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Trends in Thai Performing Arts Senior Project by Suan Sunandha Undergraduate Students in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The digital era has significantly influenced Thai performing arts, particularly at the undergraduate level, where Thai Dance Senior projects enhance creative skills and reflect cultural identity. This study examines the Thai Dance Senior projects process of Thai Performing Arts students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, focusing on creative design, interpretation, and conceptual frameworks integrating traditional Thai dance with contemporary trends. Data were collected through interviews, content analysis, and performance observations (2017–2024), alongside feedback on digital media performances. Findings reveal that thesis topics increasingly address social issues and cultural identity, including reinterpretations of Thai literature, cultural diversity, and gender roles, particularly for women and LGBTQ+ communities. Topics linking Thai performing arts with digital innovations are also prominent. Students skillfully apply technology, such as projection mapping for dynamic backdrops, and blend Thai and Western music to appeal to modern audiences. Choreography and costumes are modernized while preserving traditional elements. Storytelling aligns with societal changes, including historical narratives with social themes, emphasizing relatable topics like gender equality and cultural diversity. These projects demonstrate students' adaptability and creativity, leveraging digital tools while maintaining the essence of Thai heritage. To sustain the growth of Thai performing arts in the digital age, curriculum development, resource support, and online platforms for showcasing works are essential.

Keywords: Thai Dance, Thesis Creation, Digital Era, Contemporary Performance, Creative Design

1. Introduction

Thai dance is a cultural heritage that reflects the identity of the Thai nation through dance moves, songs, and exquisite costumes (Juntaratorn, 2023). However, in the digital age where technology plays a role in people's lives and behaviors, Thai dance faces the challenge of adapting to reach a new generation of audiences who are more familiar with technology (Pongsakorn, 2022), especially at the undergraduate level, where writing a thesis is an important channel for students to develop creativity and reflect cultural values. Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University has guidelines for developing digital technology competencies, including: 1. Create a digital technology collaboration network/establish a digital technology center within the

faculty. 2. Supervise and monitor the use of digital technology, set a standard system for measuring and evaluating the use of digital technology. 3. Organize skills development activities, encourage all sectors to create works and innovations. as well as creating a competition stage so that all sectors can access digital technology information 4. Increase knowledge, skills and aptitude in using digital technology in teaching and learning 5. Develop oneself and the organization in the use of digital technology 6. Study the policies of the parent organization and use them to determine strategies/action plans/personal potential development plans 7. Follow the news/be a role model in the application of digital technology in teaching and daily life, such as scoring systems, electronic document systems, or creative communication via social media on various channels, and 8. Allocate a budget, purchase materials, equipment and learning resources with digital technology (Noichan et al., 2024).

In addition, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University is also a famous educational institution in Thai dance. It plays an important role in encouraging undergraduate students to develop theses that combine Thai dance forms with contemporary performances (Singha & Sooksawat, 2021). Such creative processes also need to be adapted to the use of digital technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Projection Mapping, which add new dimensions to the performance (Khamwong, 2021). In addition, distributing works through online platforms such as YouTube and TikTok helps expand opportunities to reach a wider audience and meet the needs of today's digital media consumers (Chaiwat, 2022). The creation of digital theses is also important in terms of developing a performance framework that can be linked to contemporary social contexts. Most students focus on reinterpreting Thai literature and historical stories, adapting them to reflect social issues such as cultural diversity and gender equality (Wongsuwan, 2023). Such processes also include the integration of Thai and international music, as well as contemporary choreography and costumes (Somchai & Nimanong, 2020).

This research aims to study the trends in writing theses in Thai dance by undergraduate students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in the digital age, focusing on analyzing conceptual thinking approaches, creative design methods, interpretation, and performance frameworks. The results of this research will help to understand the creative processes that reflect the adaptation of Thai art in the digital age and provide guidelines to support the development of thesis writing that responds to social changes in the future.

1.1 Research Objective

1.1.1 to analyze the trend of thinking about the topic of art thesis of undergraduate students in performing arts (Thai dance). Faculty of Fine Arts Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

1.1.2 to study the creative design of performances and their interpretation in the art dissertation.

1.1.3 to propose guidelines for developing a conceptual framework for the creation of art in the digital era.

2. Body of paper

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Data Collection

- An in-depth interview with undergraduate students in Thai Dance at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Analysis of Examples of Artwork Created in 2017–2024
- Audience opinion survey on art performances disseminated through digital media.

2.1.2 Data Analysis

- Content Analysis to study topic trends and design styles.
- Qualitative Analysis to understand the interpretation and framing of concepts.

2.2 Results

Creation of Artworks by Undergraduate Students in Performing Arts (Thai Dance) during the year 2020 – 2024 There are the following principles for creating performances:

2.2.1 Trends in Thinking About Thesis Topics

Popular topics in 2017–2024 often reflect responses to social issues such as storytelling.

Regarding gender diversity, historical interpretation and presentation, tribal lifestyles, traditions, folk plays, beliefs in the modern context, and exploration of Thai culture in the context of globalization. (Khamwong, 2021)

2.2.1.1 Storytelling about sexual diversity, including male-male homosexuality, namely the performance of the Nok reet (Figure 1).

Figure 1: performances of the Nok reet.



Source: Researcher (2021)

2.2.1.2 Historical presentation, including stories of the kings of the Pattani

Kingdom of the Bhakaraya Pattani Dynasty, namely the performance of the Teeka raya patanee (Figure 2).

Figure 2: performances of the Teeka raya patanee.



Source: Researcher (2023)

2.2.1.3 Presentation of the way of life of the tribes, including the Kalerng tribe, and the performance of the Kalerng Thong Phana (Figure 3).

Figure 3: performances of the Kalerng tong pha na.



Source: Researcher (2021)

2.2.1.4 Presentation of the traditions of the candle procession of the Isan people, including the performance of the Heat Hoi Thien costume (Figure 4).

Figure 4: performances of the Heat Hoi Thien .



Source: Researcher (2020)

2.2.1.5 Presentation of traditional northern games, including the Makon Sai performance (Figure 5).

Figure 5: performances of the Makon sai.



Source: Researcher (2021)

2.2.1.6 Presentation of beliefs about the moon, the performance of Surang Apsorssinthorn Rasmi (Figure6).

Figure 6: performances of the Surang Apsorssinthorn Rasmi



Source: Researcher (2021)

2.2.2 Creative Design Methods

Students have used digital technology to enhance the viewing experience, such as using projection mapping to create vibrant scenes and lighting, such as in the Yasothon Theri Bucha performance (Siripong, 2022). (Figure 7).

Figure 7: performances of the Yasothra Theri Bucha



Source: Researcher (2022)

The combination of Thai music and international music to create new flavors in the performance is the Chula Maori series performance (Pongsakorn, 2022). (Figure8).

Figure 8: performances of the Chula Maori



Source: Researcher (2023)

2.2.3 Interpretation and framing of concepts

The interpretation and conceptualization of the performance focuses on creativity that can communicate with modern audiences, such as adapting the story to connect with Thai social issues regarding the caste system of wives living in the same house, such as the performance “Manwika” (Figure 9).

Figure 9: performances of the Manwika



Source: Researcher (2023)

The use of AR to add dimension during the show includes a series of Seirina performances (Somchai & Nimanong, 2020). (Figure 10).

Figure 10: performances of the Seirina



Source: Researcher (2024)

3. Conclusion

Creation of Thai Dance Senior Project by Students of Performing Arts (Thai Dance) Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, In entering the digital era. It tends to focus on contemporary social issues and cultural identity reflections. Storytelling about cultural diversity and highlighting the role of women and LGBTQ+ in society. Connecting Thai Dance with Innovation and Digital Advancement Application of digital technology to increase the dimension of performance Combining Thai music with international music in a way that suits the tastes of modern audiences. This includes the design of dance moves and costumes that have been improved to be more contemporary, but still maintain the traditional identity of Thai dance by interpreting and framing the concept. Students focus on telling stories in new contexts that are in line with social changes, such as telling historical stories by inserting social issues. The conceptual framework for the show also emphasizes the connection to issues that are easy to understand for modern audiences, such as gender equality and cultural diversity. Making a thesis of Thai dance in the digital era shows the potential of undergraduate students to adapt to the times. Digital technology allows for diverse creative opportunities while maintaining the essence of Thai art and culture. Curriculum Development Supporting resources and creating an online space for dissemination of works is important to help Thai dance continue to grow in the digital age, a combination of traditional and contemporary that responds to social changes. Technological developments enhance students' potential to create diverse

works and reach a modern audience. However, balancing traditional and modern values remains a major challenge.

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