

# Innovative Exhibition Management of Enterprises in Bangkok

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## ABSTRACT

The MICE industry is one of the most important service industries in Thailand. As part of the Thai tourism industry so-called – business travel, the growth of the MICE industry is very significant. Though there are many studies regarding the MICE industry, it has been found that there are very few research in the exhibition industry in particular. Hence, the objectives of this study are (1) to study the innovation of exhibition management by enterprises and (2) to study the readiness of personnel within the exhibition industry. This is qualitative research using in-depth expert interviews with 7 key informants, who are professionals in the exhibition industry. The triangulation method was used to test the data within this research through observation by the researchers. The content analysis was then used to interpret the results. It has been found that the personnel within the exhibition industry in Thailand are highly professional and thus, have a competitive advantage compared to their counterparts in the Southeast Asian region. Moreover, the Thai exhibition organizers are highly professional, which will lead to new innovative shows enabling Thailand to be the front-runners in the exhibition industry in Southeast Asia. All in all, it can be concluded that professional personnel is a crucial part of the development of the exhibition industry.

## Keywords:

Exhibition industry, Innovative exhibition management, Exhibition personnel, Exhibition organiser

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## Introduction

The term MICE is derived from Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition. MICE is a component of the tourism industry in terms of business travel (Janssen, 2017). The MICE industry has grown continuously since 2010. The overall perspectives of the Thailand MICE industry in 2016 were: (1) MICE travelers of 28,854,061 persons with a growth of 21.73% over the previous year, and (2) MICE revenue of 73,322 million baht with a growth of 58.02% over the previous year. In the year 2016, international conventions in Thailand was ranked 24<sup>th</sup> at the Global level and 1<sup>st</sup> in Southeast Asia. Hence in

2017, the international exhibition in the form of B2B (trade exhibition) was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in Southeast Asia and 8<sup>th</sup> in the Asia Pacific (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), 2018). These can be categorised as the number of MICE travellers and revenues by MICE industry as shown in table 1. When emphasized by category, it is shown that, though the exhibition industry has the lowest number of international travellers, it generated higher revenues compared to other categories. In addition, the exhibition industry has also shown growth in both the number of travellers and revenues.

Table 1 International MICE travellers and revenues 2015 –2016

MICE Industry	Number of Travellers			Revenues (Million Baht)		
	2015	2016	Change	2015	2016	Change
Meetings	262,538	258,483	-1.54%	28,397	23,445	-17.44%
Incentives	254,125	263,556	3.71%	16,136	16,217	0.50%
Conventions	294,371	298,564	1.42%	27,339	25,789	-5.67%
Exhibitions	174,652	180,480	.34%	15,214	15,686	3.10%

MICE	985,686	1,001,083	1.56%	87,086	81,137	-6.83%
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Source: Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (2018).

The MICE industry, especially the exhibition industry at international level, helps generate national income for the country, distributes revenues to related tourism and hospitality industry such as hotels, food services, shopping as well as other business sectors such as: logistics, telecommunication services, advertisement, and public relations, etc. Moreover, the MICE industry provides indirect benefits to the country's economy like employment, and exchange of knowledge, which in turn leads to the development of human resources in terms of knowledge, technology, and innovation.

Therefore, most research in the MICE industry emphasizes the overall MICE industry or pays particular attention to the meetings and convention industry for instance, "Guidelines to Develop Business Alliances in the MICE Sector for hotel enterprises in Pattaya City, Chonburi Province" (Pitakchai Tosdon, & Therdchai Choibumroong, 2016), "Factors Affecting the Selection Service of MICE for Hotels and Resorts in Kanchanaburi Province" (Pinita Kaewjitkongthong, & Yaowaluk Chaobanpho, 2016), "Readiness of Marketing Environment for Meeting Business to Support the ASEAN Economic Community: AEC of Hatyai District, Songkhla Province" (Areerat Chaichofa, 2014), "Guidelines for the Development of Mice Tourism in Khon Kaen Province" (Pakjira Saenjai, & Sathaporn Mongkhonsrisawas, 2015). Moreover, Kanchanok Dabsomdej (n.d.) has analyzed SWOT and the potential of the MICE industry in Thailand and it was found that the MICE industry has the potential compared to other countries in Asia. It was also found that the weakness of the MICE industry in Thailand is the lack of language skills of professionals within the industry. From the aforementioned studies, it can be inferred that there is still a lack of research in the exhibition industry, especially those paying particular focus to innovation in the field.

**Research questions and objectives**

Despite global popularity, comparatively little academic research focuses on the exhibition and has been argued that the importance of exhibitions has been overlooked (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011). Furthermore, studies on innovations in the service sector are largely fragmented and have received little attention from academic researchers (Oke, 2007; Daniel, Lima, & Dambros, 2017). At the same time, a framework for service innovation management remains scarce (Den Hertog, Der Aa, & De Jong, 2010). To respond to these limitations, we draw on the dynamic capabilities view to assist us contribute to the innovation management of the exhibition enterprise. In this paper, we address the following questions:

- RQ1. What is the exhibition industry's environment that the enterprises currently face?
- RQ2. How do the enterprises respond or adapt to the environment and ensure their place at the forefront?
- RQ3. As humans are the key capability in this business, what abilities and skills are needed for this career?

The objectives of this study are (1) to study the innovation of exhibition management by enterprises and (2) to study the readiness of personnel within the exhibition industry. Hence, the contributions of this research are geared toward various parties, both within the exhibition industry and its related bodies. Firstly, the exhibition enterprises can utilize the results to organize the exhibition industry, both at national and international levels, with creativity and innovation. Secondly, exhibitors could use the findings for their preparation, planning, and operation to manage the exhibition effectively. Finally, academics could employ it to construct a curriculum related to the exhibition industry in order to produce professional personnel who excel

in the dynamic global trends of the exhibition world.

### Literature Review

There is currently a high level of competitive pressure within the exhibition industry. This provides the motivation for the current study to examine more deeply the challenges that are specifically relevant for this industry.

#### Exhibition literature

##### Definition, expectation from exhibition, and entities

The terms exhibition, exposition, trade show, and trade fair may vary but are interchangeable. Exhibition is globally defined as “regularly scheduled short-term events, typically less than a week in duration that bring together various members of a certain market or industry for the purposes of meeting face-to-face in a single location and display their products and services, new product innovations, technical updates, share ideas, industry information, connect with customers and prospects, and in some cases, to advance the sales process (Bettis-Outland & Guillory, 2018; Ducate & Cathy, 2013; Herbig, O'Hara, & Palumbo, 1997, 1998; Kirchgeorg, Springer, & Kastner, 2009).

The exhibition industry develops and grows dynamically. To manage an exhibition requires the support of a whole industry, the exhibitor (seller) and attendee/visitor (buyer), as well as the government and sponsors, who must be willing to trust the show concept as a valid forum for establishing and cultivating business relationships (Kirchgeorg et al., 2009). The exhibition owner or professional exhibition organizer deals with many different constituencies, e.g., attendees and exhibiting companies. Each group has multiple reasons for participation – without them, no event would exist (Ducate & Cathy, 2013, p. 19).

The attendee/visitor is usually searching for new products, services, and sources, and spends time with the exhibiting suppliers. The exhibition also provides an opportunity for education, networking, and gathering intelligence from

industry leaders. (Ducate & Cathy, 2013, p. 19). An empirical study shows that the visitor's three main expectations at the exhibition are: to see new products and developments, to obtain technical or product information, and to get up-to-date information (Blythe, 1999). From the exhibitor's perspective, an exhibition provides the ideal environment where a product's features can be demonstrated in real time and permits the attendee to use the traditional human senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to inspect and learn about the product or service (Ducate & Cathy, 2013, p. 19). While Blythe's (1999) study explores that exhibitors cited the following as the three most important reasons for exhibiting: meeting new customers, launching new products, and taking sales orders.

The objective of exhibition organizers is to create highly effective shows that result in positive outcomes for both exhibitors and visitors (Gottlieb et al., 2011). Therefore, exhibition organizers tend to be very creative, innovative people. In addition, to produce a successful exhibition requires many essential entities to get involved. First, among them is a facility suitable for hosting an exhibition. The more "barren" a facility, the greater the need for an official service contractor to handle materials, add decorating touches, provide carpet and furniture, and other items that might be needed by the organizer and the exhibiting companies. Other companies that may be needed to produce an exhibition include electrical contractors, organized labor, involving many skills and crafts, registration badge markers, and an audiovisual company (Ducate & Cathy, 2013, p. 20).

##### The exhibition as services and interaction

Based on the definition of exhibitions, they can be classified as services (Kirchgeorg, Jung, & Klante, 2010). The different characteristics between services and products are intangibility, perishability, and simultaneity are at the forefront of these services (Oke, 2007). The exhibition presents all the characteristics of a typical service – so that in fact, they are the composition of a

sequence of services and activities that have to be perfectly coordinated (Gottlieb et al., 2011)

The model of service quality presented by Brady and Cronin (2001) suggests that overall service quality is influenced by three constructs: (1) interaction quality influenced by attitudes, behaviour, and expertise of service personnel, (2) environment quality and (3) outcome quality. Due to the aspects of simultaneity and intangibility of service, interpersonal interactions frequently have a significant impact on service quality perceptions (Gottlieb et al., 2011). As exhibitions generally involve interactions between exhibition organizing personnel and several external factors, including exhibitors, visitors, venue owners, sponsors, business partners and selected local business (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010), the effect of exhibition organizing personnel as an essential resource on service quality is likely to be observed.

### **Dynamic capabilities view**

In fast-moving business environments opening to global competition, firms require dynamic capabilities to achieve competitive advantage and successful performance. Managers in both young and established firms are challenged to revise their routines and continually reconfigure the capabilities they have developed (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006). The essence of dynamic capabilities is a firm's behavioral orientation in the adaptation, renewal, reconfiguration, and recreation of resources, capabilities and core capabilities responding to external changes. (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). In other words, when the marketplace becomes more dynamic, firms use innovation as a key, important tool for survival of the firms, increasing their competitive advantages that lead to superior performance (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009; Oke, 2007).

### **Service innovation**

Innovation was originally defined by (Schumpeter, 1934) as the introduction of a new product, a or new method of production, the opening of a new market, finding a new source of supply for raw materials, and the carrying of the

new organization in any industry. Because of the different aspects of service around a product, this definition becomes a too limited approach. Hence, in 1995, Gadrey et al., defined service innovations as innovations in processes or organizations for existing services or products (Oke, 2007).

Service innovation is the process of seizing newness: new service concepts, new customer interactions, new value systems/business partners, new revenue models, new organizational or technological service delivery systems in which different agents interact to co-produce a service-based innovation through to satisfied customers (Den Hertog et al., 2010; O'Dwyer, Gilmore, & Carson, 2009; Oke, 2007; Rubalcaba, Michel, Sundbo, Brown, & Reynoo, 2012; Rusanen, Halinen, & Jaakkola, 2014; Jermstipparsert, Sutduean, & Sriyakul, 2019 ).

### **Innovative management**

Innovation is a key policy strategic issue (Baregheh et al., 2009), cross-functional (Horn & Brem, 2013) and multidimensional phenomenon (Den Hertog et al., 2010). Policy makers are critical of service innovation, and it appears at the firm or activity level (Rubalcaba et al., 2012). Innovation management practices are defined as what companies habitually do to manage the process of carrying out an innovation (Oke, 2007), firms developing the dynamic service innovation capabilities will outperform their competitors (Den Hertog et al., 2010). So far, a comprehensive framework that takes a basic concept of innovation management into consideration has been missing (Adams, Bessant, & Phelps, 2006; Horn & Brem, 2013). Therefore, as we review literature, the articles we use to frame our research framework and compare to our research result are as follows:

Adams et al., (2006) propose a seven-dimensional conceptualization of the innovation management incidents, namely inputs, knowledge management, strategy, organizational and culture, portfolio management, project management, and commercialization, all of which require organizational capabilities to make and manage

change. Den Hertog et al., (2010) suggested that an organization will outperform their competitors if there are at least some of these dynamic capabilities, such as signaling user needs and technological options, conceptualizing, (un-)bundling, co-producing and orchestrating, scaling and stretching, and learning and adapting. Lightfoot and Gebauer (2011) propose that the determinants for success of service innovation, include service-related factors (frontline expertise, standardized service, service complexity, service quality, and service experience), market-related factors (customer fit, market rivalry, market potential), company-related factors (strategy, resources and capabilities, innovation culture and management), and new service development factors (formal evaluation, design, test and launch). Rubalcaba et al., (2012) suggested a managerial framework to determine the innovation process and a customer co-creation perspective. Lastly, Horn and Brem (2013)

discussed a holistic view of innovation management including seven interrelated factors namely customer orientation, network organization, sustainability, frugality, intellectual property, business model and global innovation.

**Research Methodology**

**Data sample**

Exploring the current environment, the adaptation and response to the change is a context-rich issue. For this reason, a qualitative, expert interview research design was employed (Eisenhardt, 1989). All 7 cases: 4 PEOs including 1 freight forwarder, 1 venue, and 1 logistics enterprise were purposefully selected and referred by MICE Capabilities Development Department. With respect to the confidentiality of the data, the real names of the enterprises are disclosed. However, Table 2 describes the characteristics of the enterprises. In all cases, the executives who have direct experience in handling the exhibition were contacted for an in-depth expert interview study

Table 2 Description of the participating enterprises

<b>Enterprises</b>	
Enterprise 1	Multinational Professional Exhibition Organizer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 30 years in the exhibition industry</li> <li>• Organizes 500 exhibitions in 30 countries and more than 20 international trade exhibitions in Thailand annually.</li> </ul>
Enterprise 2	Local Professional Exhibition Organizer/ Venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sister company of a venue</li> <li>• Organizes more than 100 exhibitions at local, national and international levels annually</li> </ul>
Enterprise 3	Multinational Professional Exhibition Organizer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert in international agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry industry and science laboratory technology trade exhibitions and conferences</li> <li>• Organize trade exhibitions in Thailand and countries in Southeast Asia</li> </ul>
Enterprise 4	Joint-Venture Professional Exhibition Organizer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert in international trade exhibitions and conferences in various sectors, such as environment, energy, food, food ingredients, machinery, building &amp; construction, defense and security</li> <li>• Organizes trade exhibitions in Thailand and countries in Southeast Asia</li> </ul>
Enterprise 5	Venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 10 years' experience in the venue industry</li> <li>• Organizes local, national and international events for public, private and</li> </ul>

	non-profit organizations
Enterprise 6	Exhibition Freight Forwarder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 10 years' experience in exhibition logistics</li> </ul>
Enterprise 7	Exhibition Freight Forwarder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tri-national joint-venture company</li> </ul>
	Exhibition Freight Forwarder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specializes in exhibition and industrial logistics in Thailand</li> <li>• More than 10 years' experience in exhibition logistics</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

**Data collection and analysis**

This study is mainly based on interview data and secondary data. Data about the enterprises and exhibitions were searched for in secondary sources (enterprise/exhibitions' websites). An expert in-depth interview was conducted from April to August 2018. The research instrument used was a semi-construct interview question. A semi-structured question was a proper choice for the researcher because it allowed greater flexibility and the new questions can emerge and be explored in the field (Eisenhardt, 1989). We developed the interview question with an executive from MICE Capabilities Development Department's consultation. Each interview lasted 2-3 hours, the voice was tape-recorded and typed out. Then, the transcribed interviews and information from websites were used for data analysis.

In general, the data on innovation management was analyzed through a pattern-matching logic. Patterns that emerged empirically were compared with service innovation and innovation management view and framework. According to Yin (1994), if the patterns indicate similarity, internal validity is enhanced. Therefore, the finding of adaption and responses to the environmental dimensions were compared with the existing theories on service innovation and innovation management.

**Results**

This section presents our findings in terms of the current situation of the exhibition industry, readiness, and competitiveness of venue facilities, location and support, readiness and competitiveness of PEOs and the importance of

product manager, and innovation exhibition management through project management.

**Current situation of the exhibition industry**

Interview results show that the exhibition industry continues to grow, as Thailand is still one of the attractive MICE destinations. This is, first, because of the globalization and regionalization. The integration of ASEAN countries (ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6) raises dramatically the population that draws the attention from the Western countries. In addition, Thailand also has an edge over other countries in this region because it is easily accessible, has good venue facilities of, and an attractive leisure environment; “[...] Thailand has been popular in exhibition destination, might be because people come for business and can enjoy the various leisure environment. (E3)”

Second, the government's policy to facilitate the ease of business investment in Thailand and to grow the MICE industry is an essential factor. Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)'s main task is to draw international exhibitors and visitors to participate in the exhibitions in Thailand through the well-plan marketing campaign; “[...] TCEB performs very well in the campaign 'My Destination'. Incorporating the entire MICE concept to show the world that we (Thailand) are ready, the government is ready, the exhibition organizers are ready, and all the facilities are ready. Then the exhibition destination should be Thailand. This is our (Thailand's) selling point (E1)”. Lastly, the rise of demand for a venue hall is a driver pushing the industry growth; “[...] the increment of venue's hall and the purpose-built exhibition hall in the key areas such as Chiang

Mai, Khon Kaen, Songkhla, and even in Bangkok can imply the growth of the exhibition industry (E5)”; “[...] in exhibition industry, without hall means nothing (E1)”.

### Readiness and competitiveness

#### Venue facilities, location, and support

Interview results show that venue facilities in Thailand appeared to be to a world-class standard, easily accessible in terms of international connections and intra-city transportation. Bangkok and the main cities offer an advanced logistics system, good variety of convenient and high-quality accommodations. Most of all, Thailand has a competitive leisure environment and a warm service mind over other countries. Singapore, however, in terms of venue facilities, is a direct and major competitor in ASEAN.

*“[...] Singapore performs better than us (Thailand) because of the better comparatively facilities, logistics, and there are more exhibition halls. All of these are provided by their government (E2)”.*

*“[...] our country has a competitive advantage over the neighbourhood in terms of venue facilities, accommodation, and tourist attraction. This is why they (exhibitors and visitors) would like to come and spend (time and money) in Thailand. Singapore has a much higher cost of living. Tourism location in Malaysia is less various than Thailand. Indonesia, the exhibition is still behind Vietnam but the government is trying to promote this industry by building a new venue, Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE) operated by company X... (E3)”.*

*“[...] venue facilities in Singapore and Malaysia are pretty good. They are professional but rather lack of service mind, maybe it is the basic nature of each country. If you are*

*about to arrange an exhibition in other countries, like Indonesia, India, or Myanmar, you will love Thailand. We are a professional... (E4)”*

*“[...] in Southeast Asia, Singapore is our major rival. Indeed, I know China is attempting to push themselves into a higher competitive position in 1-2 years. At this present time, I see only Singapore is our benchmark in terms of venue facilities and location (E5)”.*

#### Readiness and competitiveness of the PEOs and the importance of project manager

Regarding the readiness and competitiveness of the PEOs in the dynamic environments, there is some difference among PEOs. The finding shows that the existing multi- and international PEOs that have a clear innovative strategy drive the growth of the industry. While the Thai founded PEOs build alliances and network with the international PEOs in the form of a management contract or joint venture investment for the business expansion. In addition, the local PEOs gain advantages from the increase in the number of conference and exhibition centres in the main provinces.

The interview results reveal that the exhibition is a derivative service and is characterized by the integration of several external factors that are managed on a project by project basis, *“[...] exhibition in the term of an organizer is service. For us, we are a service provider. We sell exhibition space for each project (E4)”.* PEOs have been adopting a project management principle lead by a project manager (PM) to enhance innovation and better fit the work and working group. Therefore, the dynamic capabilities of the PEOs as well as the related service providers that influence the enterprise's competitive advantage are at the frontline of personnel expertise.

The PM is responsible for orchestrating the resource levelling, and at times, this may mean

taking on individual tasks to free up time for other team members (Miller, 2018). The PM forms an operation working group with other official contractors and service providers where the project charter is used. This document, for example, meeting minutes, workflow, grant chart with timeline and budget, and work sheet, is helpful for multiple collaborators as its purpose is to set goals and recommendations for moving forward and a project timeline to remind the group of its overall purpose. Thus, project management, leadership, grant writing, and multi-tasking skills are disciplinary knowledge highly valuable to exhibition development and management.

*“[...] PM is like the managing director of a small company, he/she must have a clear vision, mission, and goals. He is a conductor of an orchestra, who lead the team members from finance, marketing, PR and sales departments to the same direction. The PM must have an entrepreneurship mindset and is responsible for revenue from sales manager, all every department’s expenses, and the end profit of the show as the key performance indicator. In short, PM is an entrepreneur of the show, he/she handles everything regarding this exhibition by utilizing others’ expertise (E1)”.*

*“[...] a project manager is the valuable enterprise’s asset. I can say that the PM in exhibition freight forwarder is more valuable than a car or a building. Losing a car or building is better than we lose one a capable PM (P7)”.*

Education and skill gaps for exhibition personnel are unmatched. Today exhibition professionals are expected to possess additional knowledge and skills required within the exhibition world. It finds that the majority of new graduates are lack formal training in the area of strategy, project

management, and basic administration. The interview results suggest that courses on project management, team leadership and grant administration are the most needed additions to the current tourism curriculum for success in the exhibition initiative roles. In addition, the key abilities, skills, and qualifications needed for exhibition professional can be summarized as follows:

- Creativity and innovation
- Exceptional communication skills and networkability
- Interpersonal skill
- Influence abilities
- Problem-solving skills
- Adaptability
- Good teamwork skills
- Multi-tasking skills
- Patience and service mindedness
- Entrepreneurship
- English ability
- Willingness to learn new things
- Innovation exhibition management through project management

#### Initiating an exhibition

Before the new exhibition begins, it is important for PEOs to understand and utilize the information generated by previous exhibitions: the exhibition evaluation and performance, and environmental analysis. For this, a summary of the number and demographic data of exhibitors and visitors, the satisfaction survey results and the financial performance are reviewed. A post-show meeting among the working group is arranged to learn what the problems occurred during the show and how these problems were solved, *“[...] when the exhibition is over, we will have a post-show evaluation meeting to learn what we do good and what we need to improve. Strategy, also, for the next exhibition will be discussed (E3)”.* The dynamic environment is analysed to see what changes are taking place in the industry, what changes in consumer behaviours, what other competitors are doing, what challenges they are

encountering and how well they are doing. By utilizing this information, the PEOs will realize tangible benefits, including new customers/prospects/markets, knowing how to increase sales from current customers, new communication tools and technology to attract more visitors, technical knowledge trends, and updates to enhance customer support. This information is also used by the PEOs for intangible benefits, for instance, to improve strategic planning, new policy development, new exhibition proposition ideas, and corporate image. The interview results show the exhibition innovation responding to the changes in the marketplace and consumer behavior as follows: “[...] the size of the exhibition will be smaller. The exhibition concept becomes more specific and focuses on new market segment e.g. Thailand LGBT Expo, Windoor Tech Thailand (E3)”. “[...] to survive in this industry, the exhibition's value proposition must be differentiated from rivals. A niche market may not be always an important alternative. Because consumers and buyers are smarter. They have been selecting the preferred exhibition's value and the right time. For example, The Rehacare is the information and communication platform for elderly and chronically ill people. This event fits the aging society in ASEAN and Thailand. (E4)”. The interview results indicated that PEOs and the involvement enterprises creatively adapt and respond to the high competition, globalization and the development of new information and communication technologies. To effectively respond to customer needs, PEOs develop advanced information technology to serve exhibitors/visitors who can easily experience and acquire ponderable values (such as easy-to-use, value-added, convenience, cost-saving, etc.). “[...] Consumers media exposure behaviour change from traditional media; newspaper, magazine, TV, and radio to online media. PEO should utilize and develop advanced information and communication technologies to serve consumers

(exhibitor/visitor). PEO must shift from off-line to online (O to O) or becomes an online PEO. In other words, to add value to the exhibition, PEO should create a platform or application in order to support the exhibitors to continue their selling process after the show. Thus, the challenge is how PEO transforms from off-line or the 2-3 days physical trade show to online after the exhibition (E1)”.

### **Planning an exhibition**

Managing a new exhibition starts with when the PM creates, manages and delivers an exhibition concept in support of the enterprise-specific mission, object, and scope for the exhibition development and guidance. The PM will discuss and define the concept and project overview statement, including its environment analysis (SWOT), objectives, marketing plan, operation plan, and budget plan. A long list of forecasted revenues and costs/expenses items help to prepare a quality budget and resources after researching equipment, material, and service requirements. As the primary investigation of this exhibition project, the plan will then be presented to the management for approval. Project management techniques help the PM and resource levelling for grant-funded exhibition projects (Miller, 2018).

After that, a good PM will recruit team members and official service contractors with skills and experience to fill their specific needs. The PM cannot perform all the activities, but is capable of scheduling others to perform them all. Thus, well-planned documents such as workflow, grant charts, and work sheets are needed to enhance the team's collaboration and stay on track. In project management, along with the whole process, communication and networking abilities are important. This multi-institution work group builds collective knowledge and maximizes shared-resources.

### **Branding and marketing**

There is a reason why people tend to visit an exhibition organized by a brand PEO. They are easily identifiable and customers

(exhibitor/visitor) know what to expect from a specific brand. Thus, the development of an effective marketing and communications plan is essential for the delivery of a successful exhibition. The efficiency of a communication plan increases the number of users/visitors. The secondary source collection reveals that the exhibitions' websites present show name, show description, venue and date, key facts and updates. The exhibition, PEO, sponsors, and official

service contractors' logo are posted on the website and in all media. Technological innovations such as social media, for instance, email, Facebook, LINE, Instagram, and/or Twitter are widely used by most PEOs. These interactive modes of participatory communication allow exhibition information to continue at the hands of the customers and are not only orchestrated by the PEO. Fig.1 shows a sample of exhibition content and graphic.



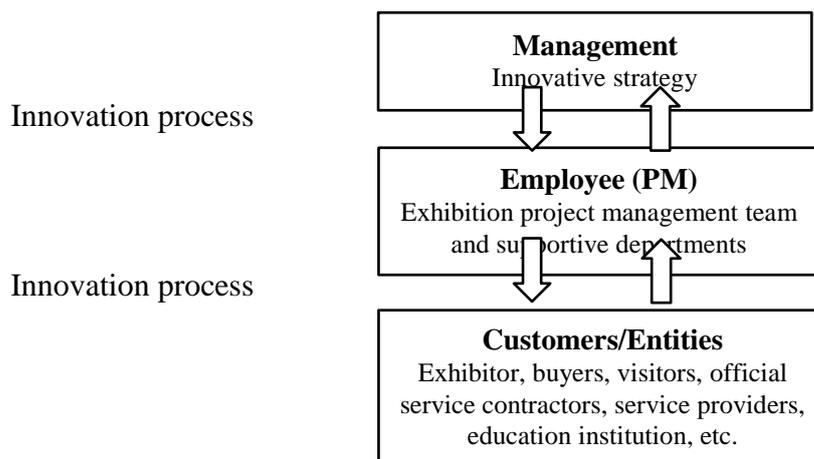
**Fig. 1: METALEX 2019's content and graphic**

Source: Reed Tradex (2019). Retrieved from [https://www.metalex.co.th/about\\_the\\_show/](https://www.metalex.co.th/about_the_show/)

**Conclusion & Discussion**

The main objective of this research is to study the innovation of exhibition management by enterprises and the readiness of personnel within the exhibition industry. Our findings show that the exhibition industry in Thailand is growing because of the globalization and support of the government's policies. Location and venue facilities are competitive in Thailand in ASEAN. Professionals in the exhibition industry are highly capable in this dynamic marketplace.

However, the globalization, higher rivalry, and the development of information and communication technologies have forced exhibition enterprises to continuously search for and adopt service innovations (Butler, Bassiouni, El-Adly, & Widjaja, 2007). Managing exhibition innovations is a rich, complex, and dynamic field from which new approaches are constantly emerging (Rubalcaba et al., 2012). All in all, we summarize the process of managing innovations in the exhibition in the following model (Fig. 2)



**Fig. 2: The innovation exhibition management model**

The innovation exhibition management model shows the requirement of managerial guidance or a corporate strategy as a guideline. It is a cross-functional and multi-level framework from marketing to operations, from human resources to different operation departments and disciplines with higher or lower strategic impact (Horn & Brem, 2013). From an organizational perspective, the exhibition innovation management depends on open processes involving various employees and managers through both bottom-up and top-down processes. Most importantly, the exhibition innovation depends on the process carrying out in networks with external actors, including exhibitors, visitors, government, and various service contractors (Rubalcaba et al., 2012).

Exhibition project management is concerned with the process that turns the inputs into a marketable innovation. Communication, both internal and external, is important in exhibition management and facilitates the dispersion of ideas, increases the diversity and leads to a team climate. This collaborative work contributes to the innovation process (Adams et al., 2006). To outperform, PEOs need dynamic capabilities, such as signalling user needs and technological options, conceptualizing, and orchestrating (Den Hertog et al, 2010). The model also suggests some determinants for the success of exhibition innovation including company-related factors (strategy, management, and capabilities),

employee factors (frontline expertise and service experience), market-related factors (customer fit and market potential), and new service development factors (formal post-show evaluation) (Lightfoot & Gebauer, 2011).

To survive and grow in this hostile environment, enterprises must habitually manage the process of carrying out innovation. In the exhibition industry, enterprises adopt a project management principle to manage innovation. Each exhibition is managed on a project-by-project basis, which is led by a project manager. A successful exhibition innovation must be based on knowledge and facts which need dynamic capabilities such as signalling customers' needs, information and communication technology change. Exhibition innovation strategy must be linked closely to the management's strategy and communicated to all involved parties. The cross-functional teams are motivated, involved and empowered and given the necessary time and resources by the project manager. Therefore, it can be said that employee factor or frontline expertise is an essential dynamic capability in exhibition innovation management.

Although the small sample size is our limitation, our findings make a significant contribution and accelerate future research on exhibition innovation management. First, enterprises can employ the results to improve the innovation process and develop their resources and capabilities. Second,

for academic purposes, the unmatched education and skill gap for exhibition professionals is needed for constructing the MICE curriculum in order to produce qualified exhibition professionals in the dynamic exhibition world. Lastly, we suggest that more research should be conducted, then a quantitative approach should assess the relationship between the factors such as company-related, employee, market-related, and new service development and innovation.

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