The Process of Career Management for Moh Lam Ruang Tor Klon Artists in Northeastern Thailand

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ABSTRACT:

The molam rueang tor klon performance tradition is a major kind of intangible cultural heritage in Northeastern Thailand. Despite their cultural relevance, artists in this field have faced significant hurdles as a result of socioeconomic change, shifting consumer tastes, and fast digitalization. The purpose of this research is to (1) look into the historical evolution of the molam rueang tor klon profession, (2) assess its present circumstances and key obstacles, and (3) investigate career management techniques among performers in Northeastern Thailand. A qualitative research design was used, which included documentary research and substantial fieldwork. Data were gathered from 70 key informants via survey guides, participant and non-participant observations, organized and unstructured interviews, and focus group discussions. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and interpretative methodologies. The data show that the profession has progressed through seven historical phases over the last eighty years, indicating a constant adaptability to changing social, economic, political, and technical environments. While the present industry has seen great changes in artist demographics, performance innovation, internet marketing, diverse revenue streams, and career management, substantial obstacles still exist. These include unpredictable income, dwindling social recognition, restricted intergenerational knowledge transmission, a lack of digital capabilities among senior artists, and insufficient long-term institutional support. The research also highlights seven categories of career management used by modern performers: self-management, performance management, resource management, marketing and customer relationship management, network building, risk management, and strategic career planning. Digital channels, particularly social media, have become critical tools

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for audience engagement, cultural distribution, and revenue diversification. The study concludes that the long-term viability of the molam rueang tor klon profession is dependent on balancing cultural preservation with innovation, strengthening professional competencies, improving digital capabilities, establishing systematic knowledge transmission, and enacting integrated public policies that support both cultural heritage conservation and sustainable creative careers.

Keywords: Molam Rueang Tor Klon; Career Management; Performing Artists; Digital Technology; Intangible Cultural Heritage.

1. Introduction

Mor lam, Northeast Thailand's traditional performance art, has significant cultural and social importance that goes far beyond its entertainment value. This art form, based on centuries of Isan legacy, serves as a medium for intergenerational knowledge transfer, a reflection of community values and beliefs, and a dynamic platform for social cohesiveness. Among its several sub-genres, mor lam ruang tor klon, a narrative performance that combines sung poetry, dramatic narration, and theatrical elements, is one of the tradition's most structurally complex and culturally rich expressions. Its progression from solo or partnered recitation to fully staged shows with elaborate costume, scenography, and orchestral accompaniment illustrates the art form's adaptability and ongoing resonance among Isan communities (Jaroenchai Chanphairoet, 1983).

The socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of mor lam performance have piqued scholarly interest for several decades; however, the vocational dimension — specifically the professional trajectories, career structures, and management strategies of individual performing artists — has received relatively little systematic attention. This disparity is especially important in light of fast technological development, shifting audience demographics, and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, all of which have transformed Thailand's folk performing arts milieu. The profession of mor lam artist is no longer passed down through family lineage or apprenticeship in close-knit rural communities. Contemporary entry points into the industry are far broader, including official school programs in folk performing arts, talent discovery via digital platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook, and competitive auditions hosted by big performance troupes.

At the governmental level, the Thai government is increasingly acknowledging mor lam as a vital cultural asset. The National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) and the THACCA national soft power strategy identify mor lam as one of the cultural pillars through which Thailand seeks to enhance its global cultural presence and generate long-term economic value at the household, community, and international levels. The inclusion of mor lam in Thailand's soft power portfolio has increased both opportunities and pressures for performing artists, raising concerns about the profession's long-term viability, equitable distribution of economic benefits, and artistic authenticity.

Despite *mor lam ruang tor klon's* popularity in Isan cultural life and gaining institutional recognition, the careers of its performing artists are rarely recognized as a subject of scholarly research. Existing research has tended to concentrate on the organizational and managerial dimensions of established performance troupes, the historical development of specific companies, or the aesthetic and structural characteristics of the performance itself (Surapon Nesusintu, 2009; Namjai Utharuk, 2011; Itthiphon Masen, 2017; Sirichai Thapkhwa, 2017). While these

contributions are significant, they all have a similar focus on the troupe as the unit of study, leaving the individual artist — and the experience of establishing and maintaining a career in this profession — largely unexplored.

This omission is significant for various reasons. First, the performance artist is the major carrier of the embodied knowledge, vocal technique, and improvisational talent that define mor lam's specific cultural content. Unlike administrative or technical staff, artists' professional development is inextricably linked to the cultural reproduction of the art form itself. Second, the profession is undergoing fundamental changes. Major troupes' management structures are transitioning from traditional, family-based arrangements to more corporate designs that include formal employment contracts, proprietary record labels, and large-scale digital distribution. These shifts affect the conditions under which artists advance their careers, negotiate their responsibilities, and protect their livelihoods. Third, a remarkable phenomenon has evolved in which persons with no familial links to mor lam are entering the profession via unconventional routes, implying that the borders of the occupational group are becoming more porous. This transition, fueled in part by the normalization of online self-promotion and the institutional development of folk arts education, has ramifications for how talent is found, skills are taught, and professional identity is established. However, no systematic research has looked at how artists navigate these new entrance points, what skills are necessary for long-term professional success, or how they deal with the economic instability and societal expectations that come with the job. Fourth, worries regarding long-term viability are significant. Recruitment into the profession is no longer the primary constraint; rather, the challenge is to retain artists who possess the depth of cultural knowledge, physical discipline, and experiential repertoire that distinguishes a genuine mor lam performer from a singer who simply performs in the style. Professional attrition and knowledge loss are genuine risks, with effects that extend beyond individual livelihoods to Isan society's larger cultural ecosystem.

Against this context, the current study looks at the career management techniques of *mor lam ruang tor klon* performing artists in Northeast Thailand. It investigates the historical history of the profession across seven distinct eras, characterizes the contemporary conditions under which artists practice, identifies structural and situational issues, and analyses the tactics they use to manage their professional life.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study pursues three interrelated objectives:

1. To document the historical origins and developmental trajectory of the mor lam ruang tor klon performing arts profession in Northeast Thailand.
2. To characterize the current state of the profession, including prevailing working conditions, economic circumstances, social roles, and the problems confronting practicing artists.
3. To analyze the career management strategies employed by mor lam ruang tor klon performing artists in Northeast Thailand.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mor Lam as Intangible Cultural Heritage

Mor Lam is one of Thailand's most distinctive forms of folk performing arts and represents an essential component of the cultural identity of the Isan (Northeastern) region. Beyond its role as entertainment, *mor lam* functions as an important medium for transmitting local wisdom, preserving language, communicating moral values, and strengthening community cohesion. Through oral storytelling, improvised poetry, traditional music, and theatrical performance, *mor lam* reflects the historical experiences, religious beliefs, and socio-cultural values of Isan communities (Chanphairoet, 1983; Khan et al., 2025).

Historically, *mor lam* originated as a community-based oral performance associated with Buddhist ceremonies, merit-making festivals, agricultural rituals, and social gatherings. Early performers served not only as entertainers but also as educators and communicators who disseminated historical knowledge, ethical teachings, and local traditions through improvised verse. Consequently, *mor lam* has long been recognized as a living cultural heritage that evolves continuously while preserving its fundamental artistic characteristics (Thammawatr, 1985; Youthao et al., 2026). Unlike many traditional performing arts that rely primarily on scripted performances, *mor lam* emphasizes improvisation, linguistic creativity, and audience interaction. Performers are required to possess extensive knowledge of local history, Buddhist philosophy, literature, social issues, and current events in order to compose spontaneous poetic dialogues during performances. This combination of artistic performance and intellectual competence distinguishes *mor lam* from many other forms of Southeast Asian folk theatre.

According to the research findings, the profession of *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists has gradually evolved from an inherited family occupation toward an open professional career. Traditionally, artists entered the profession through family lineage or apprenticeship within local communities. Knowledge was transmitted informally from senior performers to younger generations through prolonged observation, rehearsal, and practical performance experience. However, contemporary career pathways have become considerably more diversified. Individuals without family backgrounds in *mor lam* increasingly enter the profession through formal education, university performing arts programs, talent competitions, and self-directed learning supported by digital media. Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become important channels through which aspiring performers demonstrate their abilities and gain recognition from established performance troupes. These developments indicate that *mor lam* has transformed from a closed hereditary occupation into a more accessible creative profession while maintaining its cultural identity.

The transformation of *mor lam* also reflects broader changes in Thailand's cultural economy. The profession increasingly integrates traditional artistic values with entrepreneurship, digital communication, and creative innovation. Consequently, *mor lam* should no longer be viewed solely as intangible cultural heritage but also as an emerging creative industry contributing to regional economic development, cultural tourism, and national soft power initiatives. The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage requires not only preservation of artistic performances but also protection of the practitioners who embody cultural knowledge. UNESCO (2003) emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage survives only when knowledge holders continue to transmit skills across generations. Therefore, understanding the career development and professional sustainability of *mor lam* artists is essential for ensuring the long-term continuity of this important cultural tradition.

2.2 Historical Development of Mor Lam Ruang Tor Klon

The historical evolution of *mor lam ruang tor klon* demonstrates the remarkable adaptability of traditional performing arts in response to changing political, economic, technological, and social environments. Rather than remaining static, the profession has continuously evolved while preserving its essential artistic identity.

The findings of this study identify seven major stages in the historical development of the profession. During the earliest period (before 1942), *mor lam* functioned primarily as a community institution rather than a commercial occupation. Performers participated in religious ceremonies, community celebrations, and local festivals without formal professional structures. Between 1942 and 1970, *mor lam ruang tor klon* gradually developed into a recognized profession. Organized performance troupes emerged, enabling performers to earn regular income while expanding performances beyond village

communities. This period marked the beginning of commercial performance management.

The years between 1970 and 1990 are widely regarded as the golden age of *mor lam*. Increasing popularity, expanding audiences, improved production quality, and national media exposure significantly enhanced both artists' incomes and social status. Large performance troupes became important cultural institutions throughout Northeast Thailand. However, the profession encountered substantial challenges during the economic crisis of 1990–2000. Financial instability, declining public expenditure on entertainment, and competition from television, cinema, and modern popular music reduced employment opportunities for many performers. Following the crisis, artists gradually adapted to changing market conditions between 2000 and 2015. Performance formats became more flexible, production management improved, and artists began incorporating contemporary music, lighting technology, and stage design into traditional performances.

Between 2015 and 2023, performers increasingly emphasized cultural identity and artistic authenticity. Greater public awareness of cultural heritage encouraged renewed appreciation of traditional *mor lam*, while universities and cultural organizations expanded educational programs supporting folk performing arts. The current period represents the era of digital transformation. Social media platforms, online streaming services, and digital marketing have fundamentally altered career development pathways. Contemporary artists increasingly establish personal brands, communicate directly with audiences, and diversify income through online performances, digital content creation, and cultural entrepreneurship. Government policies promoting Thailand's soft power strategy further strengthen opportunities for expanding *mor lam* into international cultural markets. This historical progression illustrates that the sustainability of *mor lam ruang tor klon* depends upon continuous adaptation while preserving its core cultural values. Rather than resisting modernization, successful performers integrate innovation with traditional artistic practices.

2.3 Career Management Theory

Career management has become an increasingly important concept in understanding how individuals develop, sustain, and advance their professional careers in rapidly changing economic and technological environments. Unlike traditional occupations characterized by stable organizational employment, careers in the creative industries are highly dynamic, requiring individuals to continuously adapt to changing market demands, technological innovation, and evolving audience expectations. For *mor lam ruang tor klon* performing artists, career management encompasses not only artistic development but also entrepreneurship, financial planning, marketing, networking, and lifelong learning. Therefore, this study adopts career management as its principal theoretical foundation for explaining how performing artists sustain their professional careers while preserving cultural heritage. Several career theories provide complementary perspectives for understanding the evolution of *mor lam* artists' careers.

2.3.1 Career Development Theory

Career Development Theory, proposed by Donald E. Super (1990), argues that career development is a lifelong process through which individuals continuously construct, evaluate, and modify their professional identities. According to the theory, career development consists of five life stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. Individuals continuously acquire new knowledge, develop competencies, and adapt their career goals according to changing personal circumstances and environmental conditions.

For *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists, career development extends beyond artistic performance. During the exploration stage, aspiring performers acquire singing techniques, improvisational skills, and cultural knowledge through family members, mentors, educational institutions, and digital media. The establishment stage involves joining professional performance troupes, building artistic reputation, and expanding professional networks. In the maintenance stage, experienced performers

diversify their careers through teaching, digital content creation, cultural tourism, and entrepreneurial activities while preserving traditional performance practices. Senior artists eventually assume the role of cultural mentors responsible for transmitting knowledge to younger generations. The findings of this study indicate that contemporary *mor lam* artists increasingly demonstrate structured career planning, continuous professional development, and long-term career sustainability, consistent with Super's theoretical propositions.

2.3.2 Boundaryless Career Theory

The concept of the Boundaryless Career, introduced by Michael B. Arthur and Denise M. Rousseau (1996), challenges the traditional assumption that careers develop within a single organization. Instead, individuals increasingly move across organizational, geographical, and occupational boundaries throughout their working lives.This perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary *mor lam* artists. Unlike previous generations who remained affiliated with one performance troupe for extended periods, modern performers frequently collaborate with multiple organizations, participate in independent projects, establish personal brands, and engage with audiences through digital platforms.

The emergence of social media has further reduced organizational dependence. Artists now promote themselves through Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and livestreaming platforms, enabling them to obtain performance opportunities independently rather than relying exclusively on troupe managers. Consequently, professional success depends increasingly on individual competence, reputation, adaptability, and networking rather than organizational membership alone. The research findings demonstrate that younger performers actively embrace boundaryless career strategies by diversifying performance opportunities, expanding professional relationships, and integrating digital entrepreneurship into their artistic careers.

2.3.3 Protean Career Theory

The Protean Career Theory, developed by Douglas T. Hall (2004), proposes that careers are primarily self-directed and values-driven. Rather than measuring success solely through salary or organizational promotion, individuals define career success according to personal fulfillment, professional autonomy, lifelong learning, and meaningful work.

This theoretical perspective closely reflects the experiences of many *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists. Participants reported that artistic identity, cultural preservation, community contribution, and personal satisfaction often outweigh purely financial considerations. Many performers continue their careers despite economic uncertainty because they perceive themselves as custodians of Isan cultural heritage. The findings further reveal that artists increasingly assume responsibility for managing their own professional development by pursuing additional education, developing digital competencies, creating online content, and establishing independent businesses related to performing arts. Such self-directed learning illustrates the central principles of the protean career model. Moreover, career success among *mor lam* artists is increasingly evaluated through audience recognition, cultural contribution, artistic excellence, and social influence rather than organizational hierarchy.

2.3.4 Career Sustainability Theory

While traditional career theories emphasize career progression, recent scholarship has increasingly focused on career sustainability. According to Ans De Vos et al. (2020), sustainable careers are characterized by the interaction of three interrelated dimensions: productivity, health, and happiness throughout an individual's working life.

Career sustainability is particularly relevant to creative professions characterized by uncertain income, freelance employment, and changing labour markets. Sustainable careers require continuous adaptation, lifelong learning, resilience, work-life balance, financial security,

and professional wellbeing. For *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists, career sustainability involves maintaining artistic quality while simultaneously ensuring economic viability, physical health, psychological wellbeing, and cultural continuity. The profession requires performers to balance traditional cultural values with innovation, digital transformation, and commercial opportunities.

The present study identifies seven dimensions of career management—including self-management, performance management, resource management, marketing management, network management, risk management, and career planning—that collectively contribute to sustainable professional development. These dimensions extend existing career sustainability theory by incorporating cultural preservation and creative entrepreneurship as essential components of long-term career success.

2.4 Creative Economy, Cultural Entrepreneurship, and Soft Power

The global transition from industrial economies to knowledge- and creativity-based economies has significantly transformed the role of culture in economic development. Cultural heritage is no longer perceived solely as a legacy requiring preservation but increasingly as a strategic resource capable of generating employment, innovation, tourism, and sustainable economic growth. Within this context, traditional performing arts have become important components of the creative economy, where cultural value and commercial value coexist and reinforce one another.

The concept of the creative economy refers to economic activities derived from individual creativity, cultural knowledge, intellectual property, and artistic innovation (John Howkins, 2001; Sutthadaanantaphokin et al., 2025; Channuwong et al., 2018). Unlike conventional industries, the creative economy generates value through intangible assets, including cultural identity, artistic expression, local wisdom, and creative content. Consequently, traditional performing arts such as *mor lam ruang tor klon* increasingly contribute to regional development by creating employment opportunities, attracting cultural tourism, and strengthening community economies.

Similarly, David Throsby (2001) argues that cultural industries simultaneously produce economic and cultural values. Cultural products cannot be evaluated solely according to financial returns because they embody historical identity, symbolic meanings, artistic authenticity, and collective memory. This dual-value perspective is particularly applicable to *mor lam*, which functions both as an economic occupation and as an essential mechanism for preserving the cultural identity of Northeastern Thailand.

The research findings indicate that contemporary *mor lam* artists increasingly combine artistic performance with entrepreneurial activities. In addition to live performances, artists generate income through online concerts, digital content creation, cultural tourism, merchandise sales, music production, teaching, sponsorship agreements, and social media partnerships. These diversified activities illustrate the transition from traditional performing artists toward cultural entrepreneurs capable of integrating artistic creativity with business innovation.

The development of cultural entrepreneurship reflects broader structural changes within Thailand's creative industries. Rather than relying exclusively on seasonal performances, successful artists increasingly establish sustainable business models that combine cultural production with digital marketing, audience engagement, and intellectual property management. Consequently, entrepreneurship has become an essential competency for career sustainability within the performing arts sector.

At the national level, Thailand has increasingly recognized culture as an important driver of economic competitiveness through the National Soft Power Strategy. Under the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027), cultural industries are identified as strategic sectors capable of enhancing international competitiveness while preserving national identity. Within this framework, *mor lam* has been designated as one of Thailand's priority cultural assets for developing

the country's soft power strategy. Soft power, originally conceptualized by Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2004), refers to a nation's ability to influence others through cultural attraction, values, and ideas rather than military or economic coercion. Traditional performing arts represent significant sources of national soft power because they communicate cultural uniqueness while enhancing international recognition.

Thailand's Thailand Creative Culture Agency (THACCA) initiative further emphasizes the commercialization of cultural assets through creative industries, digital innovation, international cultural exchange, and cultural tourism. Consequently, *mor lam* artists increasingly contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to national economic development and international cultural diplomacy. However, commercialization also introduces important challenges. Excessive emphasis on commercial success may encourage artistic simplification, cultural commodification, and reduced authenticity. Therefore, sustainable cultural entrepreneurship requires balancing economic objectives with cultural integrity. Successful *mor lam* artists continuously negotiate this balance by integrating innovation without abandoning the traditional characteristics that distinguish the art form.

2.5 Digital Transformation of Traditional Performing Arts

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the production, distribution, promotion, and consumption of cultural performances worldwide. Rapid advances in communication technology have altered audience behavior, marketing strategies, and career development opportunities within the performing arts sector.

Digital transformation refers not merely to adopting new technologies but to comprehensive organizational and professional changes enabled by digital innovation. In the performing arts, digital transformation encompasses online marketing, livestream performances, digital audience engagement, multimedia production, electronic ticketing, virtual communities, and data-driven marketing strategies.

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital platforms have become indispensable tools for *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists. Participants reported extensive use of Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Line for promoting performances, communicating with audiences, negotiating bookings, and strengthening professional identities. These platforms enable artists to reach national and international audiences without geographical limitations while reducing marketing costs and increasing direct communication with fans.

Digital media have also transformed talent development pathways. Unlike previous generations, whose professional opportunities depended primarily on local performance networks, contemporary artists frequently gain recognition through viral online performances, digital competitions, and social media exposure. Consequently, digital competence has become an important professional skill alongside traditional artistic ability.

Another significant transformation concerns audience engagement. Traditional performances were largely restricted to physical venues such as temple festivals and community celebrations. Today, audiences participate through livestreaming, online commenting, content sharing, and virtual fan communities. These interactions strengthen long-term relationships between artists and audiences while expanding opportunities for cultural dissemination.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digital transformation within Thailand's performing arts sector. During periods of movement restrictions, many artists adopted livestream performances, online fundraising, digital tipping systems, and virtual cultural events to maintain professional activities. Although these innovations emerged as temporary adaptations, they have subsequently become permanent components of contemporary career management.

Digital transformation has also enhanced knowledge preservation. Performance recordings, musical compositions, teaching materials, and historical archives are increasingly stored in

digital formats, facilitating cultural transmission to future generations. Digital documentation therefore contributes simultaneously to cultural conservation and professional development. Nevertheless, digital transformation also presents new challenges. Increased competition, copyright infringement, misinformation, cyber security risks, and rapidly changing platform algorithms require artists to continuously update their technological competencies. Moreover, older performers frequently encounter difficulties adapting to digital technologies, creating generational disparities within the profession.

Therefore, successful career management increasingly depends upon integrating traditional artistic excellence with digital literacy, marketing competence, entrepreneurial thinking, and continuous technological learning. Rather than replacing traditional performances, digital technologies function as complementary tools that enhance cultural sustainability, audience accessibility, and professional resilience.

2.6 Previous Studies

The body of literature concerning *mor lam* has expanded considerably over the past four decades. Existing studies have contributed substantially to understanding the historical development, performance characteristics, management of performance troupes, cultural preservation, marketing, and adaptation of *mor lam* within changing social contexts. Nevertheless, systematic investigations focusing specifically on the career management of individual *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists remain extremely limited. Consequently, the present study synthesizes previous research into four major themes to identify current knowledge and existing research gaps.

2.6.1 Historical Development and Cultural Heritage

Early research primarily examined *mor lam* as an important component of Northeastern Thailand's cultural heritage. Chanphairoet (1983) explained the historical origins of *mor lam* and emphasized its educational, social, and religious functions within Isan communities. Similarly, Thammawatr (1985) described *mor lam* as an indigenous communication system through which local wisdom, Buddhist teachings, and community values were transmitted across generations.

Subsequent studies expanded this cultural perspective by emphasizing the role of *mor lam* in preserving regional identity and strengthening social cohesion. These studies collectively argued that *mor lam* represents more than entertainment; rather, it functions as an important cultural institution reflecting the history, beliefs, language, and identity of the Isan people. Although these studies provide valuable historical perspectives, they pay relatively little attention to performers as professional workers. Artists are generally discussed as cultural representatives rather than individuals managing long-term careers within an increasingly competitive creative economy.

2.6.2 Studies on Performance Development

A second group of studies focuses on the evolution of *mor lam* performance itself. Surapon Nesusintu (2009) investigated the development of *mor lam ruang tor klon* in the Khon Kaen tradition through a case study of the Rabiab Wathasin Troupe. The study explained changes in performance structure, stage production, and audience expectations. Similarly, Namjai Utharuk (2011) examined developmental guidelines for *mor lam ruang tor klon* across Northeastern Thailand and proposed approaches for preserving artistic quality while adapting performances to contemporary audiences. Natthaphong Pharapradap (2012) focused specifically on *lam ploen*, analysing its artistic components, musical characteristics, and developmental trajectory.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that *mor lam* has continuously evolved through adaptation to changing social environments. However, their analytical focus remains concentrated on performance forms, artistic development, and cultural preservation rather than the professional lives of individual performers.

2.6.3 Studies on Management of Mor Lam Troupes

Management issues have become an increasingly popular research topic during the past decade. Itthiphon Masen (2017) examined management systems within the Rabiab Wathasin and Wiraphong Wongsasin troupes. The study emphasized leadership, organizational structure, financial management, and administrative processes supporting large performance organizations. Similarly, Sirichai Thapkhwa (2017) investigated the commercial development of *mor lam mu* performances, highlighting modernization of production systems, stage technology, and business management.

Saman Saensupah (2020) analysed the management of the Prathom Banthoengsin Troupe, emphasizing strategic planning, organizational coordination, and performance administration. Although these studies contribute significantly to understanding organizational management, they consistently adopt the performance troupe as the primary unit of analysis. Individual artists receive comparatively limited attention despite being the central creators of artistic value.

2.6.4 Contemporary Studies: Digital Transformation and Creative Economy

Recent studies increasingly acknowledge the influence of digital technologies and the creative economy on traditional performing arts. Research following the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that digital platforms have fundamentally transformed audience engagement, marketing strategies, and income generation. Artists increasingly utilize Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and livestreaming technologies to promote performances, communicate with audiences, and diversify revenue streams. Digital transformation has therefore become an important mechanism supporting the sustainability of cultural occupations.

At the policy level, Thailand's National Soft Power Strategy and the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan recognize *mor lam* as an important component of the national creative economy. These policies encourage cultural entrepreneurship, innovation, international cultural exchange, and economic value creation through traditional performing arts. Despite these important developments, existing research has concentrated primarily on organizational adaptation, cultural preservation, and marketing communication. Few studies investigate how individual artists develop professional competencies necessary for sustaining careers within rapidly changing technological environments.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative research approach to get a comprehensive knowledge of the historical evolution, contemporary conditions, problems, and career management strategies of *mor lam ruang tor klon* performers in Northeast Thailand. A qualitative technique was deemed acceptable because it allows researchers to investigate participants' life experiences, professional practices, cultural values, and contextual aspects that cannot be fully recorded via quantitative approaches. The research used an interpretative paradigm, focusing on the meanings and viewpoints that artists create within their social and cultural contexts. To guarantee methodological rigor, data triangulation was used with a variety of sources and methodologies, including documentary research, field observations, individual interviews, and focus groups. This triangulation boosted the reliability and trustworthiness of the research results.

2. Population and Sample

The study focused on *mor lam ruang tor klon* performing artists and stakeholders involved in the profession across Northeastern Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby individuals possessing extensive knowledge, professional experience, or direct involvement in the mor lam profession were intentionally recruited.

A total of 70 participants were included, representing diverse stakeholder groups to

ensure comprehensive perspectives. These comprised:

- senior mor lam performers with extensive professional experience;
- active professional performers from different generations;
- troupe owners and managers;
- music directors and performance coordinators;
- cultural scholars and academics specializing in Isan performing arts;
- government cultural officers;
- community leaders; and
- audience representatives familiar with mor lam performances.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- At least five years of experience related to mor lam ruang tor klon;
- Direct involvement in performing, managing, preserving, or promoting the profession;
- Willingness to participate voluntarily; and
- Ability to provide rich and reliable information relevant to the research objectives.

The sample size was determined according to the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection continued until no substantial new themes or insights emerged.

3. Data Collection

Four complimentary qualitative methodologies were used to acquire the data.

Documentary Research

The theoretical and historical foundations of the study were established by reviewing relevant documents, books, journal articles, government reports, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and archival materials on mor lam history, cultural heritage, career development, and creative industries.

Field Observation

Both participant and non-participant observation were carried out during live performances, rehearsals, cultural festivals, and community events. The observations centred on actors' relationships, performance methods, audience participation, backstage administration, and adaptability to current performing situations.

In-depth interviews

Semi-structured interviews were performed using an interview guide based on the study goals. Interviews focused on participants' career histories, present professional situations, obstacles, adaption tactics, career planning, marketing practices, digital technology use, and future aspirations. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' informed consent.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group talks with members from several stakeholder groups were organised to confirm early findings, compare viewpoints, and develop collective suggestions for long-term career management in the mor lam profession.

4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using theme analysis principles.

First, verbatim transcriptions of interview recordings were made, followed by a methodical organization of field notes and documentary material. Second, all qualitative data were read many times to ensure familiarity with the material. Third, initial codes were created to identify relevant topics such as career growth, professional management, historical transition, economic circumstances, digital adaptability, and sustainability.

The coded data was then organised into larger categories and synthesised into overarching themes that corresponded to the study's aims. The study revealed trends, similarities,

differences, and correlations among participant groups.

To increase the credibility of the conclusions, methodological triangulation was used to compare evidence acquired from documentary analysis, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. Member verification was also carried out by requesting chosen participants to evaluate preliminary interpretations and validate the correctness of the results. Furthermore, peer debriefing among qualitative research professionals was carried out to improve analytical credibility and reduce researcher bias.

The findings are provided utilizing descriptive and interpretative analysis, as well as sample quotations from participants when applicable, to give a full knowledge of career management among mor lam *ruang tor klon* performing artists in the modern digital era.

Results

4.1 Historical Evolution of the Mor Lam Ruang Tor Klon Profession

The findings show that the profession of mor lam ruang tor klon performing artists has experienced constant alteration over the past eight decades. The evolution of the profession shows the intersection of cultural preservation, socioeconomic growth, political situations, technical innovation, and shifting patterns of public consumption. Rather than following a straight path, career growth has occurred throughout seven distinct historical periods, each signifying a substantial shift in professional identity, occupational organization, and creative practice. The research shows that the profession has consistently responded to external environmental changes while retaining its basic cultural character. Artists' performing styles, organisational structures, marketing techniques, and career management strategies have evolved over time in response to shifting audience expectations and technology developments.

4.1.1 Origin Period: Mor Lam as a Community Institution (Before 1942)

During the early stages, mor lam operated largely as a communal cultural institution rather than a commercial profession. Performances were seamlessly blended into local religious rites, agricultural rituals, merit-making festivals, and communal festivities across Northeast Thailand. During this time, artists were regarded more for their grasp of local wisdom, Buddhist teachings, oral literature, and traditional poetry than for their financial achievements. Family inheritance or apprenticeship under experienced performers were the most common routes to career entry. Economic compensation remained secondary to social service, with artists receiving symbolic gifts, meals, or modest monetary prizes from local communities. As a result, career sustainability was mostly determined by social recognition and cultural duty rather than market need.

4.1.2 Professional Formation Period (1942–1970)

The second historical period represented the move from cultural activity to professional vocation. Expanding transportation infrastructure and expanding regional mobility allowed theatre troupes to travel across provinces, boosting audience accessibility and job prospects. Artists began to receive regular financial recompense, and performing organisations eventually created more structured management structures. During this time, mor lam ruang tor klon gained recognition as a legal career capable of providing a solid household income. Although traditional theatrical features remained prevalent, economic factors began to affect repertoire selection, scheduling, and troupe structure.

4.1.3 Golden Age of Professional Expansion (1970–1987)

The third phase marked the pinnacle of professional progress. Mor lam ruang tor klon's popularity grew significantly in Northeast Thailand and beyond throughout the country. Larger performing troupes formed, attracting thousands of spectators and producing nationally known performers.The profession witnessed significant economic development. Artists gained

bigger performance fees, while successful troupe leaders expanded their enterprises with larger performances that included sophisticated stage design, orchestral accompaniment, and dramatic narrative. Public acknowledgement of performance has also expanded significantly, adding to greater professional status. The data indicate that this time period developed many of the professional norms that still impact modern mor lam practice.

4.1.4 Economic Crisis and Structural Decline (1987–1998)

The fourth historical stage posed the most severe barrier to career sustainability. The Asian financial crisis, along with the fast growth of television broadcasting, film, and new entertainment businesses, has significantly diminished public demand for traditional performances.Many performance troupes faced dwindling revenue, cancelled shows, and financial difficulties. Many artists found new employment to augment their income, and some left the field altogether. Investment in clothes, musical instruments, transportation, and stage production grew more challenging as operational costs rose and audience participation fell.Despite these hurdles, experienced performers maintained traditional knowledge through informal apprenticeship and local community activities, preventing cultural discontinuity.

4.1.5 Adaptation and Organizational Restructuring (1998–2012)

Following the economic crisis, several artists exhibited remarkable adaptability. Performance troupes expanded their entertainment offerings by incorporating contemporary music, upgraded lighting systems, multimedia technologies, and sophisticated stage production techniques.Artists increasingly considered themselves as businesspeople, in charge of both creative creation and commercial operations. Revenue diversification became an essential goal, which included commercial performances, cultural festivals, educational initiatives, recordings, and private events.This time also saw the growing use of professional management methods such as contractual employment, financial planning, audience analysis, and strategic marketing.

4.1.6 Identity Building and Cultural Revitalization (2012–2023)

The sixth historical period emphasised both cultural identity and professional progress. Government agencies, educational institutions, and cultural organisations are increasingly recognising mor lam as a significant part of Thailand's intangible cultural heritage. Artists aggressively advocated authenticity while modernising performance presentations. Beyond entertainment, professional identities have grown to include cultural educators, community leaders, and heritage ambassadors. The findings show that performers grew more conscious of maintaining creative authenticity while responding to changing commercial realities. During this time, educational programs, cultural festivals, and historical conservation campaigns all played important roles in professional recognition.

4.1.7 Digital Platform Era (2023–Present)

The most recent stage is distinguished by the significant use of digital technology in career management. Social media platforms, livestreaming services, online video channels, and digital marketing have profoundly altered how artists communicate with their fans, promote performances, and earn money.Unlike past generations, contemporary artists do not rely entirely on performing troupes for job progression. Individual artists are progressively establishing personal brands on Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and other digital channels, allowing for direct engagement with fans and diverse revenue sources. Digital revolution has also broadened professional prospects outside geographical boundaries, enabling artists to take part in online performances, content production, product endorsement, virtual education, and worldwide cultural promotion. Nonetheless, the data show that digital transformation creates additional obstacles, such as increased competitiveness, ongoing content development requirements, copyright protection issues, and uneven digital capabilities among performers.

Overall, the historical research shows that the profession has evolved through a dynamic interplay of cultural continuity and environmental adaptability. While external conditions have frequently changed occupational systems, the core cultural ideals of mor lam ruang tor klon have proven astonishingly robust.

4.2 Current Professional Conditions of Mor Lam Ruang Tor Klon Artists

The findings indicate that the contemporary profession of *mor lam ruang tor klon* has experienced substantial transformation in response to economic modernization, technological advancement, and changing audience preferences. Although the profession continues to preserve its traditional artistic identity, it increasingly demonstrates characteristics of a modern creative occupation. Six major dimensions characterize the current professional conditions: (1) artist profile, (2) performance practices, (3) economic conditions, (4) market and audience, (5) socio-cultural roles, and (6) innovation and adaptation.

4.2.1 Artist Profile

The demographic profile of mor lam ruang tor klon musicians has shifted dramatically during the last decade. Unlike past generations, in which performers were mostly middle-aged people who acquired the profession through family history, the contemporary profession includes a rising number of younger artists with better educational attainments.Many modern performers have formal education in performing arts, music, or cultural studies, and many chose mor lam as their major employment rather than as a secondary source of income. Entry into the business is no longer limited to family traditions; artists are increasingly entering through university programs, performing arts schools, talent competitions, and online exposure.Female participation has also expanded dramatically, indicating larger shifts in gender norms in Thailand's creative sectors. Younger performers are more confident in integrating classic performance tactics with modern communication abilities and digital tools.These demographic shifts indicate that the profession has grown more accessible while yet keeping its particular creative character.

4.2.2 Performance Practices

Although the core elements of mor lam ruang tor klon are unaltered, recent performances show significant innovation in production quality and creative presentation.Traditional improvised discourse, lyrical narrative, and vocal performance remain the basic identity of the art form. However, artists are increasingly using current sound engineering, digital lighting systems, multimedia projection, contemporary dance, and innovative stage design to increase audience participation.Performance time has grown more adaptable, allowing troupes to fit a wide range of event forms, including cultural festivals, government ceremonies, business gatherings, tourism events, and internet broadcasts. The findings indicate that modernisation has improved manufacturing quality while without fundamentally affecting the cultural core of mor lam ruang tor klon.

4.2.3 Economic Conditions

Economic circumstances have improved over past decades, yet income stability remains unclear. Performance prices typically vary from 3,000 to 15,000 Thai Baht per performance, depending on artist reputation, event size, and location. Most musicians do three to eight engagements each month, with typical monthly earnings ranging from 10,000 to 35,000 Thai Baht. Nonetheless, revenue fluctuates significantly across seasons. Peak demand comes around traditional festivals and cultural gatherings, while opportunities decrease during the off-season. Most performers still lack formal job contracts, pension plans, health insurance, and other social welfare benefits. Despite increased commercial prospects, financial stability remains one of the profession's primary concerns. Music recording, online performances, teaching, cultural seminars, retail sales, product endorsements, and digital content production are all becoming more popular income streams for artists.

4.2.4 Market Expansion and Audience Characteristics

The audience structure has become more diverse.Traditionally, Northeast Thailand's audiences were mostly rural populations and elderly generations. The data show that younger audiences and urban customers are becoming an increasingly prominent market segment.Digital communication technology have significantly changed marketing tactics. Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and livestreaming platforms have emerged as the primary avenues for promoting performances, engaging audiences, and building brands.In addition to temple fairs and traditional community festivals, performance marketplaces now include government events, tourism festivals, private organisations, commercial entertainment venues, educational institutions, and foreign cultural exchange programs.This diversification has considerably improved professional prospects while also exposing artists to more market competition.

4.2.5 Socio-Cultural Roles

Despite commercialisation, mor lam ruang tor klon continues to serve important sociocultural purposes.Artists are still significant communicators of local knowledge, regional languages, ethical ideals, religious views, and community history. Performances continue to establish cultural identity, foster community solidarity, and preserve Isan customs for future generations.However, interviewees noted that public recognition among younger urban populations is still very low when compared to modern popular music. As a result, artists increasingly see themselves as cultural ambassadors tasked with combining legacy preservation with current relevance.The findings show that professional identity today includes a variety of positions such as performer, educator, entrepreneur, and cultural champion.

4.2.6 Innovation and Professional Adaptation

Innovation has become a critical component of professional longevity. The majority of artists use digital tools to grow their following, promote their work, and build their personal brand. Social media technologies provide direct engagement with audiences while lowering reliance on traditional performance agency.Artists are increasingly using data analytics from internet platforms to better understand audience preferences, optimise advertising methods, and assess performance efficiency.Furthermore, performers display increasing entrepreneurial abilities by diversifying their revenue streams through online teaching, digital content development, commercial collaborations, product sales, and cultural tourism activities. Continuous professional development has been a distinguishing feature of top performers. Many participants said that they attended seminars on a regular basis to improve their digital competences, learn foreign languages, and increase their understanding of company management.Overall, innovation represents not only technological adoption but also strategic adaptation to a rapidly changing cultural economy.

4.3 Current Professional Challenges of *Mor Lam Ruang Tor Klon* Artists

The findings reveal that although the *mor lam ruang tor klon* profession has demonstrated remarkable resilience throughout its historical development, contemporary artists continue to encounter numerous structural and operational challenges. These challenges extend beyond artistic performance and directly affect career sustainability, professional identity, and cultural continuity. Five major categories of challenges emerged from the qualitative analysis: (1) economic sustainability, (2) social recognition, (3) knowledge transmission and succession, (4) digital technology and media, and (5) policy and institutional support.

4.3.1 Economic Sustainability Challenges

Economic insecurity is the most serious obstacle for mor lam ruang tor klon artists. Although digital platforms and other performance options have boosted income-generating potential, revenues remain highly unpredictable and seasonal. Most artists reported variations in employment due to festival schedules, visitor demand, and local cultural events.Participants

said that monthly revenue changes regularly depending on the number of performances obtained, resulting in financial insecurity and challenges with long-term career planning. Unlike workers in official sectors, most performers work as independent contractors, with no fixed salary, employment contracts, or retirement benefits.Furthermore, artists incur significant operational expenditures, such as transportation, clothes, musical instruments, rehearsal fees, stage equipment, and digital production. These expenses frequently diminish real net revenue, especially for independent performers. The absence of structured financial planning and investment knowledge further limits long-term economic resilience. Although younger artists increasingly diversify income through online teaching, social media monetization, merchandise sales, and commercial endorsements, many senior performers remain dependent solely on live performances.

4.3.2 Social Recognition and Professional Identity

The second key difficulty is the dwindling societal recognition of traditional performing artists. Interviewees frequently stated that younger generations identify entertainment more with foreign popular culture, modern music, and digital media than with traditional folk performances. As a result, many artists face social preconceptions that characterise their job as obsolete or monetarily precarious.Several participants also reported a lack of family support for younger people pursuing careers in medicine, particularly in families that value higher education and professional employment.Nonetheless, the data show that artists still see themselves as stewards of Isan cultural identity. Their professional identities increasingly include several jobs such as entertainers, educators, entrepreneurs, and cultural ambassadors. Maintaining cultural authenticity while attaining economic success is thus a constant professional problem.

4.3.3 Knowledge Transmission and Succession

The effectiveness of intergenerational knowledge transmission is critical to mor lam ruang tor klon's long-term viability. However, participants highlighted many impediments that jeopardise long-term cultural continuity.First, many older artists are nearing the end of their careers, leaving fewer experienced performers to guide future generations. Traditional apprenticeship systems have eroded as a result of shifting lifestyles, urban migration, and less possibilities for extended face-to-face learning.Second, while official educational institutions now offer programs linked to traditional performing arts, participants emphasised that institutional education cannot fully replace experiential learning gained from long-term involvement in live performances.Third, there is presently no national standardised certification or competency framework for mor lam artists. As a result, professional standards differ significantly amongst performance troupes and educational institutions.The findings suggest that preserving artistic authenticity requires stronger collaboration among experienced artists, universities, cultural organizations, and government agencies.

4.3.4 Digital Technology and Media Challenges

Digital change has produced both possibilities and new difficulties.Younger musicians typically have higher digital skills and actively use Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and livestreaming platforms to increase audience interaction. In contrast, several senior performers showed low confidence in digital content creation, online marketing, and platform administration.Participants also cited a lack of access to professional recording equipment, high-quality video technology, and digital production resources as barriers to effective online advertising.Another major problem is copyright protection. Interviewees raised concerns about digital material ownership, unauthorised duplication of performances, and a lack of legal knowledge about intellectual

property rights.Furthermore, fast changes in social media algorithms necessitate ongoing content generation and audience interaction, which increases strain while yielding unpredictable financial results.

4.3.5 Policy and Institutional Support

Participants consistently recognised policy limits as important hurdles to long-term professional growth.Although mor lam has lately earned greater official recognition through Thailand's cultural heritage and soft power projects, artists saw current support mechanisms as fragmented and inconsistent.Funding sources are still limited, particularly for individual performers and small performing troupes. Participants also cited a lack of collaboration among government organisations responsible for culture, tourism, education, and economic growth.Furthermore, the profession lacks comprehensive social protection policies covering healthcare, workplace safety, retirement security, and emergency financial aid.Many participants emphasised the significance of forming stronger professional groups that can represent artists' interests, promote ethical standards, and facilitate collaboration among governmental institutions, educational organisations, commercial businesses, and local communities.

4.4 Career Management Practices of *Mor Lam Ruang Tor Klon* Performing Artists

The findings demonstrate that successful *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists no longer rely solely on artistic talent or traditional apprenticeship. Instead, career sustainability increasingly depends on systematic career management integrating artistic excellence, entrepreneurship, digital competence, financial planning, professional networking, and continuous learning. Seven interrelated dimensions of career management emerged from the qualitative analysis.

4.4.1 Self-Management

Self-management is essential for long-term professional progress. Participants emphasised that effective performers are always improving their creative abilities via frequent practice, self-reflection, and lifetime learning.Artists described following tight rehearsal regimens to maintain vocal quality, improvisational skill, and physical health. Aside from technical abilities, participants emphasised emotional control, stress management, and time management as critical for reconciling tight performance schedules with family obligations and personal well-being.Personal branding is an emerging technique. Younger artists aggressively shape their professional identities through consistent public images, distinct performing techniques, and internet presence. Rather of depending primarily on ensemble notoriety, performers are establishing themselves as autonomous creative workers.These data suggest that self-management has shifted beyond creative discipline to include psychological resilience, career planning, and professional identity building.

4.4.2 Performance and Work Management

Participants indicated more methodical methods to organising performances.Accepting bookings, negotiating contracts, managing logistics, and interacting with clients are all now done mostly through digital platforms. Artists increasingly organise shows utilising disciplined methods such as rehearsal schedules, costume preparation, equipment inspection, travel arrangements, and contingency planning.Following performances, many artists do informal assessments based on crowd response, social media participation, and client satisfaction. Such reflective methods promote continual growth and long-term professional development.Compared to past generations, modern performers are more mindful of professionalism, timeliness, service quality, and customer relationship management.

4.4.3 Resource and Financial Management

Resource management emerged as an important driver of job longevity.Participants mentioned keeping precise records of their revenue and costs, segregating corporate and personal accounts, and allocating income for savings, investments, equipment maintenance, and emergency reserves.Professional equipment, including as costumes, musical instruments, sound systems, and digital recording devices, is

increasingly regarded as a long-term company investment rather than an operating expense.Knowledge management is an important part of resource management. Many artists use digital storage systems to save performance scripts, musical compositions, recordings, and instructional materials, so promoting future learning and cultural information preservation.These behaviours show that younger performers are becoming more financially literate and savvy in their resource use.

4.4.4 Marketing and Customer Relationship Management

Marketing has undergone significant evolution as digital communication tools have advanced.Participants reported extensively using Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and livestreaming platforms to promote performances, communicate with audiences, and build personal brands. Digital marketing initiatives include promotional videos, behind-the-scenes footage, livestream performances, audience interaction programs, and collaborations with influencers and cultural organisations.Customer relationship management has also grown more methodical. Artists communicate with event organisers before and after performances, answer quickly to internet enquiries, and promote repeat bookings with personalised services. Pricing plans are becoming more flexible, taking into consideration event features, travel needs, audience size, and promotional opportunities. Overall, performers have embraced customer-focused strategies similar to those used in modern creative sectors.

4.4.5 Network and Relationship Management

Professional networking is vital for job advancement.Participants emphasised the importance of establishing solid relationships with their fellow performers, troupe leaders, event organisers, cultural institutions, educational organisations, local communities, and government agencies.Collaborative networks make it easier to share information about job possibilities, performance schedules, financing initiatives, and professional development events.Many artists actively participate in cultural societies, professional organisations, and community projects that promote collective identity and cultural preservation.Collaborations with universities and tourist organisations are becoming increasingly vital for reaching new audiences and generating cultural innovation projects.These findings show that professional success is determined not just by individual skill, but also by social capital and collaborative partnerships.

4.4.6 Risk Management

Participants highlighted a variety of workplace dangers that require proactive management.Vocal strain, physical exhaustion, travel-related accidents, and mental stress are all health problems associated with irregular work schedules.Financial risks include seasonal income variations, unexpected performance cancellations, increased operating expenses, and uncertain market demand.Cybersecurity threats include unauthorised digital material distribution, copyright infringement, and fast technical development.To offset these risks, participants reported diversifying their income streams, saving for emergencies, investing in professional insurance where possible, and constantly upgrading their technology skills.Risk management has therefore become an essential component of career longevity.

4.4.7 Career Planning and Professional Development

The last component addresses long-term career planning.Participants are increasingly setting both short and long-term career goals. Short-term goals include improving performance quality, expanding the audience, digital marketing, and generating cash, while long-term ambitions include developing performance schools, producing younger artists, launching cultural enterprises, and safeguarding traditional knowledge.Continuous professional development has been a distinguishing feature of top performers. Artists frequently attend seminars, academic conferences, cultural exchange programs, and digital skills

training.Several participants indicated a desire to preserve traditional knowledge through publishing, digital archives, and educational activities to ensure intergenerational transfer.The findings indicate that career planning is increasingly emphasising sustainability above short-term economic success.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This study used a qualitative technique to analyze the career management of *mor lam ruang tor klon* performing artists in Northeast Thailand, including documentary research, field observations, interviews, and focus group discussions with 70 participants. The data show that the profession has experienced constant modification across seven historical periods, reflecting shifting societal ideals, economic situations, technical advancements, and cultural policy. Although the industry continues to confront enormous obstacles, such as economic insecurity, dwindling social acceptance, technical inequities, and inadequate institutional support, modern artists have shown remarkable adaptation. Contemporary performers are progressively using digital technology into their careers through social media marketing, online audience involvement, multiple revenue streams, and methodical career planning.

The study finds that long-term career growth in traditional performing arts necessitates a careful balance between cultural preservation and innovation. The long-term viability of mor lam ruang tor klon is dependent not only on retaining creative authenticity, but also on increasing artists' administrative talents, entrepreneurial competences, computer literacy, and professional support structures. To ensure long-term sustainability, government agencies, educational institutions, cultural organisations, the commercial sector, and local communities must work together to develop policies that protect cultural assets while also improving artists' quality of life.

5.2 Discussion

The findings show that the mor lam ruang tor klon profession has evolved to meet changing social, economic, and technical settings while retaining its cultural character. This lends credence to the idea that intangible cultural heritage is durable via innovation and adaptability rather than static preservation (Tan et al., 2020). The historical trajectory revealed in this study suggests that mor lam has evolved from a community-based cultural practice to a commercially organised creative business enabled by digital technology. This transition echoes wider global trends in the cultural and creative sectors, where digital technology are reshaping professional practices and career prospects (Pilege, 2023; Channuwong et al., 2026).

The survey also discovered that digital platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become indispensable tools for career management, audience interaction, and income generating. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that digital transformation opens up new avenues for preserving and sharing intangible cultural assets while also boosting creative economies (Hou et al., 2022; Arcos-Pumarola et al., 2023).

Despite technical advancements, artists continue to endure economic uncertainty, sporadic work, and inadequate institutional support. Similar issues have been highlighted among creative individuals whose careers rely on balancing cultural preservation and economic viability (Bennett et al., 2014).

Furthermore, this study reveals that successful career management increasingly necessitates entrepreneurial skills, computer literacy, financial planning, networking, and ongoing education. These findings are consistent with prior research that has identified human capital development as a significant determinant for career sustainability in the cultural and creative sectors (Pilege, 2023).

6. Recommendation and Limitations and Future Research Directions

6.1 Recommendation

This study contributes both theoretically and practically by providing an integrated framework

for understanding career management within traditional cultural professions and by offering evidence-based recommendations for strengthening Thailand's creative economy through sustainable cultural heritage development.

Theoretical Implication

First, the study contributes to the career management literature by demonstrating that career sustainability in traditional performing arts requires more than creative capability. The findings show that effective career advancement for *mor lam ruang tor klon* artists is dependent on a combination of artistic talent, entrepreneurial aptitude, computer literacy, networking, financial management, and ongoing professional learning. These findings enhance standard career management ideas, which have mostly been created in corporate and organizational settings, by demonstrating how career management works in informal cultural jobs.

Second, the study adds to the literature on intangible cultural heritage by seeing traditional performance artists as active cultural entrepreneurs rather than passive stewards of cultural traditions. While earlier research has mostly concentrated on performance preservation and troupe management, this study emphasizes the individual artist as the key player in maintaining, adapting, and transferring cultural legacy in changing socioeconomic settings. This approach adds to previous conversations about the sustainability of intangible cultural resources by emphasizing the relationship between cultural preservation and professional development.

Third, the findings advance studies on digital transformation in the creative industries by revealing how digital technologies affect professional identity, audience engagement, marketing tactics, and revenue production among conventional artists. The study demonstrates that digital transformation is not just a technological event, but also a driver of organizational and professional change in traditional cultural professions.

Finally, the identification of seven historical stages of career progression gives a thorough framework for comprehending the long-term history of conventional creative professions. This historical viewpoint provides a theoretical platform for future comparative studies on the evolution of traditional cultural vocations in changing economic, technical, and regulatory contexts.

Practical Implication

First, governments should provide comprehensive long-term support mechanisms for traditional performing artists, such as professional certification systems, social welfare protection, healthcare benefits, retirement security, and financial help. Such measures would improve employment security and encourage young people to explore professions in traditional performing arts.

Second, higher education and vocational training providers should update performing arts courses to include entrepreneurship, digital marketing, financial literacy, personal branding, intellectual property management, and digital content production. These skills are becoming increasingly important for maintaining professions in the modern creative economy.

Third, cultural organizations and mor lam groups should improve partnerships between performers, local communities, researchers, private businesses, and government agencies. Stronger collaborations would enable information sharing, innovation, audience development, cultural tourism, and worldwide promotion of Thai performing arts.

Fourth, performing artists should pursue lifelong learning techniques that include the continual development of digital competences, entrepreneurial skills, communication talents, and multiple revenue streams. The strategic use of social media, online performance platforms, and digital branding may boost professional awareness while maintaining creative authenticity.

Finally, the findings lend support to Thailand's national plan for developing soft power and the

creative economy, suggesting that the long-term growth of traditional performing arts necessitates integrated collaboration across cultural, educational, and economic sectors. Investing in artists' professional capacities can help to maintain cultural heritage, promote local economies, and boost Thailand's international cultural competitiveness.

7. Limitations and Future Study

Limitations

First, the study concentrated solely on *mor lam ruang tor klon* musicians in Northeast Thailand. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect other kinds of mor lam or traditional performing arts practiced in other ethnic locations.

Second, the qualitative approach prioritizes deep contextual understanding above statistical generalization. Although different stakeholder groups were engaged to offer a comprehensive view, the findings should be evaluated within their cultural context.

Third, the study focused particularly on current career management strategies during a time of fast digital revolution. Future technical breakthroughs, altering cultural policies, and developing audience behaviors may all have an impact on career patterns in ways that go beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, because data relied largely on participants' experiences and perceptions, some findings may reflect subjective interpretations despite the use of methodological triangulation and member checking to enhance research credibility.

Future Study

First, future study should use quantitative methods to investigate the links between digital competency, entrepreneurial aptitude, career resilience, and professional sustainability in traditional performing artists.

Second, comparative studies of different types of mor lam and traditional performing arts in Southeast Asia might improve our understanding of cultural career management.

Third, longitudinal studies are also advised to look at how artists adjust to technological progress, artificial intelligence, and shifting cultural policies over time. Future interdisciplinary research that integrates cultural heritage, the creative economy, entrepreneurship, and digital change will help to create more complete frameworks for long-term career development (Tan et al., 2020; Arcos-Pumarola et al., 2023).

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