

## **Thinking of Musicians on Music Industry Landscape in Thailand**

Sutthiphong Ruangchante

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand

e-mail: sutthiphong.rua@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Innovative thinking of musicians encompasses the capacity to generate novel ideas and techniques for addressing or enhancing music works across several dimensions. Musicologists have determined that innovative thinking has been present since the medieval period of Western music and continues to the present day, revolutionizing every aspect of the music landscape. Through the combination of documentary evidence and interviews in the research entitled "Desirable Characteristics of Musical Innovators in the 21st Century," the researcher delineated the geographical focus as Thailand and identified participants as individuals with experience in music or innovation. It was found that innovative thinking influences the evolution of the music industry landscape in Thailand, categorized into four main issues: (1) Developing the manufacturing processes for mainstream music companies; (2) Creating musical genres for niche markets; (3) Developing commercial musical instruments; and (4) Formulating the curriculum of music for colleges and universities. The evolving music industry landscape necessitates that artists and associated professionals adapt to new concepts and methods. Their objective is to cultivate their talent, sustain their careers, generate innovative music concepts, etc. Consequently, innovative thinking is a crucial element driving the changing landscape of the music industry globally, including in Thailand.

*Keywords:* innovative thinking, music industry in Thailand, music industry landscape, musicians

### **Introduction**

Musicologists have determined that innovative thinking has been present since the medieval period of Western music and continues to the present day, revolutionizing every aspect of the music landscape. (Bölling, 2006) Innovative thinking is one of the systemic competencies, which mean skills and abilities that are interrelated throughout the system, combining imagination, feelings, and abilities (Sánchez, A. V., et al., 2008). In addition, innovative thinking is a skill that is directly related to art and music, using techniques to generate new ideas on a wide and diverse scale, or to enhance intellectual and intellectual values (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2020). Thus, innovative thinking of musicians encompasses the capacity to

generate novel ideas and techniques or to extend ideas from existing musical works for addressing or enhancing works of music across several dimensions (Sutthiphong, R., 2022). Examples of musical innovation include the use of old theories combined with new concepts to create new music, new musical instruments, or to extend musical instruments that have never been seen before, and to generate new forms of performance, new forms of music festivals, and new techniques and methods used in the field of music therapy, etc. (A creator of Thai Lanna music, Chiangmai province, personal communication, March 5, 2021; Kylliäinen, 2020; Lux, 2012; Euajirapongpan et al., 2020; Popa et al, 2020; Kumar, 2015) .

From the review of related research literature, it was found that the issue of innovative thinking was used in the landscape of the music industry, for example, (1) Dina Dellyana, and Togar Simatupang (2020) studied “Business Model Innovation in Music Industry: A Literature Review,” stating that to survive in the music industry that is facing the problem of declining sales of recorded music in many countries, musicians or entrepreneurs are trying to find new revenue channels, marketing strategies, and distribution approaches, focusing on the use of business model innovations that affect potential value creation and enhance the process or production of goods, (2) Ben O’Hara (2020) researched “Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Music Business Education” found that the use of innovative thinking in developing a music business curriculum that focuses on training entrepreneurs may result in a clear connection between the industry and music education. (3) Paul D. Lopes (2020) researched “Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry, 1969 to 1990” found that the use of open development and production systems by large record companies led to the creation of innovation and diversity of popular music, (4) Burnett and Weber (1989) showed that the oligopolistic market innovation and diversification system in popular music is an effective strategy that allows large corporations to control production, distribution, and access to marketing channels by adopting a multi-party organizational form linked to a large number of independent producers, which finds advantages in bringing together new artists, producers, and musical forms to continuously stimulate marketing and control consumer demand, which is different from the closed development and production system in the music industry in the 1940s and 1950s and (5) Cheng-Yi Lin (2020) researched The Evolution of Taipei’s Music Industry: Cluster and Network Dynamics in the Innovation Practices of the Music Industry, finding that the innovation dynamics of Taipei’s music industry is a combination of Taipei’s cluster environment and the strategic competence of the music project network, forming a hybrid creative platform.

From the above information, the author found that innovative thinking is used in the music industry landscape to solve problems, improve situations or processes involved, and achieve better results. Therefore, the author is interested in studying the relationship between innovative thinking and situations that occur in the music industry landscape in Thailand, asking the main question in this paper: “How does innovative thinking of musicians affect the music industry landscape in Thailand?”

## Methodology

The Human research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Mahidol University accepted the research, as shown in the exemption review form and certificate number: MUSSIRB No. 2020/267 (B2). This study is a part of the research entitled “Desirable Characteristics of Musical Innovators in the 21st Century,” which focuses on the music industry landscape in Thailand. The methodology consists of the following components (1) Delphi Technique was employed as the conceptual framework, (2) Thirty participants were categorized into four divisions according to their expertise: creators (four innovators and three musicians), educators (five innovators and four musicians), executives from public and private organizations (five innovators and three musicians), and entrepreneurs (three innovators and three musicians). Each category was partitioned into two groups: innovation and music. Every participant was mandated to possess a minimum of ten years of professional experience in music or innovation, be esteemed in the academic and professional domains of innovation or music, and have an educational or career experience in innovation or music. (3) Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and included documents related to relevant concepts and theories. and (4) They are interrogative inquiries used to validate data via triangulation. Thirty participants further offered further suggestions consistent with the assessment in Elliot Eisner’s connoisseurship approach.

## Results

In this article, the researcher collects and analyzes lessons learned from field data obtained from in-depth interviews, analyzes and synthesizes them together with relevant documentary data, leading to information on innovative ideas that influence the evolution of the music industry landscape in Thailand, categorized into four main issues, as follows.

### Developing the Manufacturing Processes for Mainstream Music Companies

During the 1980s-1990s, two music companies led the way in introducing Thai pop artists into the Thai music industry by transforming the production process and disseminating popular music to the mainstream market with innovative ideas. The findings are as follows.

- i. RS Public Company Limited was established in 1976. Innovative ideas were used in 3 areas: (1) Organizational innovation: This was the management adjustment and organizational reform with new methods that were in line with the needs of the industrial sector, such as investing in building a standard recording studio and changing the business model from a music company to a full-service entertainment company with its own tools and media space. Later, the company restructured and expanded its business network, such as a Thai copyright collection company, international music marketing, etc. (2) Product innovation: This was the presentation of artists

and musical works by presenting new entertainment products that were an extension of old artists, such as in 1984, the company produced the music album “Ruam Dao” by gathering teenage artists at that time to sing Santaraporn songs, which achieved record sales, etc. (3) Process innovation: This was the invention of new production processes, such as changing from operating a jukebox business to recording music from records to cassette tapes in the early days of the company’s establishment. Later, musical works production, public relations, and musical works introduction to the market were developed in a complete cycle. (RS GROUP, 2022; Amatayakul, 2007).

- ii. GMM Grammy Public Company Limited (GMM GRAMMY, 2022; Amatayakul, 2007) was established in 1983. Innovative thinking was used in 5 areas: (1) Organizational innovation: changing the management system, such as teamwork system, financial system, etc. Finally, the company was listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand as GMM Media Public Company Limited to be a media company that could produce complete entertainment media with a vision of “a leader in the complete entertainment business to bring happiness to consumers in all groups in every channel sustainably.” (2) Product innovation: presenting artists and musical works with the concept of producing Thai pop songs that were different from the songs of the past era (Luk Krung songs); for instant, lyrics and melodies must not have been conflict with each other; notes matched the lyrics: short and long tones, weight and lightness of the sound and consistency on language grammar, etc. In addition, the presentation of songs had clear issues, such as psychology, feelings, important points, symbols, etc., resulting in musical works with an identity that reflected the company’s identity. (3) Process innovation: creating a system that took universal rights into consideration and generating a system to take care of benefits through the law and copyright contracts (4) Marketing innovation: The company operated cutting-edge marketing to reach the target group of teenagers relatively quickly and adapted marketing techniques from foreign record companies to suit Thailand and (5) Educational innovation: The establishment of a world-class artist vocational training institute to drive the music business in the future, such as Mee Fah Music School, Grammy Vocal Studio, GMM Academy, etc. (GMM GRAMMY, 2022; Amatayakul, 2007)

### **Creating Musical Genres for Niche Markets**

In addition to the mainstream music market, there was another type of music for niche markets that was found in the music industry landscape in Thailand. Niche markets music was distinguished from mainstream music with innovative concepts. The findings are as follows.

- i. Butterfly Musicians Group, formed in 1978. One member of the Butterfly Musicians Group (A music composer, Bangkok, personal communication,

May 20, 2021) expressed his view that the recording system and equipment were an important part that led to innovation in the music business and music industry. Later, when the demand for music recording increased, recording studios were built to meet that demand, and it became an innovation in music business. Therefore, knowledge and skills of sound engineering and the generation of world-class recording studios were an extension of knowledge and skills from abroad. This resulted in the creation of musical works that are different from previous musical works. It also included a group of musicians who used a different organizational management style. Later, such a system was used in some large music production companies, which led to a prosperous era of the Thai pop music industry.

- ii. Fong Nam Band was founded in 1979 as a fusion band that combined Thai and Western music. By using the composition techniques of 20th-century music, for example, the combination of Western and Eastern music, such as the combination of Thai musical scales with Western music while maintaining the identity of Thai accents, such as the form of band arrangement, scale, accent and style, etc., techniques for harmony and arranging the sound of Western and Eastern musical instruments to be balanced, etc. (Amatayakul, 2007). These led to the creation of new musical works for the music industry in Thailand by using their own original musical knowledge and skills together with newly known music and inventing techniques and methods for creating music that extended from the original theory.
- iii. Non-mainstream music, such as experimental music, was another option for music listeners who searched for new alternative music, which became a new channel for the small Thai music industry that led to changes and more growth. The characteristics of the sounds in experimental music were strange, such as Thai-Music Avangard, Thai-experimental music, Thai-Music and Sound Scape, Isan music mixed with sound, and ambient sound music with a single guitar. Organizing orchestral concerts that performed popular music, such as Star Wars movie soundtracks and animation movie soundtracks. Organizing these concerts demonstrated a different business model and led to greater success than the traditional classical music performance format of an orchestra (An educator of jazz music, Bangkok, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

### **Developing Commercial Musical Instruments**

- i. Chan Music Company Limited (CMC Music) was established in 1987 as a leader in rhythm music instrument products made of leather and brass (Membranophones and Idiophones). Chan Music is considered a leader in experimenting in creating musical innovations in Thailand, including (1) Using Thai circular economy wood as the main material in the production of products, such as Prelude Series Snare Drum, made from rubberwood in

Thailand; (2) Applying existing technologies, such as conga drums that use chrome plating technology, fine brass plating, etc., for which the company must design machinery and production lines to develop the production process to produce better quality products (CMC Music, 2022); and (3) Designing patented drum equipment, drum keys that can be tightened and released to adjust the nuts around the drumhead or drum legs. The drum keys were designed as standard numbers with a grip size that was large enough to create torque. It was the only device that could be used with every nut of the entire drum set (A creator of bio-engineering, Bangkok, personal communication, March 30, 2021).

- ii. Vibrato Co., Ltd. (A music instrument craftsman, Bangkok, personal communication, May 29, 2021; Sax Appeal, 2022; Idea Cheep, 2022) was established in 2006 as the world's first manufacturer of polycarbonate saxophones. With a manufacturing process of plastic injection into molds that was patented both domestically and internationally, the vibrato's saxophone had a sound quality that was no different from a brass saxophone. Furthermore, it was a saxophone that was 1 kilogram lighter, 100 percent waterproof, and cheaper, making the product accessible to a wider range of customers. In addition, the company has designed different manufacturing and distribution processes from the original. For example, the company used an assembly manufacturing process, which was the production of saxophones by injection molds into parts, taking a very short time. Within 2 weeks, 500 saxophones could be produced, and the components could be shipped to dealers for assembly and sale. The dealers were the company's end customers, who benefited from the lower prices of saxophones because there was no additional assembly cost, and the reduction of the cost of high-paid shop technicians because the company had a diagram of saxophone parts that specify the code, location, and price. The dealers could sell just by knowing the parts of the saxophone without having to hire a specialist. This was an innovation in the sales process designed to be easier. All this not only changed the production of saxophones but also changed the sales method and the inventory method worked more easily. On the other hand, the company produced DIY tenor saxophones, which was not only an innovative product but also a great marketing strategy because it could attract another group of customers who liked DIY, buying saxophones as a kit to build and do it themselves according to the manual attached to the product. Since saxophonists know the parts and mechanisms of the saxophone, they could buy only the damaged parts and replace them themselves, which reduces the cost of sending technicians to repair the saxophone, which was expensive.

### **Formulating the Curriculum of Music for Colleges and Universities.**

Teaching innovation projects are created to solve problems such as thinking of new teaching methods with activities to attract students' attention while learning theory, thinking of new teaching media that are up-to-date and attractive, etc. (An educator

of music education, Bangkok, personal communication, June 25, 2021). Innovative ideas in music education are therefore used to produce works that can respond to teaching use and create new products, such as creating new musical instruments to help or solve problems, creating programs (software) to be used as media for teaching music, etc. (An entrepreneur of music school, Bangkok, personal communication, July 17, 2021) to solve the problem of difficulty and boredom in teaching music, as well as creating satisfaction for students and teachers and the progress of the music education industry.

### **Discussions**

The evolving landscape of the music industry requires artists and related professionals to adapt to new ideas and methods. Their purpose is to cultivate their talents, sustain their careers, and generate innovative musical concepts, etc. Therefore, understanding the music industry landscape encourages musicians to predict situations in the music industry and to plan operations for survival with innovative thinking. This innovative idea is researched by Bagley et al. (2021) The study “The Evolution of Niche: diversity in Knowledge Networks in the Global Music Industry” found that there are three ideal types, including seed fragmentation network, creative horizontal network, and artistic experimentation network, representing three different patterns of niche emergence and growth. All three types differ in the underlying nature of the niche’s inherent properties, be that in terms of the means of production, initial conditions, genre, or subsequent structural events. Poullos & Kemperou (2022) The study, “Business Innovation in Orchestra Organizations Supported by Digital Technologies: The Orchestra Mobile Case Study,” began with the problems and situations that have arisen in orchestra organizations since 2010. The results of the study found that “the complex relationship of “sustainability-innovation-digital technologies” could be of benefit to a wide range of cultural organizations and entrepreneurs.” Finally, with the above information, the researcher can understand innovative thinking that can promote the changing landscape of the music industry globally, including Thailand.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, innovative thinking of musicians on music industry landscape in Thailand is categorized into four main issues: (1) Mainstream Music Production: RS Public Company Limited (1976) transformed music production with innovative thinking in organization, product offerings, and production processes. GMM Grammy (1983) introduced changes in management, product creation (distinct Thai pop), marketing, copyright law, and artist education, (2) Niche Music Genres: The Butterfly Musicians Group (1978) and Fong Nam Band (1979) pioneered new musical styles by blending Thai and Western influences, while experimental music emerged as a growing alternative genre, (3) Musical Instrument Development: Chan Music Company (1987) generate drum products, utilizing local materials and new technologies. Vibrato Co. (2006) made saxophones with polycarbonate, reducing

cost and manufacturing time with innovative production and DIY models, and (4) Music Education: Innovations in teaching methods, curricula, and tools helped modernize music education, addressing student engagement and improving learning outcomes. This innovative thinking collectively shaped the evolution and expansion of the music industry in Thailand.

The significance of promoting innovative thinking of musicians on the music industry landscape in Thailand consists of 4 arguments: (1) Understanding the ecosystem of the music industry in Thailand, (2) Training musicians with innovative thinking to music innovators, (3) Creating a curriculum about innovative thinking, and (4) supporting by Thai Government through capital and policies. Currently, studying the impact of innovative thinking on the music industry landscape has many interesting aspects. If researchers can work interdisciplinary with other related sciences, it will result in more in-depth research. Moreover, those research results will benefit the music industry landscape in Thailand in terms of both creativity and business management of music works.

## References

- Amatayakul, P. (2007). Bruce Gaston, entering Thailand January 1969. *Music Archives 5 Reign, Vol. 1*, 518. Bangkok: Duantula.
- Amatayakul, P. (2007). Grammy founding in 1983. *Music Archives 5 Reign, Vol. 2*, 699–700. Bangkok: Duantula.
- Amatayakul, P. (2007). Origin of RS Promotions. *Music Archives 5 Reign, Vol. 2*, 699–700. Bangkok: Duantula.
- Brilliant idea. Plastic Saxophone 'Vibrato,' the world's first Thai workmanship. (n.d.). Retrieved October 21, 2022, from <https://mgronline.com/smes/detail/9510000074804>
- Burnett, R., & Weber, R. P. (1989). Concentration and diversity in the popular music industry, 1948–1986. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, August, San Francisco, CA.
- Bölling, J. (2006). *Das Papstzeremoniell der Renaissance: Texte-Musik-Performanz*. Peter Lang GmbH.
- CMC Music. (n.d.). Retrieved December 15, 2022, from <http://playcmcmusic.com/about.php>
- Dellyana, D., & Simatupang, T. (2020). Business model innovation in the music industry: A literature review. Retrieved June 15, 2020, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308265800>
- Euajirapongpan, S., Wattanasin, P., & Janchai, A. (2020). Innovation: Definition, types, and significance for entrepreneurship. Retrieved from [http://www.jba.tbs.tu.ac.th/files/Jba128/Article/JBA128\\_Somnuk.pdf](http://www.jba.tbs.tu.ac.th/files/Jba128/Article/JBA128_Somnuk.pdf)
- GMM GRAMMY. (n.d.). Retrieved December 11, 2022, from <https://www.gmmgrammy.com/th/corporate.html>
- Kumar, V. (2015). *101 design methods: A guide to making innovation a reality in organizations* (Satja Jaratrungraweeorn & Juiphng Phusumat, Trans.). IDC Premier.
- Kylliäinen, J. (2020). Innovation matrix: Types of innovation—The ultimate guide with definitions and examples. Retrieved from <https://www.viima.com/blog/types-of-innovation>



- Lin, C. Y. (2020). The evolution of Taipei's music industry: Cluster and network dynamics in the innovation practices of the music industry. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273290208>
- Lopes, P. D. (1992). Innovation and diversity in the popular music industry, 1969 to 1990. *American Sociological Review*, 57(1), 56–71. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224>
- Lux, R. (2012). *The book of innovators* (Khomsan Khajoncheepphan-ngam, Trans.). Expernet.
- O'Hara, B. (2020). Creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship in music business education. *International Journal of Music Business Research*, 3(2). Retrieved July 5, 2020, from <https://www.academia.edu/8667094>
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (n.d.). P21 framework definitions. Retrieved May 5, 2020, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED519462.pdf>
- Popa, I. L., Preda, G., & Boldea, M. (2020). A theoretical approach to the concept of innovation. Retrieved from <http://conference.ubbcluj.ro/mccs/RePEc/bbu/wpaper/151-156.pdf>
- RS GROUP. (n.d.). Retrieved December 11, 2022, from <https://www.rs.co.th/th/>
- Sax Appeal. (n.d.). Retrieved October 21, 2022, from <https://readthecloud.co/entrepreneur-vibrato-saxophone/>
- Sánchez, A. V., Ruiz, M. P., Olalla, A. G., Mora, P., Marín, J. A., Malla, G., ... & Eizaguirre, J. S. (2008). *Competence-based learning: A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (A. Villa Sánchez & M. Poblete Ruiz, Eds.). University of Deusto.
- Sutthiphong, R. (2023). Desirable characteristics of musical innovators in the 21st century [Doctoral dissertation, College of Music, Mahidol University].

### Biography

**Sutthiphong Ruangchante** is a lecturer at the School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), Thailand. He is interested in music education and musicology, especially music and innovation. He has over 30 years of experience in piano teaching, and music philosophy coaching in abled and disabled people and continues to do related research. He is the adviser of KMUTT choir and special advisor of Thammasat University choir. His current academic service activities are as follows: He is on the working group for the “Phet Phra Chom Klao” scholarship project in arts and culture, and Halabala Soundscape Project.