An analysis of television news procedure of televistion stations by using social media in Thailand via ethical approach

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative ethical research aimed to analyze TV news broadcasted via two Thai television channels - Nation Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS). Using 'Unobtrusive' methods, the data were collected from print media such as annual project reports,news letters and social media such as reporters' blogs, reporters' facebook and youtube's news clips. The ethical analysis included the textual and contextual clues. The results showed that the channels implicitly stipulated 9 ethical violation issues in publicizing news through social media : 1) sneaky use of unauthorized accounts; 2) allowing others to use one's personal account to spread news; 3) spreading personal news as if it were broadcasted by a TV program or media organization; 4) no evident separation between fact and opinion; 5) spreading information of other person or organization in social media without reference; 6) showing prejudice in TV news reports; 7) reporting news in the way that caused damage to others; 8) reporting false news or distorting the fact; 9) reporting news that infringed the privacy right of others.

Keywords: news reporting, social media, ethical analysis, TV channel

Introduction

Currently, social media, such as Facebook.com, Twitter.com etc. have very important roles in daily communication of people. The relationships between friends can develop to be relationships in groups or between groups and expand to be the relationships that connect people around the world. In the aspect of journalism, the wave of borderless news society and the development of information and communication technology which can send and receive information instantly without limitation in time and distance influence the practice in news reporting of the journalists and change ways people consume news. Journalists and people receive and send news via the Internet more and more, especially through social media, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Popularity of Social Networking Web Sites in December 2011 (Barket, Melissa and others 2013, p.2)

Social Media Site	Category	Monthly Visitors (millions)[1]	Google Page Rank[2]	Alexa Global Traffic Rank[3]
Facebook	Social Network	700	9	2
Youtube	Video Sharing Site	450	9	3
WikiPedia	Wiki-based Encyclopedia	350	8	6
Twitter	Microblogging Site	200	9	9
WordPress	Blog Hosting Site	150	9	93
Linkedin	Social Network	100	9	13
Flickr	Photo Sharing Site	90	9	36
MySpapce	Social Network	80.5	8	124
Photobucket	Photo Sharing Site	75.5	7	143
Blogger	Blog Hosting Site	75	9	7
eHow	Article Directory	55	7	149
Digg	Social News Site	25.1	8	190

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[1] Estimated from the number of visitors in each month by eBiz/MBA inc.

[2] Scores were given by Google by estimating from the number of links from Google to the social networking web site. The score given was in the range of 0-10 meaning that 10 is the highest important and 0 is not important at all.

[3] Scores were given from the traffic data accessed by Alexa Toolbar users and other news assessing tools by score criteria of 1 meaning heaviest traffic data

Table 2: The Number of Users of Social Networking Web Site surveyed on May 24, 2013 by The Realtime Report | Business on the social, mobile and realtime web:RLTM

Social Media Sites	Number of Members
Facebook:	More than 1 billion users
Twitter:	More than 500 million users
Qzone:	More than 599 million users a month
Sina Weibo:	More than 400 million users
Renren:	More than 170 million users
VK:	More than 190 million users
LinkedIn:	200 million users
Google Plus:	More than 135 million users a month
Tumblr:	110 million blogs
Instagram:	100 million users
Tagged:	More than 20 million users a month
Foursquare:	Almost 30 million users
Pinterest:	More than 25 million users
Reddit:	More than 70 million visitors a month

Table 3: Number of Facebook Users in the World Surveyed on February 22, 2013 by socialbakers

Number of Facebook Users in the World		
No.	Country	Number (million)
1	The United Stattttes	163.07
2	Brazil	66.55
3	India	61.50
4	Indonesia	47.17
5	Mexico	39.95
6	Turkey	32.44
7	The United Kingdom	32.18
8	The Philippines	30.09
9	France	25.31
10	German	25.06
11	Italy	23.03
12	Argentina	20.40
13	Thailand	18.20
14	Canada	18.00
15	Colombia	17.69

Table 4: Number of Facebook Users in Thailand Surveyed on February 22, 2013 by socialbakers

Facebook Users in Thailand						
Year in B.E.	2551	2552	2553	2554	2555	2556
Number of Users (Million)	0.17	1.96	6.73	13.28	17.47	18.20
Rank in the world	27	23	21	16	15	13
Increase compared to previous year (%)		1,063.80	242.89	97.18	31.60	4.18
Total number of users in 2551-2554 (end of year) 2555 (October 29) and 2556 (Feb 22)						

Table 5: Number of Facebook Users in the Top-ten cities ranked from highest to low survey on February 22, 2013 by Thaibbclub.com

No.	City	Country	Number of Users
1	Bangkok	Thailand	12,797,500
2	Jakarta	Indonesia	11,658,760
3	Sao Paolo	Brazil	8,791,700
4	Istanbul	Turkey	8,325,860
5	Mexico City	Mexico	7,743,220
6	Bogota	Columbia	6,958,200
7	London	United Kingdom	6,811,680
8	Mumbai	India	5,926,980
9	Buenos Aires	Argentina	5,473,060
10	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	5,062,320

From Table 1 to Table 5, it can be concluded that the social networking media that most people use in the world is Facebook. The country that people use Facebook the most is the USA. Thailand is ranked number 13. When counting only in the capital city, Bangkok is ranked number 1 in the world.

For Thailand, the use of social media related to news reporting designated as the policy started at the Nation Television first. Then, it expanded widely when there were protests and political demonstrations with violence occurred to the protestors and government officers in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, in April 2553. After that, news reporters used social media wider, especially the use of Twitter. It is up-to-the-minute, and additional news data could be added which is different from the mainstream media. This made social media in the process of news reporting to have more roles in the television circles. This has attracted the intention of the researcher to study 1) whether roles of social networking in the process of news reporting affect the changes in the process of news reporting before using social networking. If so, in which way, and 2) whether the use of social media in news reporting had any effects on mass communication ethics.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the use of social media in the process of news reporting by Thai television stations
2. To analyze the working processes of news reporting by Thai television station in the aspect of journalism ethics

Methodology

This research was a qualitative study. It used the data collection method that did not involve the informants. It was the non-participative method. There were not any interactions between the researcher and the informants. The data was collected from information sources such as interviews reports from the newspapers, journals, social media, line program, research articles, etc. This is called the unobtrusive method (Liamputtong, 2013). The selection of evidence was done with the criteria related to content on the social media in the working process of mass media journalists in the category of television news reporting that were aired from the sources during 2012-2013 by the professional television stations in Thailand. The researcher also collected data from related literature issued by higher education institutions in Thailand which had programs in mass communication. The data for this study consisted of the following materials.

1. There were documentation sources which were obtained from the research in books, journal, theses, and related articles. The main documents was the Annual Report 2012 by the Thai Journalist Association which contained interviews with the personnel in television news reporting field who used social media as follow:
      1,1 Mr. Sutichai Yoon, editor-in-chief of Nation Group
      1.2 Mr. Noppatjak Attanon, Journalist at Nation Channel

2. The second source was video clips broadcast on Youtube.com. The clip was the event to discuss on the future of social media which was broadcast on Thai PBS station. The persons joining the discussion were:
      2.1 Wasan Paileeklee, Vice Chief Operational Officer of Thai PBS
      2.2 Korkhet Chantalertluk, Assistant director Thai PBS
      2.3 Chavarong Lempathapanee, association president news agency newspaper of Thailand
      2.4 Paiboon Amornpinyokeith, expert Law
      2.5 Nattha Komolvatin, Moderator of PBS
      2.6 Dr. Mana Treerayapiwat, Lecturer of department of mass communication,
      2.7 Srisuda Winitsuwan, IT Reporter of MCOT DOT NET

The Data Verification and Check

The researcher used data triangulation as the way to verify the data. This was done by studying and perusing documents from many sources. The documents were compared to see similarities and difference. If the sources show similarity, it could be validated.

Result of the Study

1) Social Media in the Process of News Reporting on Television Station

Before discussing the process of news reporting by social media as the tool, the researcher would like to mention the process of traditional news reporting before using social media. The traditional process starts with dispatching a reporter to the scene to send the news back to the editor. There are news selection by the gate keeper and agenda setting before disseminating the news to the consumers as shown this communication model (Adapted from Sakulsri Srisarakam, 2012).
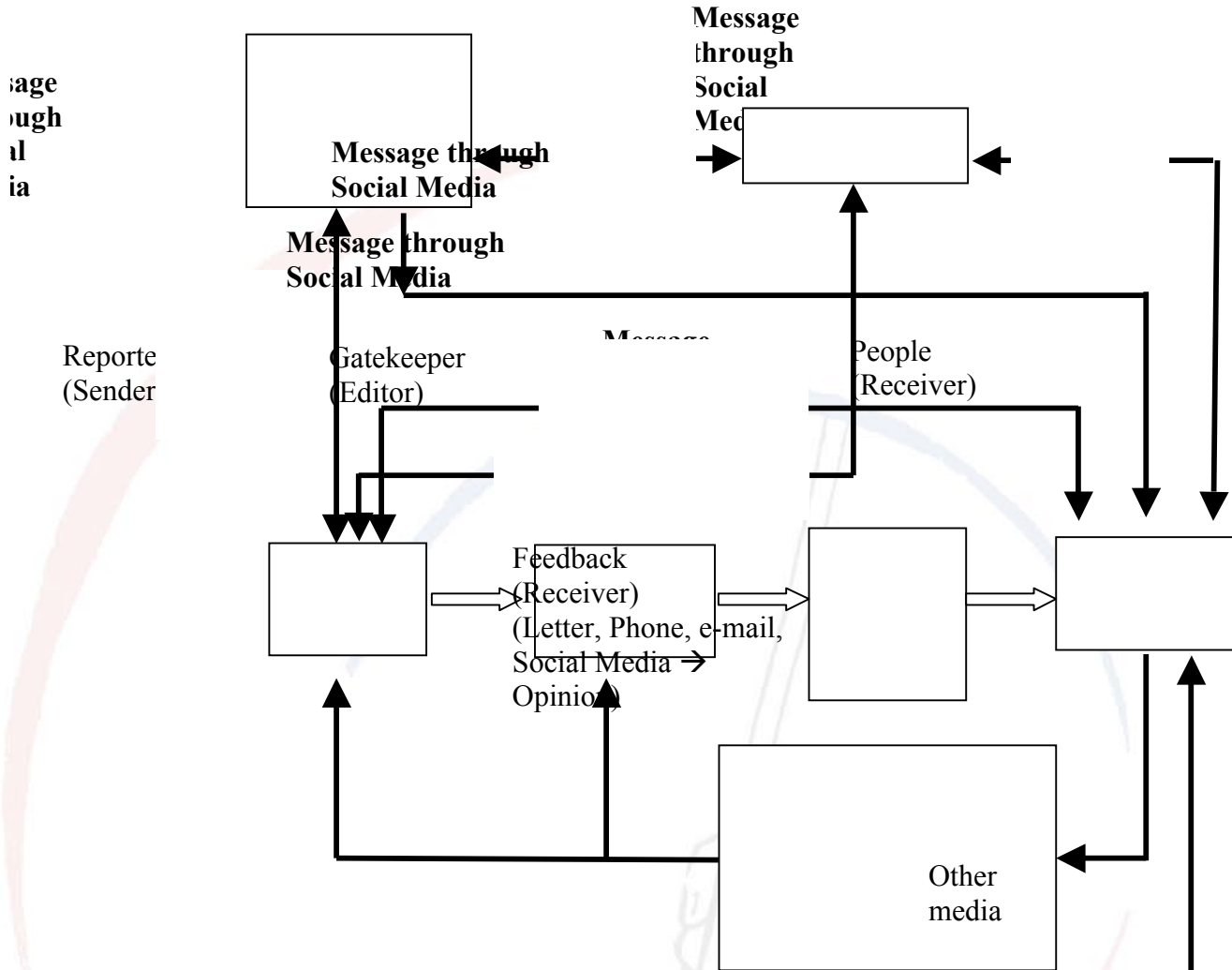
Figure 1: Model of News Reporting of Mass Media
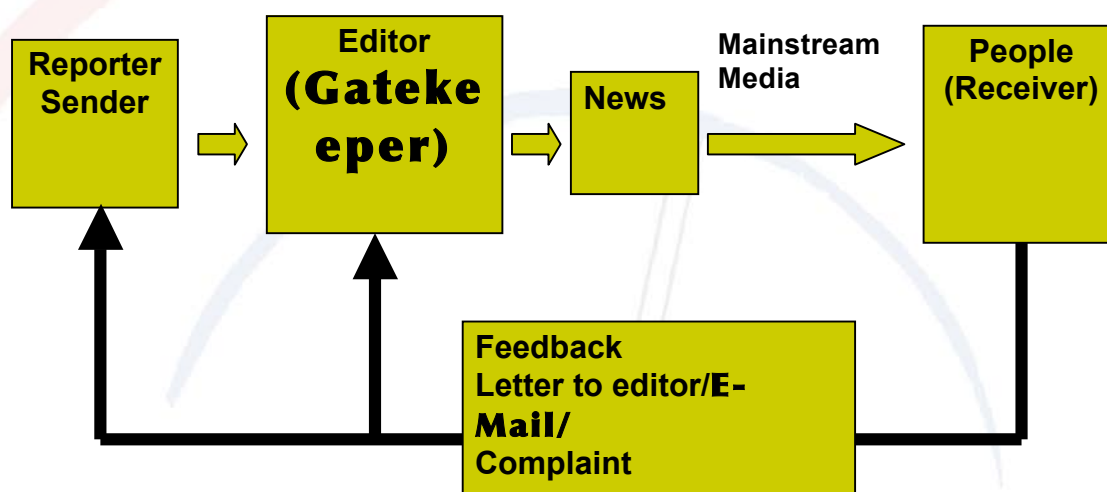
From Figure 1, the traditional news reporting started with the reporter who sends the message. Before sending the message, he/she must produce the content. The content passes small processes such as collecting facts about the news issue, arranging the issues, and passes it on to the editor. The editor works as a gate keeper. He/she screen the stories and prioritize them by selecting news to send to the receivers. The factor in news filtering and selecting depends on the policy of the news organization. In this traditional news report, the editor is the most important because he or she makes a decision on what the society will learn from the news. He/she also designates what is more important and what is less important by presenting it via the frequency and quantity of news through mainstream media such as newspaper, journal, magazine, radio, and television to the receivers.

Using Social Media for News Reporting

In the last 2-3 years, there have been academic studies on the use of social online media for work in journalism in Thailand. For example, the researcher of Suthita Raungronghiranya focuses on administration of news reporting by social networking media. In 2011, the research by Sakulsri Srisarakam was conducted on the social media and the changes of news reporting. In 2012, a thesis by Chuenpajee Klaunklad centered on using twitter in the news producing process by Nation Chanel. In 2011, an independent study by Siriwan Makorkiat studied the Nation Social Media: a Strategy of Social Media in the National Channel New Organization. From these studies, the researcher could come up with a model showing the relationship between social online media and the news reporting process of mass media as follow.

Citizen
Journalism/
Direct Source/
Indirect Source

**Message
through
Social
Media**

Crowdsourcing

**Message
through
Social
Media**

Figure 2, the Model Representing News Reporting Process of Mass Media

**Message
through
Social
Media**

**Message through
Social Media**

**Message through
Social Media**

Reporter
(Sender)

Gatekeeper
(Editor)

People
(Receiver)

Message

Feedback
(Receiver)
(Letter, Phone, e-mail,
Social Media →
Opinion)

Other
media

From the model showing relationship between social media and news reporting process of the mass media, it was found that the process of using social media to report news was more complicated than the process of news reporting in the traditional model. That is the reporter exchanged and share news matters with citizen journalists. Citizen journalists are people who were in the news situations. They might have some issues related to the news, or they might be the direct source that the news reporters know. They might even be the persons who know the event from a witness (indirect source). These people send, exchange, and share news. They also express opinion on the news matters through online social media such as blog, fan page, Facebook, and Twitter of the reporter.   In the mean time, the reporters themselves might contact the source or collect the news data from blog, Facebook, and twitter accounts of the sources.

The reporter not only gets the news from citizen journalists, direct source, and indirect source but also get the news from crowd sourcing. This attracts collaboration and wisdom from people who use the online social media to help solve the problems together in the form of interaction such as comments and public opinions by clicking the like button, share, tweet, retweet, and tag in Facebook and twitter in the form of graphic, pictures which is the virtual community. Crowd sourcing occurs everywhere,

every time, and with all people who join the social online media such as news reporters, citizen journalists, direct source, indirect source, and even the receivers who are the consumers of news.

After the reporters has the news matter ready for sending, social media increase the channel of communication for the reporters. That is the news can be sent via the social media directly by not having to pass the editorial, which is different from the traditional news reporting. Using social media to report news can speed up the process. The information is up to the minute and timely. However, this type of news contains errors because the editor did not have a chance to filter the content. The news may lack accuracy and objectivity because it might have biases from the reporter's opinion and lack of balance and fairness. The reporter did not intend for this to happen, but because of limitation in the nature of the new media especially in the news spaces, such as the limitation of only 140 characters in Twitter. This process of news reporting is a tool that helps the other similar processes of traditional news reporting. It is different in that social media can collect feedbacks which are written in the form of comments sent to the reporter or other news organizations affiliated. The fact that receivers of news via from social online media can use the media to express opinions to the reporters and news organizations can help reporters and news organizations to evaluate their efficiency easier and faster.

2) The Analysis of Work in News Reporting of Thai Television Stations on the Aspect of Ethics

From the source of information gathered by the researcher, it could be concluded that reporters express ethical issues related to the work of news report of television programs in three areas as follow.

Ethic in using social media as a technical tool for news reporting

1) Reporters used the username and password of others in the news via social media. This made the sources or public misunderstand characters of the news informants.
2) Reporters who own username and password gave the username and password to others to work in social media news reporting. This made sources or public misunderstand the characters of the informants.
3) Reporters spread information through social media on their own first. The affiliated organization of the media reporters did not know and receive information from reporters afterwards.

Ethics in obtaining news via social media

1) Is it accurate? Do the sources know well and provide real information to reporters or not? Information about the same topic came from multiple data sources are consistent or not.

2) Are they reliable? Is it a rumor or not? Reporters have a review process for the accuracy of the information or not, such as a check for the existence of the person and locations that appeared in the messages that have been said to exist. Informants hide names, surnames, photos or not. If the reporter can confirm the identity of the data source, it is a reliable source of information than those who do not reveal their identity.

3) Is it well-round? The reporters have gathered information from all sources related to the issues or not. The offenders and the victims is affected or not. Government officials and private sector were directly related to the other party witnesses, etc. or not.

4) Is it up to date? Check with other sources produced in the same period, or a different period. Check to see if data are more current than other sources or not. The data is different in detail or not.

5) Is privacy protected? Is there a protection of the information source of the news or not?

Ethics in the Dissemination of News via Social Media

1) Correctness. The information published came from sources in all aspects or not. It was presented as fact without any bias or not.

2) Reliability. Information published, journalists can tell the source of the information available or not. Sources of information must disclose their identity to recipients to be recognized and accessed. Information posted to social media must show name initials, symbol of the corporate media, and name-last name of the reporters clearly along with communication channels to get feedback.

3) No infringement of right. If the information published through the social media was taken from other media coverage, the reporters must cite the source of information. Or, if possible, ask for permission from the owner first. If the data owner is deceased, reporters should ask relatives of the deceased before publishing such information.

4) Do not cause damage to anybody. That is if the disclosure of information impact negatively on the professional reputation of and individual, whether that person is alive or dead, or have a negative impact on the organization, it must not be reported. If any violations cause damages, adhere to the interests of society and nation primarily.

5) Do not cause despise between societies. Do not incite violence that could lead to conflict and corruption of people in society.

6) There are separations between facts and opinion in presenting information.

7) No violation of human rights of those at issue in the news. In particular, information about children's rights, women's precarious information that indicate pornography, fear, and violence.

Conclusion

The advent and the development of effective social media up to now have made communication fast and convenient. Social media have influences on human communication in everyday life and on the work of the press. At present, the media have adjusted and used online communication channels to communicate with consumers. Many media companies chose to step into the news space by using social media to gather information in order to create news issues and use social media to

check accuracy and reliability of the received messages. The social media are very diverse, whether it is Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc. The process of using social media is more complicated than the traditional news media. It is the two-way process of communication that occurs rapidly and is instantaneously dynamics. The power to determine the agenda is not from reporters or editorial anymore, but it comes from the people who act as citizen journalists. Citizens are direct sources and are indirectly involved in setting the agenda for the whole society. The use of social media in society makes people who are interested in the same subjects be able to discuss any issues, share knowledge, and understand each other as well as bring issues and views in the news media to link to other receivers.

Suggestions

1. Corporate media that adopt social media for news reporting should have a policy in the use of social media so that the personnel of organization is committed to practice to reduce work problems and conflicts in the workplace.

2. Journalists who use social media should be aware of ethical issues in communication, namely the accuracy and reliability of the data. The presentation of information in social media that spread immediately without screening is different traditional editorial. This can cause the material presented to lacks accuracy, objectivity, and balance and fairness that the reporter did not intend to happen due to the limitation in the nature of new media.

3. Reporting news via social media need the differentiation between facts and opinions of reporters.

4 Reporters should cautiously report the news media which may lead to violation of privacy, human dignity, and the rights of children by not presenting inappropriate graphic, obscenity, violent language use and violent visual presentation.

5 Processes for news gathering by social media should be done carefully and should check carefully in every aspect with the reference sources of news presentation unless it can be verified according to sources directly.

6 If comments made through social media contain errors causing damages to any party or other organizations, reporters need to perform text editing or correct the problem promptly. The reporter must show a personal apology to organization that has been damaged.

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