

News Selection, Media Roles, and Media Ethics
in the Light of Digital Television News in Thailand
การเลือกประเด็นข่าว บทบาทหน้าที่ และจริยธรรมของสื่อมวลชนในยุคดิจิทัล
ประเภทรายการข่าวโทรทัศน์

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Abstract

Digitalisation influences media industry and business including news selection, media roles, and media ethics. Shifts in consumer behaviour can be one of the most vital factors. The study, therefore, targeted to examine news selection, media roles, and media ethics in the light of digital television news in Thailand. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with three key informants from Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS), Thairath TV, and Bangkok Broadcasting Television Channel (Channel 7). The results revealed that these three media organisations shared their similarities in news selection by listening more on audience's voices, media roles by training and skilling mass media persons to be responsible professionals, and media ethics. A few differences were, nonetheless, found, especially in rule and regulations practiced. In other words, whereas Thai PBS took into practice the Act of Thai Public Broadcasting Service, the rest of the digital television channels applied the professional code of ethics and standards of professional conduct into consideration. The ultimate goal of this paper is to encourage media persons to profoundly re-think their professional practices and professional codes of ethics while they are living and transforming themselves into the digital age.

Keywords: Mass media, Digitalization, News Selection, Media Roles, Media Ethics

บทคัดย่อ

การเคลื่อนตัวสู่การเป็นดิจิทัล (Digitalisation) มีอิทธิพลต่ออุตสาหกรรมและธุรกิจสื่อ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นเป็นการคัดเลือกประเด็นข่าว บทบาทหน้าที่ และจริยธรรมของสื่อมวลชน พฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปคือ เหตุผลที่สำคัญเหตุผลหนึ่ง การศึกษานี้จึงมุ่งศึกษาการเลือกประเด็นข่าว บทบาทหน้าที่ และจริยธรรมของสื่อมวลชนในยุคดิจิทัล ประเภทข่าวโทรทัศน์ การวิจัยครั้งนี้ใช้การสัมภาษณ์เจาะลึกแบบกึ่งมีโครงสร้างกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญจำนวน 3 คนที่ทำงานในองค์กรกระจายเสียงและแพร่ภาพสาธารณะแห่งประเทศไทย ไทยรัฐทีวี และสถานีโทรทัศน์สีกองทัพบกช่อง 7 ผลการวิจัยพบว่า สถานีโทรทัศน์ดิจิทัลทั้ง 3 สถานีมีการเลือกประเด็นข่าว บทบาทหน้าที่ และจริยธรรมของสื่อมวลชนในยุคดิจิทัลเหมือนกัน โดยต้องคำนึงถึงความต้องการ

และความสนใจของผู้รับสาร และสื่อมวลชนต้องปรับตัวให้สอดคล้องกับการเคลื่อนตัวสู่การเป็นดิจิทัล ให้มีความรู้ความสามารถ และทักษะในด้านต่างๆ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการศึกษายังพบความแตกต่าง โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในด้านของข้อบังคับหลักจริยธรรม กล่าวคือ องค์การกระจายเสียงและแพร่ภาพสาธารณะแห่งประเทศไทย ดำเนินการโดยยึดหลักพระราชบัญญัติองค์การกระจายเสียงและแพร่ภาพสาธารณะแห่งประเทศไทย พ.ศ.2551 ในขณะที่ ไทยรัฐทีวี และสถานีโทรทัศน์สีกองทัพบกช่อง 7 นำเอาประมวลจรรยาบรรณวิชาชีพและมาตรฐานเพื่อการปฏิบัติวิชาชีพมาใช้ เป้าหมายสูงสุดของงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้คือการผลักดันให้สื่อมวลชนพิจารณาแนวทางการปฏิบัติงาน และจรรยาบรรณวิชาชีพอีกครั้ง ในขณะที่สื่อมวลชนกำลังอาศัยอยู่ และกำลังเปลี่ยนผ่านตนเองสู่โลกยุคดิจิทัลอย่างแท้จริง

คำสำคัญ สื่อมวลชน, การเคลื่อนตัวสู่การเป็นดิจิทัล, การเลือกประเด็นข่าว, บทบาทหน้าที่ของสื่อมวลชน, จริยธรรมของสื่อมวลชน

Introduction

Digitalisation is a two-edged sword issue to business and industry, especially media industry, including television stations. According to YouTube Audience Insights Thailand 2017 (2017), there are a smaller number of audiences who are exposed to offline television. Instead, their preference goes to online television. Watching back-up videos over and over and freedom of exposure can be the expected reasons. As a result of these, it is very important for people in media industry, especially television stations to adaptability and flexibility in content and timeliness (source, year2011; Srihiran, 2016) as well as news selection (Srisarakarn, 2011; Treeyapiwat, 2013). The former scholar elaborated that whatever is publicly posted and communicated widespread, it is selected as news issue.

And that can impact on news production. It is important to systematically plan and follow and apply a communication theory to be used in a news production process. This contributes for television programmes and programme evaluation (Jitrapattananan, 2017). Conclusively, there are three main stages of news production as follows:

1) Audience planning targets to an analysis of target audience in terms of their demographics, lifestyle, and psychological factors. This can bring an understanding of their needs. Also, it should be remembered that target audiences are also an indicator of television programmes' success whether it can respond to the target audience's need. In short, it is rating (Intaratat & Boontawee, 2017).

2) Programme type includes programme type design, genre design, them design, storytelling, and presentation (Jittaprapan, 2013).

3) Implementation planning covers human resource management, equipment planning, venue management, budget management, air time, and the like.

Altogether with this, Treeyapiwat (2013) highlighted that social media have much effects on news process and news selection. In an overall picture, such situation is indicated by changes in consumer behaviour. In Thailand, the two current examples showing the ef-

ffects of social media are Deputy Prime Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan and his expensive watch and car hit in Seri Villa Village.

Recently, likewise, Dr Vanchai Danaitamonuch’s suicide on facebook live puts a question on general public’s minds about media roles and media ethics. Chotipitayasunan (2016) strongly commented how bad it is when the victim’s relatives and children are exposed to the circumstance. Rating and profits can be the good explanations, though. Referring to Nielsen surveying popularity on news digital television channels between 19 and 25 March 2018, it is found that that while 33HD is of highest popularity; it is vice versa for TNN24. The following figure shows the rating of Thai digital television stations in a greater detail.

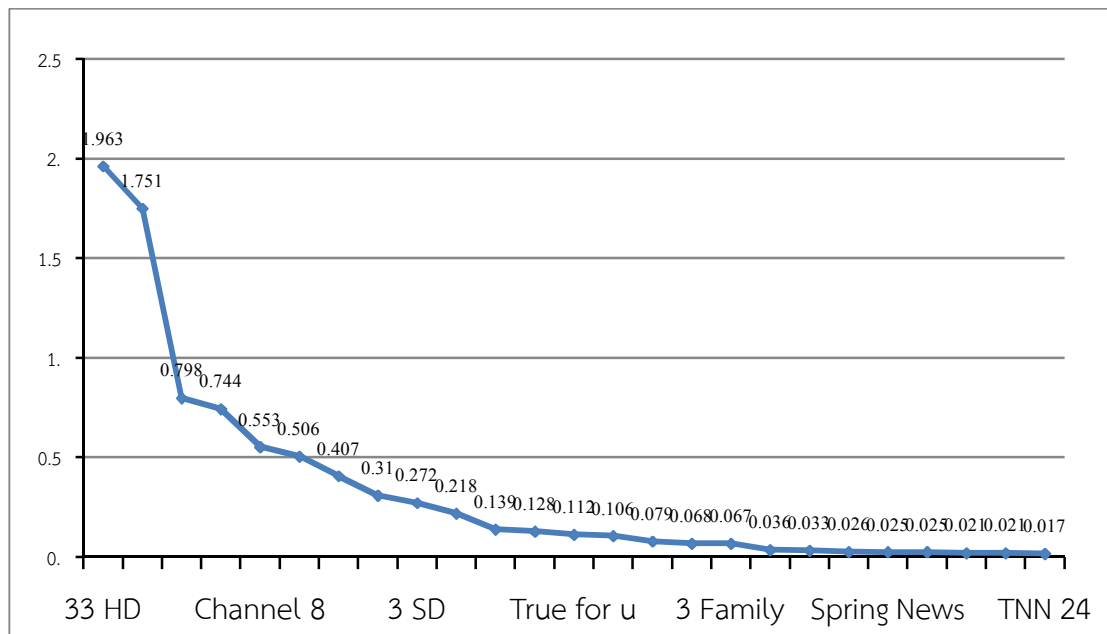


Figure 1 Thai digital television stations rating

Source: The National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission (2018)

Nowadays, digital media, conclusively, play an important role in our daily lives. The media power does not limit not to offline media only. There is an emergence of personalised platform (Kerdwiboonvej, 2015). According to Poovatis (2017), it is revealed that Facebook, Google+, Twitter are such good sources of information. Although social media welcome people for freedom of expression and immediacy, it is under critics because social effects are not thoughtfully considered. Although, today, it is an interactive, two-way communication that allows mass media and people working together. Nonetheless, correctness and credibility are critical.

Consequently, media ethics are a tool that controls media’s practices, responsibility, and professionalism so that social contribution can be generated. There are four main ethics media persons should concern, i.e. 1) correctness, 2) neutrality and transparency, 3) privacy and legitimacy, and 4) avoidance of conflict (Srisarakarn, 2014).

As a result of these, the study targeted to examining news selection, media roles, and media ethics in the light of digital television news.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine news selection in the light of digital television news.
2. To study media roles in the light of digital television news.
3. To explore media ethics in the light of digital television news.

Scope of the research

The scope of this was limited to studying three issues, i.e. news selection, media roles, and media ethics in the sights of mass media persons, especially and particularly those who were working in Thai Public Broadcasting Service, Thairath TV, and Bangkok Broadcasting Television Channel. They were asked for providing the information, knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on news selection, media roles, and media ethics.

Methodology

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with three important key informants including Mr Noppadol Srihathai, Executive Editor Thai Public Broadcasting Service; Mrs Somrudee Yeethong, Manager Editor Thairath TV; and Ms Chutiwadi Thongnak, Editor Bangkok Broadcasting Television Channel 7. A series of questions were consisted of two main sections, i.e. policy about news selection and adaptability of media persons in the light of digital era. The latter question covered adaptability of media persons in news selection and production in the light of digital era; news production process; news selection criteria; news format, sequence, and content; effects of digitalisation on news selection; media roles; news reporting; benefits of digitalisation; and media ethics.

Results

Following to the research questions, the results were descriptively reported in two main sections, i.e. news selection in the light of digital television and media roles and media ethics in the emergence of digital television.

News selection in the light of digital television

We shall start our first session of news selection in the light of digital television with a diagram showing a news selection process in the light of digital television.

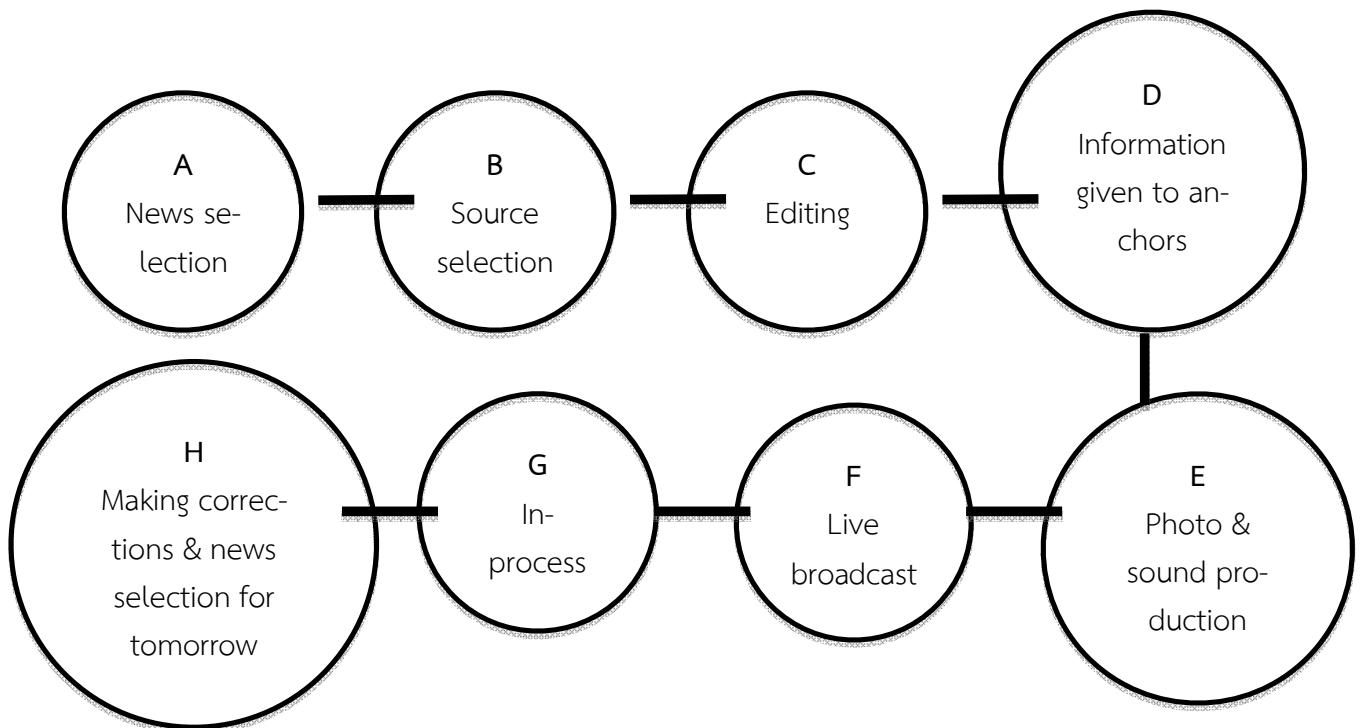


Figure 2 A news selection process in the light of digital television

A. News selection

Thai PBS, Channel 7, and Thairath TV shared their similarity in news selection process. Unfortunately, issues to be published were differently selected. Comparing between these three television channels, issues posted on social media were exceptionally prioritised in the sight of the commercial-oriented television channels, i.e. Channel 7 and Thairath TV. While Channel 7 focused more on crime and social news, general news that could attract the audience was the target of Thairath TV. In contrast to this, Thai PBS gave a lesser attention to what was happening in social media. It paid attention to quality news rather its counterparts whose focus was on soft news.

B. Source selection

The three television channels were structured and divided into offline and online. News clips were predominantly distributed on Facebook and YouTube. Apart from these two major social media, Thairath TV also utilised Instagram and Twitter as the main voice of the channel. In relation to A. News Selection, since Thai PBS was concerning with facts and truth, its information source was not taken from comments shared and posted on all kind of media or, so-called secondary data. Instead, the channel directly conducted a phone interview with the information source.

In contrast, Channel 7 and Thairath TV published what attracted people and was shared and posted on social media directly. They agreed on the importance of asking permission for publications.

C. Editing

Editing process should be finished three hours, prior to being aired. Thai PBS and Channel 7 shared the similar editing structure, i.e. editors, reporters, and producers were giving details to and working directly with editing staff so that mistakes could be avoided. Nonetheless, in the case of Channel 7, it was the responsibility of reporters and producers in communicating with editing staff.

D. Information given to anchors

This was an important stage. The anchors should understand what they had to convey to the audience. Otherwise, misunderstanding and incorrect understanding among the audience could be the expected results.

In practice, anchors from Thairath TV and Channel 7 were directly working with editors for getting details and discussion. More importantly, however, for Thai PBS, anchors should have a meeting with editorial board and, for greater information, they could contact with reporters directly.

E. Photo and sound production

For Thai PBS, it was the responsibility of producers and photo and sound production staff for correct sequences. As for Channel 7, only producers were playing such a photo and sound production role. In terms of Thairath TV, altogether with photo and sound production staff, producers and reporters were making this duty.

F. Live broadcast

Offline and online broadcast was implemented in all these three stations. They underlined the importance of dual system broadcast that interactivity, one-to-many communication, and real-time communication with the audience could obviously be foreseen.

These showed both offline and online sub-channels of Thai PBS, Channel 7, and Thairath TV. For Thai PBS, this included digital Channel 3, www.thaipbs.or.th, Facebook live on Thai PBS and Thai PBS PLAY page, and back-up videos over the internet from www.thaipbs.com. In terms of Channel 7, it was digital Channel 35, www.ch7.com and www.mediastudio.co.th, back-up videos over the internet from www.ch7.com, www.mediastudio.co.th, and Outstanding News Channel 7 (*Pradendet Jet See*) and Morning at Morchit (*Chao Nee Tee Mor Chit*) pages. As for Thairath TV, digital Channel 32, www.thairath.co.th, Thairath facebook page, and back-up videos over the internet from www.thairath.co.th, Thairath facebook page, and Thairath Youtube channel could be consumed.

G. In-process monitor

While being aired, it was important for the television stations to check ‘have your voice’ messages. The source of checking information and details was newscenter, field reporters, and online news source for Thai PBS, online news source, Line application, and reporters for Channel 7, and Thairath Online, field reporters, newscenter, and Facebook pages for Thairath TV.

H. Making corrections & news selection for tomorrow

All of these three digital television stations shared their similarities in the process of making corrections and news selection for tomorrow that incorrect news would be deleted and prohibited to reproduction and then expression of sorrow would be given by anchors.

Media roles in the light of digital television

In the digital era, conclusively, these were main media roles presented in this paper as follows:

- 1) Media persons still played an important role in distributing facts and information attracted by people. However, people’s posts or so-called journalist citizens became an important source of information.
- 2) News conveyed and distributed must be correct, factual, beneficial, and ethical.
- 3) There must be a shift in news and content production.

Media ethics in the light of digital television

Media ethics widely were under discussion. However, Thai PBS took into practice the Act of Thai Public Broadcasting Service, Channel 7 and Thairath applied the professional code of ethics and standards of professional conduct into consideration. Thai PBS also elaborated that the channel was really concerned on publishing sexual harassment news. Victims’ privacy was highly respected.

Discussion

The targets of this study were to study news selection, media roles, and media ethics in the light of digital television news in Thailand. The results revealed that these three media organisations shared their similarities in news selection by listening more on audience’s voices, media roles by training and skilling mass media persons to be responsible professionals, and media ethics. One outstanding shift in news selection and media roles was that information shared and posted by people could be a source of information nowadays. This was consistently with the study of Muandao (2014), currently, it was not mass media setting an agenda. It was the other way round, though. It was due to digitalisation. Digital platform

is more preferable (Kerdvibulvech, 2015) and it is the source of information and the space of expression (Phoovatis, 2017).

A few differences were, nonetheless, found, especially in rule and regulations practiced. In other words, whereas Thai PBS took into practice the Act of Thai Public Broadcasting Service, the rest of the digital television channels applied the professional code of ethics and standards of professional conduct into consideration. Especially, the issues of privacy and public space should highly be taken into practice (Phonwasi, 2010)

As a result, the ultimate goal of this paper is to encourage media persons to profoundly re-think their professional practices and professional codes of ethics while they are living and transforming themselves into the digital age.

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