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FEMALE NIGHT SINGERS IN PUBS AND THE PROGRESS FOR ASEAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The article "Female Night Singers in Pubs and the Progress for ASEAN Community" was originated from the academic research, called "Negotiation of the Meaning of Female Night Singers", by collecting additional research data from key informants who are female night singers in pubs via the Interview and Participant Observation methods focusing on the career matters. The purpose of this research aims to study the patterns in career and influencing values of female night singers and to suggest solutions to female night singers in economic area in Hat Yai City, Song Khla Province. According to the study, it was found that female night singers were bound with some conditions in the context of working area, which is pub. Also, while female night singer career are under the social values, female night singers express their points of view that their career is right livelihood which has been widely accepted nowadays. They also define and introduce themselves in form of professional singers.

Keywords: Female Singers, Pub, Female Night Singers, Negotiation of the Meaning, Nightlife, Hat Yai, Song Khla, ASEAN Community, ASEAN

INTRODUCTION

Thai society in the past called performance careers; e.g. Li-Ke (Thai Musical Folk Drama), Lam-Tad (Thai-Style Antiphon), Dance, Dancer, Singer, Actor/Actress as "Making a living as a performer or dancer". Although people like music and admire the performance as "Art", on the other hand, people within these careers are likely not accepted as "Artists" and are seen as inferior than other careers (Saowalak Taengtang; 2549). Female singers and being insulted by people in the society are originated from authoritarianism. One of definitions of singer career from the discourse of as "Making a living as a performer or dancer" is still one of conflicts on values which still exist in the society. "Female Singers in Pubs" is a group of people who perform careers to feed themselves, but since the social values which do not accept or some values which do not see "Singing" as "Career", therefore, "Female Singer Career" is still stuck in the ambiguity in terms of values and acceptance from the society. However, female singers have done their negotiation of the meaning in career issues by introducing themselves as "Being Professional" to introduce in their career. Among the area of their career and entertainment industry which is clustered in the city, the paths of singers mostly come from their passion in singing that makes them having opportunity to be singers in many parts of the society; such as being singer in small band, being singer in the restaurant, hotel, and entertainment venues (Dusit Pongsapipat; 2544). "Career" is not only earning

ordinary livings. In western context, the definition "**Professional**" means "professionalism" and means people or group of people, that means those who perform their career which utilizes specific skills different from people who perform ordinary career (Surachart Thueksathit; 2552). **Professional** consists of the following elements; being persons who have high skills, being the persons full-standard skills, having "ethics of career", having achievements as "professional" which "can be evaluated", being accepted by persons in the same field, and being public. Singer career must use potential and development to become professional while the necessary things for performing this career and hard practice to become professional must contain "high" skills by focusing on responding the needs of customers and being skilled persons, being accepted by persons in the same field, working with skills for the positions, duties, and roles which professionals exploit from the success of the business under the rules, regulations, and manners of their career (Yanyong Sinthngam; 2552). The unfolding of female-singer career in terms of "career" was introduced via the identity introduction and opinion expression from female singers who perform this career in order to search for new meanings to negotiate with old values and beliefs and to firm their ground under the social acceptance nowadays.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the pattern of female-singer career in pubs in economic area in the middle Hat Yai City, Song Khla Province.
2. To suggest the improvements the influencing values towards female-singers in pubs in economic area in the middle Hat Yai City, Song Khla Province.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilizes Qualitative Research by broadcasting data from the informants to the researcher and focusing on field data. Key Informants of this study are female singers who work in pubs in economic area in the middle Hat Yai City, Song Khla Province, specifically, on Niphath Uthit 3 Road and Thammanoonwithee Road, Hat Yai District, Song Khla Province. The access to the key informants and study area is done by specifying the roles of the researcher who appears in the status of a female singer in a semi restaurant-pub and under the social context of night singer. The information is broadcasted via the exposed experience as career colleague and the settings of study area in order to collect Field Research Data by performing Surveys. The researcher accesses to the study area where the key informants work using Participant Observation and Informal Interview data collection methods. The instruments for the data collection and arrangement are Note Taking or Observation Note and Tape Recorder to record the interview in order to collect complete data and also to collect information from the interviews in many topics.

RESEARCH RESULT

According to the study with female singer in the economic area in the middle of Hat Yai City, Song Khla Province, key topics are as follows. First, patterns of female singer career are bound with social contexts. Second, female singer career and social

contexts are more accepted in the society with matters of honest livelihood and professionalism of female singers. Third, female singers need crucial factors to support the social matter, economic matter and security of the career.

Aside of communicating in English, songs being sung in the performances are 90 percent contemporary international hits and 10 percent Thai hits. Some of most requested Thai songs are Ruk Ter Mai Mee Wan Yood by Aon Kevlin, Sabai-Sabai by Bird Thongchai McIntyre, Om Pra Ma Pood by Bird Thongchai and Sek Loso, and Sip See Eek Krung by Sek Loso. When the intros of these songs were played, the foreign tourists, e.g., Singaporean and Malaysian, will clap their hands and sing along with joy. If they know other international songs being played, they will clap their hands and sing along as well.

Additionally, there are Chinese, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Filipino songs being frequently requested by the customers and become the regular songs. Chinese songs are Ciu Kang Dang Bue Bo (酒研倘賣無), Kam Tin Ngo (海闊天空), and Yue Liang Dai Biao Wo De Xin (月亮代表我的心). Indonesian songs are Si Jantung Hati, Joget Hati Seung. These Chinese and Indonesian songs play an important role in attracting the ASEAN customers such as Malaysian, Indonesian, and Singaporean. Therefore, the female singers have to practice them all.

Thus, singing is the way to entertain these people. Although they are from different races and culture, and use different languages, they will share the same values and behaviors when they are in the same space. Most of them will stand up and dance when they hear energetic music and make other people want to stand up and dance together. Some even clink their glasses with others to make friend. This makes a more satisfying atmosphere to them.

In the study area, people's values and beliefs tend to be westernized but mixed and flexible, unlike being attached to a single social norm. This create their freedom of thought which is open to different attitudes leading to new and creative ideas that will be discussed further in the next topic.

Female Singers and Social Values

Female singers are bound with some conditions which affect to values of people in the society from many contexts as follow; 1) Area Context; the working area of this career is "pub" which is seen as grey area. It consists of positive value which is the place for relaxation and socialization, while the negative value is the bad image and the place to get drunk and gang up. 2) Period Context; female singers have only one working period that is during the night, which is contrary to ordinary careers which has the working period during the day, and the night is the time for rest. 3) Sexual Context; female singers have working patterns by expressing their voices, emotions, and postures as part of the show including the attitude during the work, for example they must show good interaction with customers, using female charm to negotiate in terms of communication, words, postures, dressing, make-ups in order to create attraction under the aforementioned conditions "professionalism" which is often translated in negative manner rather than the professionalism.

However, female singers attempt to express "the professionalism" by explaining and introducing themselves as "female singers" in order to create understanding of elements and patterns in their career for social understanding, attitude development and social values towards this career, which is the introduction as female singer by singing, performance, and interaction with customers.

The expressions of female singers are singing and performance of voice quality and the appearance and dressing. These things are from the social expectation which have become the qualifications of female singers. For the performance; such as entertainment with speech and the movement of emotions through the songs, eyesight, gestures and song meanings; such as slow movement in slow songs or dancing in fast songs are, are patterns of performance.

"We perform the best we can on stage. If the song is fast, we have to dance and add some styles, not just standing still. Our body and eyesight have to conform with each other. We have to be in it, but also show people that this is performance."

(Tam (assumed name); 2555; Interview)

According to the abovementioned introduction, there is a negotiation of the meaning that such may not be the real person, but to show the meaning that it is the form of performance which a female singer must put on the role on the stage, the communication, and singing which are the specific patterns on the work.

The introduction to the customers creates interaction between each other. The distance of the relationship is maintained between customers and female singers. The true emotion is separated from the emotion created from the work although such emotion separation does not obviously break off from each other. Both sides must feel informal to each other but in the appropriate distance, called "Not over the limit"; such as greetings at the table but not hugging or holding hands or treating in terms of adultery. According to the working experiences, each female singer has their own defense techniques from various situations by their skills. We can see that female singers try to introduce themselves under the career pattern that is under the working conditions, not according to the negative values. Moreover, they claim their colleagues to perform this career honestly, not taking advantages or exploiting others. It will be beneficial to their images and values of those who perform this career.

Social Acceptance and Professionalism

"Being accepted" or "Being admired" from open-mind of people is the social need of female singers, and also the expectation towards "the place in the society" so that they can access to that area and have a ground in the society firmly. Upon this topic, female singers reveal that female-singer career is not inferior in the social position than the economic matter or authority.

Female singers have collected experiences, prides, awards from being singer and positive attitudes towards their career as "Jenny" and "Kik" (assumed names) reveal as follows.

"The image of female singers change. At first, I am not quite proud with myself, but once we are into it and work with it, our attitude changes. We have seen people who work as real singers, not only for money, but they actually love singing. Therefore, we learn more experience and we earn many good things beneficial for life"

(Jenny (assumed name); 2555, Interview)

"I am proud of this career because it's the job that is accepted from people, it's known in the society, and it makes good income from the skills of ourselves. It's an honest job which makes a livelihood for the family. That's what makes me very proud. Singing is to make customers happy, and we are happy with it. It's the career that gives and accepts."

(Kik (assumed name); 2555, Interview)

Female singers reflect the point of view of earning meanings and acceptance from the society and their methods to their goal relying on their creativity to respond to the changes of the modern society upon their living.

The Needs of Female Singers and Suggestions

The story broadcast for their work needs skills, knowledge, and specific abilities of female singers. The opening for the space or life stage of female night singers takes new perspectives without the obstruction from authority, illusion, values, trends, and contexts from the society from accessing into the study area and collecting data from female singers. These allow the researcher to be able to access to the space of female singers' thoughts and identity who claim for many needs in order to fulfill their career and to stand their ground in the society proudly.

The problems may be suggested very well from those who perform this career and actually encounter those problems. The researcher collect those issues and hope that this research will be one of spokespersons to allow the society to perceive and understand the problems and true conditions of female singers from career values. Female-singer career is likely a career with uncertain income and no insurance. "Female-singer career" has become the career unsuitable to hold as major career according to the thoughts and values of most people in the society. Also, this career does not apply learned knowledge and skills, so, it is unsuitable for taking as major career. There are also social factors; such as the study which earns money rather than seeing the importance of education for developing the potential and opening visions.

The study and values of learning in Thailand become fashion which limits the thoughts, paths of life to go along only one road which is to study, take examinations, look for a job. Human values are judged from money that people have forgotten life factors, skills, and talents. The education restoration must add the direction and learning processes in order to develop specific skills of every person. However, education should lay the path for the knowledge, open the visions for available choices in work which every person can truly have and apply for their career.

The uncertainty of this career may depend on many factors; such as economic condition, the changes of the restaurant, and agreements with the employer, because it is likely an employment for singing without signing agreements of work. Therefore, the restaurant or pub has the right to decrease the working period or day of the band or singer or to cancel the employment with the band to stop playing with the pub. However, there are claims for the needs in the career from little voices of female singers concerning with the income and welfare towards the business owners that they should provide security to the employees who perform this career firmly; for example, official employment contract signing in order to ensure the security, social welfare provision like other careers; such as compensation, medical treatment fee, social welfare fee, etc. Also, they want Thai society to accept and open the space for female-singer career to be aware of the social phenomena, and be aware of the problems open-mindedly in related contexts. These may be guidelines for the government to determine the policies to develop the society, economic, and tourism; such as promoting tourism business and being aware of the safety during the night and related problems which occur during the night. It will lead to further analysis in order to seek for solutions and protections.

The governmental sector should propose policies to provide assistance, to solve problems, and to ensure rights for female singers to have social opportunity, for example, allowing the related governmental organizations to take care of the personnel development, control the safety, propose policies to provide assistance, solve problems, and help female singers to have rights from the society like other careers.

Under the Constitution Law B.E. 2550, Section 30, Paragraph 1-3, it intends to create the equality between men and women to have equal rights in many manners, for example, the Concept of Women's Rights. Therefore, related organizations; such as Ministry of Culture and Minister of Social Development and Human Security to set campaigns to provide education about female values in order to open social space for women and open opportunity for women to choose right careers while creating new attitudes with many processes which create consciousness of being women and recognition of female sex.

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APPENDIX



Surveys located in Nipatuthit 3, a road crossed Thumnoonvithi road.





Research area in the pub the downtown of Hat Yai District, Songkhla Province.



Female singer in pub. (One of key informants)