soap operas and other shows, which are easily understood, amusing and more exciting. Regarding the inheritance of Nora performances, the new generation lacks interest due to their opinion of this kind of art as being difficult to learn and train for. Nora performers are also seen to have fewer employment opportunities due to the stage of present economic downturn.

The model for development of Nora performance and management system for creative economy can be categorized into 6 dimensions:

1. Stage and scene of Nora theatre - there are 3 types of theatre: spiritual theatres for paying worship to Nora ancestors, ancient theatres and Nora theatres for performances incorporating folk music.
2. Nora costumes - the costumes need to be developed in terms of their style, colour and materials, so as to be easy to make with easy-to-find materials and cheaper to produce.
3. Musical instruments - the musical instruments need to be developed by integration of international musical styles with folk music.
4. Light and sound - apart from lighting on stage, Nora performers may have to develop the lighting and sound themselves to produce a more skilful, more attractive, more exciting atmosphere.
5. Performers - Nora performers have to understand the needs of the audience. They should always update their actual knowledge and develop

varieties of their own skills in order to satisfy the audience.

6. Programs of Nora performance - the programs of the shows may actually be selected from some short stories of Thai literature but the new trend of performances may be adapted to include folk music and dancers at the end of the show.

This study is a collection of information on the problems and weaknesses of Nora art performance in the southern region. The study also found appropriate channels or methods for developing the management system, both in terms of performing the show and preparing the stage or theatre as well as equipment and materials, transferring knowledge, administration, management and income generation so as to make the art of this field remain creatively sustained.

#### **Recommendations for the application of this research**

1. The Nora performance teams may apply this research for developing the model of their Nora performances in order to make this field of art remain progressive and sustained.
2. The government and non-government organizations at the provincial level may take into consideration how to maintain the conservation and development of Nora performance as the art of the southern region as well as finding the appropriate ways to sustain income generation.
3. The Tourism Authority of Thailand as well as the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture may promote development and support the art of Nora performance so as to highlight southern cultural tourism promotion at a provincial level.

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