

# The Casting Business in Thai Film Industry

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## Abstract:

Abstract—The purpose of this research is to find the process that most of the Thai film industries commonly use in order to find the right cast to play the role. The result can be split into 2 categories, which are no - low budget films and high - budget feature films. The results were proved that most of the low - budget film productions nowadays find the cast by asking from the crew's friends or friend of friend. Therefore, finding the cast in low - budget film productions normally has only few people shown up for the auditions and sometimes either none of them has acting skill or their appearances do not match the character. However, since most of the low - budget film productions do not have much ability to find members of the cast, thus some of them still will be selected. On the other hand, most of the high - budget film productions use modeling companies to find the cast for them. However, most of modeling agencies in Thailand seek and select their cast members from the cast's appearances rather than the skill of acting

## Introduction

Currently, the entertainment business in Thailand grows increasingly, resulting in the emergence of many stars, actors and actresses. However, the process of selecting persons to act in films in Thailand is still ambiguous as to casting method because most actors chosen to play lack skill of acting. This can be observed from the fact that the majority of stars fail to graduate or never study acting before, nevertheless they can play in dramas and attain stardom, which a huge amount of money are paid to all famous stars. Moreover, there are claims of diverse social media in Thailand that merely looks can generate acting opportunities, as results of many net idol became stars and act in a movie such as Tep Pituck who before was knowing Pod Arnon had none of acting background. This gives rise to a number of issues: as to whether the likelihood of being selected as actors or becoming famous stars in Thailand just depends on the unique character and an appearance factor or not; whether the chance of being chosen as stars as a result of looks factor only will adversely affect the development of Thai actors to international level or not. On the other hand,

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if the casting results from skills in other fields, the question arises as to which are the best channels for people competent in acting so as to allow them to have easiest access to being movie actors. The reason is because the competition related to show business vastly arises today, nevertheless publicity or access remain ambiguous.

The preparation of this research reporting aims to understand the phenomenon of casting into Thai film industry and access channels between the actors and the directors. The purposes are to improve or develop the proper channels of choosing actors with capabilities in line with the roles. This research is expected to be beneficial to the management of actors in order to have a chance of developing potentialities in accordance with the market demand even more and to be useful for the development of Thai film industry in the future. In addition to this, in others countries such as United Kingdom and United State there are services to help finding actors with a professional performance background to illustrate, a casting call pro website is to search for people eager to become actors in one's own in England. After interviewing and selecting British actors who were aware of casting information from such website, it has been discovered that all actors coming for casting had a great performing skill because everyone had ever studied acting before. Based on these reasons, the researcher has been curious about the casting procedure in Thailand and can the non-profit website to find a cast apply in Thai society. The reason is because Thailand lacks non-profit website system

that helps in finding jobs for actors and seeking members of the cast and crews for film directors as that is the case in England. All this is therefore the origin of factors in conducting the research to find conclusions about the search process for actors in Thailand.

### Purpose of the study

There are 2 purpose of The Casting Business in Thai Film Industry research which are

1. To investigate the actual process of Thai film industry according to casting.
2. To find a suitable channel in Thai society to become actors and actresses.

### Material and literature review

According to the study on literature and research work as well as the articles related to the process of finding and selecting actors in Thailand, it is found that the Thai film business mostly prefers deploying the older-generation artists who are already stars for casting. Therefore, the researcher needs to go back to study the history of casting that took place for the first time with available evidence. The first film that publicized the recruitment of actors in Thailand was the film entitled "Mai Kid Loei (Never think at all)" with the conduct of advertising to find actors through the medium of newspapers in 1927. However, shortly after the advertising, it was announced that many people applied for becoming actors and recruitment was closed already. Soon after that, a list of actors to play in this film was published in the newspapers again. People chosen to be actors in this film were all friends or acquaintances of the work team.

However, owing to unfavorable filming equipment of Tai Papayon Thai Company (The Siamese Film Co.), which was a film production of “Never think at all”, so the first film produced by Thai people and released was entitled Chok Song Chan (Double Luck). The cast included the following: a leading actor in the film Chok Song Chan (Double Luck) namely Manop Praparak who was selected from the applicants via newspapers; ML Sudjit Isarangkun, main actress in musical comedy and dance drama of renown at that time; Luang Pharotkamkoson, villain of the film Nang Sao Suwan (Miss Suwanna of Siam), who played a role as culprit. The film Nang Sao Suwan was a Thai film produced by the Americans from Universal Studio in 1922, which was released as the first film in Thailand. As to casting for this film, His Majesty King Mongkut assigned the Royal Railway Department to cooperate in filming and casting along with the director, namely Mr. Henry MacRae. Therefore, there were major actors in this film including: Miss Sa-ngiam Navisthira, dancer of the Royal Theatre Department, who played a role as

Miss Suwan; Khun Ram Pharotsat (Yom Mongkolnat), Rama pantomime character of the Fine Arts Department, who played a leading role as Mr. Klahan and Luang Pharotkamkoson (Mongkol Sumonnat), accountant, who acted as Mr. Kongkaew, a rogue. Concerning the publicity on recruitment of cast for the film Miss Suwanna of Siam, there has been apparently no evidence as to whether the recruitment was advertised or not. But it can be sufficiently concluded that the

majority of Thai films in the early days announced the recruitment of actors through newspapers.

Currently, the entertainment industry in Thailand focuses mainly on the capitalists. The reason is because the film productions require funding support. Besides, there is still absence of any government agencies in Thailand to provide support in terms of funding except for private companies with need of profits in exchange. Consequently, nowadays many Thai films include the advertisements concealed in movies to be funded by private companies or film-supporting capitalists. As to changes in society, economy, politics and mass communications, there are the scholars who provide comments by division into two groups as follows:

1. Group with focus on the economic status or the production pattern of media (political economic analysis). This group looks at various processes in the manner of Critical structure research. According to the analysis of Dallas Smythe, 1997, what has been produced by the media for masses of people all along is not the substantial content, but it is the audience production (audience) for capitalists. In addition, the media also determine various characteristics of audience for media producers as to: whether the audience group will be male or female; in which age range the audience is. Furthermore, the media set various details of the audience as well. Upon gathering enough audience, then the media producers will sell the audience to capitalists. The latter will decide to select the group of

audience to match the investment or products of one's own. As a result, this system looks chiefly at the benefits and profits to get back.

2. Group with emphasis on culture analysis such as scholars in the group of Frankfurt School, which analyzes the mass culture. According to the analysis, the mass communication production system induces the loss of artistic value because mass culture focuses on masses of people to generate profits for capitalists mainly. This causes the scholars of this group to think that the media bring ideology and false consciousness for dominating the ideas and minds of people. The following is the example of this concept with regard to an incident in Thailand, i.e. making cultural products of cultural industry nowadays. Thai mass communication experts have invented the standard formula whereby it is necessary to deploy highly popular stars to attract the attention of audience in order to come and watch the films, to create the story about love or horror movies which enjoy popularity among masses of people in Thailand. Besides, the story must be finished in a happy-ending manner. Mass culture means the culture established by masses of people as to objects of preference. This culture is created by lots of people, which responds to the needs of mass market where the capitalists themselves can seek profits and can prescribe various cultures for numerous people as well. This causes the high-class culture to decline steadily owing to dominance of capitalists. In addition to this, the film industry in Thailand had been divided into 2 groups which are high - budget capitalists group and low - budget films which focus on a culture.

In addition to this, a casting procedure in Thailand changed from advertising for the actors via many channels such as newspapers, radio or word of mouth were transformed to an individual searches for a well-known actor to play the role, for instance, director producer or sponsor already had some actors in mind and asked them directly to play the role without casting or audition but decided from their previous work. According to this, it can reduce a lot of a substantial amount of cost, for example in normal casting procedure, film production has to pay a newspaper, a radio or a TV channel to advertise the casting. Then they need to have a place to do the casting which include electricity such as light, air-condition and water supply. Some even employ a make-up and costume designer to make candidate look like a character as much as possible. Not only the film production department has to pay for casting procedure but also candidates have to bear the travel expenses. On the other hand, internet is widely used by numerous performing arts students and alumni from many universities in Thailand. Therefore, it can be a potential channel for casting procedure to save such times and costs.

#### Methodology

The conduct of this research is based on the mixed model (Mix Methodology) with the use of both Qualitative Method and Quantitative Method combined. The Questionnaire and management of in-depth interviews from directors such as Nonzee Nimibutr, Tanwarin Sukapisit and Genwaii Tongdenok also interviewed from production houses and modeling agencies are used

as tools. The information is divided according to the model for data collection into two types, i.e. primary data and secondary data with the details as follows:

**Primary Data:** Data collection is carried out by using research tools.

#### Qualitative data :

In depth - interview was used with a total of 10 directors and members of casting staff in the movie fair. The questions included what is a requirement for a successful in casting and what channels are commonly used in finding actors and actresses.

#### Quantitative data :

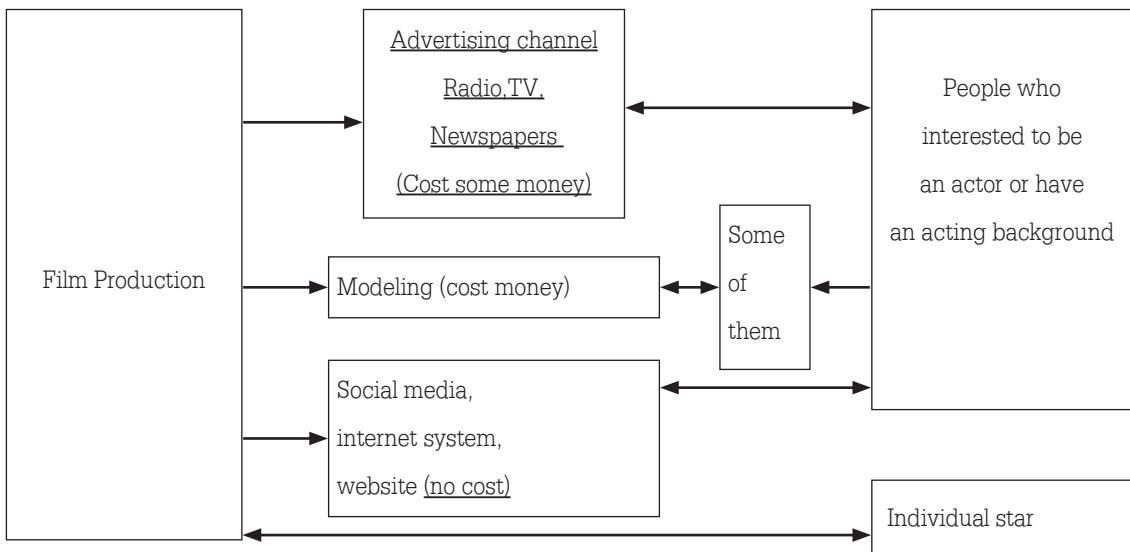
This research uses 400 sets of questionnaires for collecting quantitative data from people who used to at least once auditioned or casted for a film. Questions are about advantage and disadvantage channels of access to work line expectations toward the career as actors and actresses.

**Secondary Data:** Research, data collection from academic papers in the forms of academic articles, research work, theses, textbooks, etc. for Content Analysis on expectations toward the career as actors, channels of access to work line.

#### Survey Results

From in depth - interview it was found that the requirements for a successful in casting are a person who can make a big film sponsor thinks he or she is suitable for a role. Moreover, most of film sponsors don't have any knowledge of acting but are proficient in business therefore, the well-known persons or a person who can sell often be selected. Nonzee Nimibutr a director explained about a

casting history as, in the past actors and actress were chosen from another actors' or actress's relative or family such as Lalita Panyopas is a daughter of Jaruwan Panyopas, who is also a respected actress. However, a few years after there are modeling agencies provided good looking persons for film industries. Modeling agencies earn money from film companies by collecting from a cast who was chosen to play a role. A modeling will charge 20-30% of a total payment of which paid to the cast. Not only casts that modeling agencies provided but the agencies also find good looking men and women to compete in many competition such as Miss Thailand Word, Thai Super Model or even a singing contest. After the competitions the person who won always became a star and gets a role in a movie afterward. According to this, despite a modeling, some individual who wants to act in a film starts to enter into a competition wished they will win and can become a star so they don't have to pay 20-30% to a modeling. On the other hand, from a modeling interview, it is easier for modelings to access to casting informations than individual person because many film productions have good relation with modelings. However, both modelings and film production houses agreed to use an internet or website to search for a person who seems to suitable for a role. Furthermore, film production houses and modelings use internet for work every working day. According to the in-depth interview, it can be written for conceptual as follow:



The questionnaire respondents include people working in the entertainment industry and people who once experienced a casting procedure of 400 persons age between 19 - 30 due to the majorities of characters in Thai film are based on these ages, which 41% are male and another 59% are female. It is found that the most common channels of advertising for casting today are namely: social network, representing 60%; printing and television media; equally representing 34%; modeling, representing 32%; website, accounting for 30% and no found publicity, representing 14%. In addition, the respondents answer the questionnaires about the most important factors in being successfully selected as actors which are the appearance suiting the character most, followed by good looks. The factors considered by the respondents as unimportant to being cast are the qualities of being already famous or well-known to the

general public, followed by personal familiarity with work team of film production.

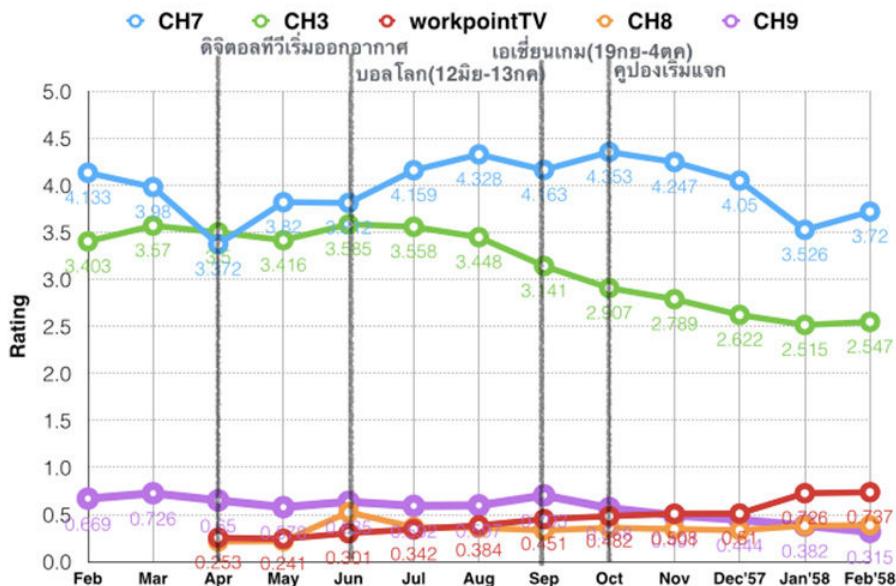
Moreover, Data about the decision on casting of acting operators or film production companies is based on the use of in- depth interviews. The interviewees are mostly small productions or possess low- budget for film productions, use the channel of finding actors by word of mouth. The channels of finding actors via social media, post on face book are slightly used. The majority of interviewees as film production companies with high budget, meanwhile, indicate the use of method for finding actors through modeling agencies. In this regard, the modeling agencies will be notified of roughly desired personality, character, looks and they have charge of supplying actors. The acting ability can be trained without difficulty. Thus, such capability hardly affects the casting as long as the personality, mannerisms and appearance meet the character

requirements. Additionally, apart from the required acting ability of most people chosen, the majority of capitalists tend to select on the basis of other talents associated with acting as well.

From secondary data researcher collected data for biographies of famous stars in 2015 - 2016. According to the word famous stars, means stars, who are well-known from their acting career or from other talent but has once acting in film business.

Therefore, researcher had looked for rating of TV. Channels in Thailand base on top 2 channels which were channel 3 and Channel 7 since these 2 channels have a lot of stars who used to act in film and are well-known for Thai people than another lower-rating channel which has few stars who ever act in Thai Film as picture show the comparison of a rating in Thai TV. Channel where also has a lot of film star

### AGB Nielsen Rating 15+ (Avr.18Hours(06-24:00)) Nationwide (Top5 FreeTV)



Now only in Channel 3 and 7 that the researcher had collected the data but also the data from music industries which producing film such as RS which used to produced films and have many film stars, and GMM which has GDH as a company group were selected as one of the sample group as well. From stars biographies they can be split into 4 groups, which are stars who age between 40 and more than 50 years old (elderly

group), stars age between 30 and 40 years old (Y generation group) and stars age between 20 - 30 year old (young adult group) and stars age lower than 20 year old (teenager group) those 4 groups can be explained as follow :

Most of the elderly group became a star from word of mouth from some film crews or producer or another star. Some became a star from their relative or friend. Most of them are good

looking Thai nationalities. However, few of them became a star for some other advertising such as newspaper, radio or TV which published about finding a cast for a film production

Most of Y generation group became a star from modeling and some from friends and relative or word of mouth. Stars in these aged are more half nationalities than Thai nationalities but still good looking persons.

Most of young adult group became a star from winning a competition such as AF.house competition, Duchies competition, Miss Thailand World competition. However, some of them come from modeling or from a connection with directors, producers or even a sponsor.

Most of Teenager group became a star from connection via social media and heard about casting news from social media channel some of. Some of them start from be a Net idol before became a star.

#### Conclusion and Discussions

It can be concluded that the creation of casting channels for people with competence or interest in the acting work requires the establishment of network before as to help saving cost from both film production houses and candidates. Such network must be ubiquitous and reach the group of people with acting ability or other capabilities related to acting. This operation must be followed by support from government authorities and development of such network for practical use in everyday life, respectively.

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