

## The Development of Major Thai Mass Media from the Central to the Northeast Region of Thailand

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the development of major Thai mass media in the Northeast Region through the lens of timeline. The timeline of media development can be divided into six periods basing on the historical events of country. Documentary research and semi-structured interview was conducted in this research. The research findings revealed that the development of major Thai mass media from the Central to the Northeast Region of Thailand is significantly different. It also found that media development in Thailand is likely to shrink.

**Keywords:** Development of Major Thai mass media, Central Region, and Northeast Region

### 1. Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many people around the world have found themselves living in a media-dominated environment where newspaper, radio, television, and internet enveloped them on a daily basis [1]. Current levels of media consumption have been described as a raging torrent that has overwhelmed daily life for citizens in Asian countries, especially Thailand. Several Thai scholars revealed that media consumption among Thai people greatly expanded with the rapid diffusion of new technology such as satellites, mobile phone, computers, the Internet, and cable services [2]; [3]; [4].

According to the topography of Thailand, the northeast region is regarded as the biggest region with the largest number of people of the country

[2]. After the end of the Second World War, the northeastern way of life has been rapidly changed along with the launch of First National Development Plan (1961-1966). During that time, the mass media became the index and agent of modernization for national development. The latest survey in 2008 reported that 96.6 per cent of the northeasterners were mostly expose television while 48.6 per cent and 38.2 per cent respectively, listen to radio and read newspapers [5].

Based on the latest survey in 2008, it is believed that the northeasterners, nowadays, are likely to access and use a wide variety of media outlets. Nevertheless, Yongvanit's study in Doon Sard sub-district, Khon Kaen revealed that 62.1 per cent of people [6], especially those of middle age, did not read newspapers and over 92.7 per cent had never used the Internet. The implication of this finding indicated that the timeline of media development from the Central to the Northeast Region is likely to differ. Similarly, numerous communication scholars both Western and Asian mentioned that the first newspapers, as the first medium in the world, appeared in Germany, France, and Belgium in 1600 while Asian countries, especially Thailand merely emerged in 1844 [7]; [8]. That is to say that the journey of newspapers from the West in 1600 to Thailand in 1844 spent approximately two hundred forty four years. Additionally, the review of the state of knowledge of the media development in Thailand indicated that no prior studies were conducted to investigate the development of major Thai mass

media in the Northeast region. Consequently, it provides a good opportunity for the researcher to investigate the following objective of the study.

## 2. The Objective of the Study

1. To explore the development of major Thai mass media from the Central to the Northeast Region.

## 3. Methodology

To test the above objective of the study, the qualitative method is used for exploring the bird's-eye view of the development of major Thai mass media.

### 3.1 Sample

The purposive sampling technique is used for selecting key informants. *The well-informed persons in Northeast Region* comprised of a Senior Broadcast Specialist in Khon Kaen Province, the Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education, the First Voice Actor in the Northeast Region and the First Newspaper Distributor. Those people were selected because they have been involved with mass media more than forty-five years. The information gained by these interviews is quite valid and reliable resulting in maximizing the chances of uncovering insights into the overall picture of the development of communication.

### 3.2 Data Collection Instrument

Qualitative methodology composes of two methods: documentary research and semi-structured interview. Interview Questions will be designed to cover the development of communication from the Central to the Northeast Region.

### 3.3 Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among the well-informed persons in the Northeast Region. The interviews took place in November and December 2011. Participants were interviewed in person by the primary researcher with a variety of questions. The questions can be adjusted according to how the interviewee responds and can offer

probing and follow-up questions in order to stimulate the interviewee's responses. The interview is approximately fifty minutes in length. The location of the interview was determined by each participant. All interviews were audio-taped. The material will be used to generate the interview transcripts. Prior to identifying the interviewee in this article, the interviewer must gain permission from the interviewee. After the interview, an incentive in the form of a gift was given to all participants for their participation.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

All raw material data obtained by these interviews will be translated into English by using the method of back translation. Subsequently, it was read by means of interpretation, constant comparison, data synthesis and conclusion.

## 4. Results

Based on the content analysis, it was indicated that the development of major Thai mass media from the Central to the Northeast Region is significantly different. In order to understand the differences, the description of media development will begin from the Central region followed by the Northeast Region as follows:

### 4.1 The development of major Thai mass media in Central Thailand

The development of major Thai mass media in Central Thailand is studied through the lens of timeline involving the historical events of country. It can be classified into six main periods as follows:

Firstly, prior to the Siamese Revolution 1932, it was revealed that a printing press using Thai script was set up in Thailand in 1832, during the reign of King Nangklao and used to publish 9,000 copies of a royal decree banning opium consumption. It was the first official document that was printed and produced by the new printing technology [9]. On 4 July 1844, during the reign of King Mongkut, Dr. Dan Bradley, an American Medical Missionary, published Thailand's

first newspaper known as the Bangkok Recorder. The bulk of its content related to official news, trade news, miscellaneous stories, documentaries and news from the United States. It operated for over a year until it folded due to a French Consul suit. However, the Bangkok Recorder was resurrected together with the Siam Weekly Monitor. It was during this time that the ‘elite’, who had obtained a high level of education from overseas, realized that the content of the print media owned by Westerners was likely to propagandize and dominate its audience’s attitude and behavior. As a result, the Royal Gazette or Rajkitchanubeksa was launched in order to announce the court news and to break the Westerners monopoly of news propagation. During the reign of the next King, Chulalongkorn (1868), the increase in Colonial expansion by European powers was the crucial cause leading to the reforms in bureaucracy and provincial administrative and to the development of infrastructure such as transportation, irrigation, communication and telecommunication systems. Most importantly, a modern education system was introduced into Thai society. This resulted in higher literacy and education among commoners, increased trade with foreign countries, and widespread political ideology in line with the Western Concept. It also included a rapid increase in the numbers of the journals and newspapers [9]; [10].

The media industry grew at a fast rate not only during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, but also during the reigns of King Vajiravudh and King Prachadhipok. It was called *the Golden Age of Thai Journalism* because the writers and journalists could express and criticize their political views freely. Under the trend of the democracy ideology, King Prachadhipok realized that freedom of expression and the indoctrination of democracy for Thai people were important. As a consequence, public radio broadcasts were inaugurated on 25th February 1930, the Coronation Day of the seventh King. Its initial mission was

to provide news of commerce, entertainment, and education for tradesmen and commoners. Nevertheless, the Khana Rassadawn coup d’état of June 24, 1932 ended the absolute monarchy and halted press freedom [10].

Secondly, after the end of the Siamese Revolution 1932, the administration encountered with the resistance from the royalists and in-fight among members of the People’s Party themselves. More than 90 per cent of Thai people had no idea as to what the constitution was. It also included rumors in the remote areas that Constitution was a son of Phraya Phahon Pholphayuhasana. As a result, the Publicity Division set up a lecturing unit in order to disseminate knowledge toward people through various medium such as newspaper, radio, billboard, leaflets, and mobile public relations unit, and various pictures of the constitution. The Northeast Region was the prototype for the operation due to the Bovorndej Rebellion. Professor Pairoj Jayanama, Director-General of the Publicity Department, reported that the lecturing unit traveled to all districts and tried to reach all major sub-districts [9]; [10].

Thirdly, the systematic use of broadcast media to publicize politics began in the period of the Second World War led by Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram. It found that radio broadcast had played the most significant role to distribute the news into general public in the period of wartime. Unfortunately, most of the political media messages propagandized the slogans of nation building and leader cult such as ‘Believe in the leader and nation will be saved from danger’ and ‘Have faith in Pibulsonggram, the nation will survive. As for culture, new trends were promoted to present Thailand as a modernizing country. It launched a set of twelve cultural mandates including knowing the national anthem, speaking the national language, dressing in a western fashion and so forth [11]; [10]. After the end of the Second World War, Television broadcasting, one of the most powerful

media, was introduced and affirmed on the national agenda in 1950 by the regime of Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram. The political situation became the significant factor that made television broadcasting technology become more meaningful for the Thai government. During that time, the government was unstable due to the inception of authority under a coup d'état backup, which caused much resistance from the opposition. Furthermore, the government was unable to control the press. Television, a new medium, played the crucial role in supporting the political status of Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram. However, his political power was ended when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat revolted on September 17, 1957.

Fourthly, a gloomy age for Thai Mass Media began when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat declared martial law, suspended the constitution and imposed press controls. Regrettably, fourteen newspapers were closed down due to extreme criticism from the Revolutionary Party. The authorities arrested hundreds of opposition politicians and journalists who were thought likely to be involved with communists. Article 17 of the 1959 Constitution authorized the prime minister to repress and suppress mass media under the discourse that it jeopardized national security. Sittirak further explained that Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat realized that television broadcasts played the significant role in publicizing the government's policies and current affairs to the public [11]. Also, Channel 4 'Bang Kun Phrom' established on 24 June 1955 was attracting more and more interest. Because of this, the Royal Thai Army launched Thailand's second television station, Channel 5, on Thai Army Day, 5th January 1959 and expanded Radio and Television networks to all regions in line with the accelerated development programs for the country. After Sarit's death in late 1963, his successor Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn continued the military dictatorship until the Student Revolution of October 14, 1973 [12].

Fifthly, although major Thai mass media once more obtained the Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression after the end of the Student Revolution of 14 October 1973, it ended with the Massacre of 6 October 1976. In that period of time, mass media, especially television broadcast, was regarded as the crucial variable of national development. On 9th April 1977, Channel 9 was established with the goal of disseminating news and information, fostering greater understanding among citizens and contributing to national development. Channel 11, an Education TV Station, had emerged on 11th July 1988 and aired the Ramkhamhaeng and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open Universities distance education programs. Also, the Cabinet endorsed a satellite education project in co-operation with the THAICOM foundation to support the utilization of modern communication and information technologies for educational purposes [13].

The Internet in Thailand began in mid-1987, when the Prince of Songkla University and the Asian Institute of Technology started the Thai computer Science Network (TCSNet) via an electronic mail connection with the University of Melbourne. The Ministry of Science's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) initiated the Inter-University Network Project in 1991, which it used with the major Universities in Bangkok such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Kasetsart. In 1993, Thai Scientific, Academic and Research Network (ThaiSarn) established the country's first World Wide Web server. A year later, the Internet Thailand Service Center, was the first commercial service, beginning by publicizing newspaper articles through the internet and then followed by the music industry, television & film industry [5].

Lastly, the struggle for freedom of the Press and the Right of people to know emerged among the Thai middle classes after the Bloody Crisis of May 17-18, 1992. The voice for media reform from both

public and media sectors became louder and louder until it eventually generated the establishment of Independent Television (iTV) in 1996 and the guarantee of Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Press in the Constitution of 1997. Nevertheless, the deterioration of Thai mass media has increased rapidly and drastically from the first election of the Thaksin government to today. Due to preferential privatization policies, the government transformed the Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT), Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT), and Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT) into the private sector. Thai mass media's situation was likely to get worse when the Shinawatra family took over ITV and transferred the program content from *news* to *entertainment*. At the same time, twenty three reporters and editors were fired owing to their outcry of political interference in the newsrooms. Besides, it has been found that the Thaksin government used many methods to control the mass media. These were: open intimidation by using legal and bureaucratic investigation on media owners/editors assets, putting pressure on the newsroom, meddling with editorial independence and filing defamation lawsuits claiming extremely high amounts of compensation against critical papers. The ultimate economic measure would be buying up shares or taking over media corporations which resisted the government [14]; [15].

Even though the Thaksin government was overthrown on 19th September 2006 due to rampant corruption, abuse of power, media interference, and non-government organization interference, Thai mass media has been interfered with continuously and drastically by a further four governments in the context of the division of political viewpoint, that is those who supported and those who opposed the Former Prime Minister Thaksin and his government. Firstly, the Surayut government seized all television stations in Bangkok and censored political discussion

on the Internet and community radio. Secondly, state broadcast controlled by the Samak government became a political apparatus by presenting Son-Tha-Na-Pra-Sah-Samak and Truth Today television programs through the NBT channel. Thirdly, the Somchai government had continued to interfere in the media. Lastly, almost all channels for communicating among the red shirts and Thai society, the People's Channel, thousands of community radio stations and dozens of web sites were shut down even though Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva introduced a law to protect media professionals in order to ensure press freedom, non-interference and social responsibility.

Under the deterioration of major Thai mass media, the emergence of new forms of media technology - such as communication satellite, the office personal computer, laptop computers, the Internet, MP3 technology, Apple's iPod, DVD media player and all forms of digital media- became the five basic needs of Thai people. Information and Communication Technology pointed out that the number of internet users in Bangkok is the most (27.2%), followed by Central (22.2%), North (20.4), South (18.6), and Northeast Region (14.4) [5]. It also found that there are over 18 million in Thailand that use computers and internet. That is to say that Thai people have entered the digital world.

In conclusion, there are 80 private commercial newspapers, 20 Thai-language dailies, 2 English-language dailies, 2 Chinese-language dailies and 1 Muslim-language daily. In the broadcasting section, Television has 6 free-to-air terrestrial television stations, 8 regional stations, and 1 cable station. Free-to-air terrestrial television stations can be classified into two groups in terms of institutional setting. In the first group, State-run television stations comprise Channel 5 of the Army, Modernine TV of the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT) and NBT as an educational station of the Government Public Relations Department (PRD). Independent

Television (iTV) operated by Shin Corp under license from the Prime Minister’s Office was transferred to the Department of Public Relations in 2007 and renamed TITV. Later, the Central Administration Court mandated the transformation of TITV into Thai PBS on January 15, 2008. In the second group, the Bangkok Entertainment Company and the Bangkok Television Company operate Channel 3 and Channel 7 respectively as privately run state-owned stations.

As for radio broadcasting, 524 radio frequencies were available in Thailand. The PRD owned 147, followed by the army 127, MCOT 62, the Air Force 36, and the Navy 21 respectively. Meanwhile, the rest of them were owned by state universities and other agencies. Three agencies, the Military, PRD, and MCOT owned approximately 75 percent of the total radio frequencies. More than 460 stations are commercial, entertainment-oriented ones which rely heavily on advertising revenues.

#### **4.2 The development of major Thai mass media in the Northeast Region**

The development of major Thai mass media in the Northeast Region will be explained by using the same time-line as for the media development in the Central region.

Firstly, the development of modern communication in Central Thailand had begun to emerge in the Northeast Region prior to the Siamese Revolution of 1932. Under the pressure and stimulus of Western Colonization and the Franco-Siamese treaties of 1893 and 1904, King Chulalongkorn, Rama Five of the Chakri Dynasty, reformed the bureaucracy and provincial administrative system to be based on the concepts of the West and new technology, which is the linkage, by transportation networks and modern communications, to the Northeast Region. The construction of the first railway link to Nakhon Ratchasima was completed in 1900. Seven years later, The Post and Telegraph, a new and modern form of communication, was inaugurated officially at Nakhon Ratchasima in 1907 [16],[17].

Nevertheless, northeasterners’ communication has still been tied with the oral tradition that conveyed their ideology and social value system in the course of proverbs, tales, stories, lullaby songs, festivities, rituals and celebrations. It also embraced teaching through daily life such as weaving cloth, making handicrafts, and so forth. Moreover, scriptural tradition - such as palm leaf and stone inscriptions - played the significant role in conveying local stories and important events in a pattern of a literature. The majority of literature related to the five hundred former lives of the Buddha, historically important persons and historical-based events. Consequently, their communication was not merely a matter of things but it was the spirit of their ancestors who had previously lived and was handed on to their children from generation to generation [18].

Secondly, after the end of the Siamese Revolution in 1932, the government, led by People Party, attempted to disseminate knowledge and understanding about democracy through a wide variety of medium, especially mobile public relations units. Its main task was to reduce the lack of information in the remote areas. Nonetheless, the northeasterners were still exposed to the information that came from opinion leaders such as heads of villages, monks, and chief cattle sellers known as Nai Hoy. Similarly, a Senior Media Specialist said that *“we gain information from monks who study at Bangkok. When those monks come back to hometown, people living in surrounding areas will be going to visit monks in order to talk to and ask what we would like to know about Bangkok.”* He further explained that *“I had never known what mass media are, but I hear that we will, soon, listen to the people’s sound from the box. A few years later, it is truth; I see and listen to the radio at the house of the district chief officer.”*

Thirdly, although radio receivers appeared in the period of the Second World War (1940), they were

in particular for the use of governor, district chief officer and schools in the province. Radio waves were transmitted from Ayutthaya to Saraburi and from Saraburi to the Northeast Region. The majority of programming was national news aired by the National Broadcasting Service of Thailand. Senior Media Specialists further mentioned that print media, especially national newspapers had still not penetrated in to the Northeast Region, but a local newspaper appeared prior to the revolution on September 7, 1957. The most popular news among the northeasterners was of the government lottery.

Fourthly, the National Development 1958 - 1973 led by the military government was the *turning point* for media exposure in major Thai mass media. It was revealed that radio was the most popular in the Northeast Region, followed by newspapers. Daily newspapers were first transported from Bangkok to the Northeast Region by train in 1960. After the Friendship Highway road was finished, the newspapers were transported by ten-wheeled trucks. Thai Rath was the most popular, followed by Daily News, Siam Rath, Dao Siam, and Dali Mirror respectively. A Newspaper cost approximately one baht fifty satang. The majority of media content consisted of crime, sex, scandal and sport along with summaries of popular news, semi-nude pictures and entertainment news. Political news was hardly reported to the general public. This was the result of Article 17 of the 1959 Constitution that authorized the prime minister to repress and suppress mass media under the discourse that it jeopardized national security [9]. It was found that government officials, teachers, merchants, Kamnan and Puyaiban were likely to access the newspaper to a greater extent than the general public in the remote areas.

Additionally, the number of radio receivers was increasing continually after the expansion of the television and radio network. It was found that the radio was introduced into the villages together with

mobile cinema known as Rot Kai Ya. Radio's cost approximately 50-60 baht [18]. The First Voice Actor in the Northeast Region claimed that radio is the most popular, followed by mobile cinema. He further explained that when the villagers knew that Mobile Cinema would come to villages they were very glad. Almost all villagers in the community came to see the movie. While they waited to see the movie, the commercials continued until an amount of product had been sold. Nevertheless, Mobile Cinema gradually vanished in the Northeast Region when television emerged in 1960.

As for radio broadcast, the northeasterners could listen to both national and international radio stations. There were four main radio stations in Thailand being the National Broadcast Service of the Government Public Relations Department (PRD), Radio of the Royal Thai Army, Radio Broadcast Station 1 Po No of the Post and Telegraph Department, and the KU Radio Network of Kasetsart University. On the other hand, international radio stations - namely Moscow Radio, Peking Radio, Radio Hanoi, VOT, ABC, BBC, FEBC, Free Asia Radio Station, Laos Movement Radio, Radio of Kampuchea Radio and Voice of America - had been popular among the educated elite. This is because the military government presented only one sided messages regarding anti-communism through the national radio, especially the Radio Broadcasting Station 909 at Sakon Nakhon [18]. The Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education stated that the media messages of the international radio stations were translated into many languages such as Japanese, Cambodian, Indian, Burmese, Chinese, Malay and Dutch. The information aired by international radio stations actually helped audiences keep-up with the current issues and events in the society and the world. Also, it actually helped them understand the political situation of that time.

In 1962, the television network was expanded to all regions of the country. Black and white television

sets came to the Northeast Region through Chinese merchants. Very few people owned a television set because of the very high price, approximately 10,000 baht. In the Northeast Region, there was only TVT Channel 5, Khon Kaen. All of the programming was live and focused on entertainment programming such as Seeking Stars (Kon-Hah-Dow). Television programming would be aired during 18:00-21:00. A few years later, television programming changed from being live to being recorded. It was found that the most popular programming was local serial drama, Mohlam, boxing and movies from the United States, Japan and Hong Kong and also cartoons. After that, television stations increased the period of broadcast time, from 18:00-21:00 to 18:00-24:00.

Fifthly, in the period of the democracy movement, the media coverage in newspapers was more credible while the broadcast media - such as radio and television - were still a crucial mechanism of the government to publicize government policies.

Opinion leaders had mostly influenced the attitudinal and behavioral change in the Northeast Region. It was found that more than 90 per cent of northeasterners could access the radio, followed by newspapers and television (Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education, interview). Meanwhile, the Mobile Cinema was gradually vanishing in the Northeast Region due to the emergence of television. Radio programs still consisted of entertainment, government lottery, local news, national news, international news, sports news, religious and educational programs and agricultural features [10].

After the end of the Student Revolution of October 14, 1973, television channel 7 was the first channel penetrating into the Northeast Region, followed by channel 5, channel 9 and channel 3 respectively. Since the Massacre of 6 October 1976, television has succeeded, in a relatively short time, to enter every house. Its powers of persuasion and

attraction seem to be supernatural. In 1981, color television came to the Northeast Region along with transistor radio. Ten years later, computers emerged, in particular with the centralization of government officials. The Internet came in 1997. The educated people - namely government officials, teachers, students and business men - were the first group using computers and the Internet.

Lastly, after the end of the Bloody Crisis of May 17-18, 1992, the emergence of new forms of media technology - such as communication satellite, office personal computers, laptop computers, MP3 technology, Apple's iPod, DVD media players and all forms of digital media- allow the northeasterners to access a wide variety of media content and media outlets. However, Yongvanit's research [6] indicated that people in Doon Sard sub-district, Khon Kaen province do not use the internet and read newspapers while they do use television and radio on a typical day. Accordingly, the Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education pointed out that satellite television is, nowadays, the most popular, followed by community radio. As for the new media, some villagers have never used a computer or the Internet. They do not use them because the price is rather expensive and difficult to use while satellite costs approximately 2,000 baht and is easy to use. They can watch various television channels from both national and international television stations. As for radio broadcasts, community radio is rather popular because the media content involves them with local news, agricultural knowledge and I-San culture and tradition, and Mohlam.

In short, the findings are that difference in time-line of media development from the Central to the Northeast Region is likely to shrink resulting in the evolution of the advanced communication technology.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The research findings mentioned above provide the reasons for the development of major Thai mass media from the Central to the Northeast Region of country through the lens of the comparison between timelines. It can be classified into six main periods. *In the first period*, before the Siamese Revolution of 1932 there was the start-up of printing presses, especially newspapers. *In the second period*, radio broadcast was developed continually after the end of the Siamese Revolution in 1932. During that time, people in the Central region of country were exposed to information from both newspaper and radio broadcast while the northeasterners hardly obtained any information from outside due to the geographical limitations. It was also found that their communication within the community was still tied with the oral and scriptural tradition. *In the third period*, the radio broadcast was mostly popular among people in the Central region during the Second World War. On the other hand, Radio had just come to the Northeast Region. It was revealed that Radio was in particular found at the governor's house, district chief officer's house and schools in the province. Because of this, it is believed that a great number of the northeasterners, in the remote areas, did not know what radio was. *In the fourth period*, television had played the significant role and was mostly popular during the National Development. Meanwhile, all sectors of Thailand, especially northeasterners began to own radios. They also merely knew of television broadcasts. *In the fifth period*, there was the expansion of Thai mass media and the emergence of new media such as communication satellite, computer and the Internet during the Democracy Movement (1973-1992). It showed that people in the Central region were highly likely to have Satellite Television, Cable Television, Computers and Internet whereas television was mostly popular among the northeasterners. *In the last period*, that is to say, we are in the digital world.

Very few people in the Central region do not know of computers and the internet. Although the journey of all forms of digital media from the Central to the Northeast Region is faster, it is found that there are still some northeasterners who do not have access.

The analysis through the lens of time-line provides a bird's eye view of the media development. Moreover, the period of time that each medium reached the Northeast Region reflects that media development well. That is, in 1844, the first newspaper in Thailand emerged in Bangkok while the northeasterners began to see newspapers in approximately 1960. The radio broadcast was officially inaugurated in 1930; on the other hand, the northeasterners began to listen to the people's sound from a box during 1940. As for television, the first television, Channel 4 Bang Khun Phrom appeared in 1955 whereas a television station with 6-kilowatt transmitter was set up in Khon Kaen in 1962. In 1993, Thai Scientific, Academic, and Research Network established the country's first World Wide Web server and begin to be widespread in the Universities in Bangkok while the northeasterners, especially the educated elite, used the Internet from 1997. In other words, the journey of the newspaper from the central to the Northeast Region took around 116 years, followed by radio broadcast in around 10 years, television in around 7 years and the Internet in around 4 years. Therefore, the media development time from the Central to the Northeast Region is likely to shrink more and more. This phenomenon is in accordance with McLuhan's writing that "media tie the world into one great political economical, social, and cultural system". It means that we should be concerned with global events, rather than remaining focused on our own communities.

In the future, although the northeasterners are likely to access and use a wide variety of media outlets, major Thai mass media has repeatedly conveyed misleading content. After the guarantee

of Freedom of Press and Freedom of Expression in the constitution of 1997, media has been fiercely interfered with, not only politically but also by commercial interests [15]; [4]; [14]. As a result, the proportion of entertainment programming is likely to increase to a greater extent than news, knowledge, and commentary. The proliferation of urban-centre consumer advertising and product placement in game shows, talk shows, music and sit-coms is likely to increase rapidly. Soap Operas have attempted to convey and reinforce the sense of virtual modernity through materialism such as mega-malls, cars, mobile phones and fashionable clothes [13]. Most importantly, Freedom of the Press in Thailand was ranked at 59<sup>th</sup> in 2004, 122<sup>nd</sup> in 2007 and 153<sup>rd</sup> in 2010 out of 198 countries. Numerous empirical researches posited that mass media could become the basis for the people’s view of the world and the essential tools for manipulation and social control. Consequently, the rapid increase of media consumption in the Northeast Region, the deterioration of major Thai mass media, suggests that the research in the future should investigate the impact of media use on the changing ways of life of the northeasterners.

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