Unofficial Translation

Impacts of Media on Youth and Family

1. The Media Situation in Thailand

At present, the media is influential to the learning of persons in Thai society. Media surrounds us, both old world media from the age of print and broadcast to electronic media forms such as websites, cam frog, Hi 5 and computer games that most children access from game cafes. At the same time, these on-line media forms have expanded their penetration to mobile phones and it is found that the number of such phone users is continuously on the rise.

In the August 3, 2008 case where a youngster of merely 19 years killed a taxi driver of, it was found from primary investigation that the crime was partly influenced by a computer game known as GTA or Grand Theft Auto, which was a game where the player assumes the role of a criminal and engages in illegal acts such as theft, drug abuse and rape. This phenomenon reflects the outcome of Thai society's negligence to issues concerning the use of information communication technology which affect children and youth.

Meanwhile, when considering each media type, starting from television media, it is found that the Department of Public Relations[1] has instructed that 25% of broadcast time between 16:30 and 18:80 hrs. be given to programs for children and youth. The mentioned time slot will be used for the broadcast of television programs which are suitable for children, namely programs in the *por* category (suitable for viewers 3-5 years of age) and the *dor* category (suitable for viewers 6-12 years of age). From data collection carried out between September, 2007 and December, 2007, it was found that each station had programmed an overall total of half an hour for programs in the two mentioned categories, but real figures showed an average total of *por* and *dor* category programs of only 10% from all stations combined or only approximately 1.7% for each station.

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[1] According to the Notification of the Public Relations Department Licensing Office on Radio and Television Airtime Proportion, between 16:30 and 18:30 hrs., stations are to broadcast at least 0.5 hours or 25% of total airtime of category *por* (viewers 3-5 years of age) and category *dor* (viewers 6-12 years of age) programs.

When comparing the airtime of content, entertainment and news programs from a study of airtime proportion as indicated by television stations in their 2003 contract documents[2], it was found that each station aired entertainment programs for more than 65% of their total airtime, which was more than the proportion allowed by the Public Relations Department3. In 2003 the airtime for educational programs for children and youth decreased by 4.75% when compared to 1993 figures. It was also found that between July and August of 2003, the airtime for educational programs was only 45 hours 22 minutes per week or 4.94% of total airtime[3].

For motion pictures, statistics of motion pictures shown in Thailand between 2006 and 2007 indicated that among 319 motion pictures shown in 2006 and 248 motion pictures shown in 2007, more than 35% were rated in the category where viewers below 13 years of age needed supervision from adults and there were 27-31% which were unsuitable for children below 18 (NC 17 and R rates).
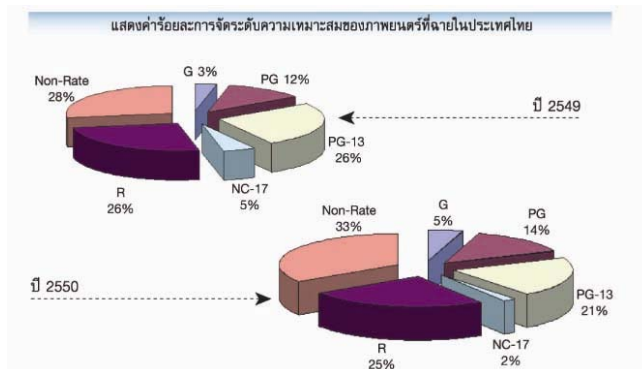
From an Assumption University ABAC Poll survey on the Influence of Television Media on Children's Behavior, it was found that most children spend an average of 3.9 hours per day of their free time watching television between Monday and Friday. This figure increases to 5.51 hours per day on weekends.

When considering the content of television programs in August 2005 during primetime periods between 16:00 and 22:00 Hrs., it was found that content relating to sex, violence and segregation appeared throughout the programs with most of the content being related to sex and inappropriate sexual norms. In regards to the analysis of television dramas, findings from a research on the Impacts of Television Media and the Use of Violence among Youth Groups: a Case Study of 1,500 Students in Bangkok[4], showed that approximately 72.1% of respondents liked to watch television programs every day and 39.8% watched an average of 3-5 hours of television per day. Recalling the findings of a study conducted by Child Watch, the ABAC Poll survey and the Federation of Intellect, which conducted studies on population groups throughout the country, it was found that the results all pointed in the same direction, indicating that children and youth were spending more time, from 2-3 hours a day to 3-4 hours a day, taking in content from ICT media. It is therefore not surprising how much integrity

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[2] Findings from a study on Radio and Television Program Content Quality, part of a series of studies in the Mass Media for Education and Learning Project, the Strategic Children's Media Program by Ass. Prof. Wilasinee Pipitkul, Office of the Thai Health Promotion Fund, 2003

[3] Findings from a research by the Strategic Children's Media Program, the Foundation for Child Development, 2005

[4] Findings from a workshop on Ranking the 40 Most Popular Websites, 12 November, 2007 at Sri Suriyothai School

children and youth need to fight distractions which may appear on media forms that surround them, especially media messages that involve violence and inappropriate sexual behavior such as those displaying pornography and inappropriate language use.

Computer games also have a negative impact both in (1) time consumption for players and (2) imitation of computer game behavior. From a survey of computer game shops in the cities of Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchatani, Pitsanulok, Pathumtani and Bangkok, it was found that the 5 on-line games most popular among players were (1) Cabal, (2) Dot A, (3) Audition, (4) Special Force and (5) Tales Runner. It was also found that 4 of 5 games centered upon fighting and the use of violence, making them suitable for players aged 13 and 18 or above. For on-line games, surveys were conducted to find the 5 most popular games in more than 200 game cafes of all 5 regions. Findings showed GTA or Grand Theft Auto to rank 3rd in popularity. Conversely, a number of creative games such as those which emphasize the employment of thinking skills and career planning have not been popular among players in Thai society.

For the internet, in 2004, there were more than 1.3 million pornographic web pages and more than 260 million in 20056. This figure has now climbed to 420 million web pages7. For the case of Thailand, from the 40 most popular websites[5] among users, 52.5% displayed inappropriate sexual content and inappropriate language (the grey group) while more than 17.5% were categorized in the black group, particularly displaying obscene sexual messages[5], inappropriate language and violent content.

## 2. Issues Relating to Safe and Creative Media in Thai Society [6]

At present, it is found that there are very few safe and creative media for children and youth while there is an increase in harmful media. Furthermore, this situation has been aggravated by the following six factors combined:

1st Factor Lack of on Screen Participation, which refers to making available areas where children and youth can express their views to the media and where their opinions will be taken into account and used for improvement and development purposes. We refer to this process as the media monitor. Examples of such processes are the "Media Monitor Family Volunteer Network", which is a network of parents who "volunteer" to help "keep watch" and "reflect opinions" in a quality rating technical framework. Viewpoints reflected to television stations provide concurrent joint learning experiences between producers, station operators, academics, children, youth and parents and consequently help to support continuous quality development for television programs.

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[5] http://truehits.net/index_ranking.php

[6] Safe media refers to media with content that is not illegal or contradictory to social order. Creative media refers to media that fosters learning and education for Thai children and youth in 6 major aspects: promotion of academic knowledge, emphasis on morals-ethics, support for life skills, creating understanding and learning for peaceful co-existence or any combination of the above aspects and fostoring understanding and affection among family members.

2nd Factor Lack of Participation as "Producers", which involves providing opportunity for children and youth to take part in news production, work as reporters and participate in the inception, planning, filming and editing of programs. Children and youth may be given the opportunity to work as young reporters and have their own television program broadcasted on community television or other media channels.
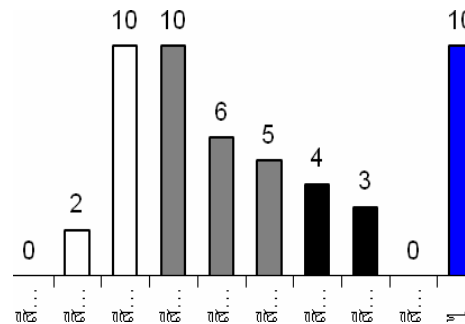
3rd Factor Lack of Motivation for Producers to Create Inventive Media, which is resultant from (1) the employment of the quantitative rating system making children and youth programs unable to survive and (2) the lack of a safe and creative promotion system which is concrete and sustained.

4th Factor Lack of the Strengthening of Audiences both in (1) the lack of serious efforts to strengthen children, youth and family groups, (2) the failure to instill good ethics in information communication technology use11 and (3) the lack of participatory promotion systems for children, youth and family groups.

5th Factor Lack of Legal and Policy Mechanisms Conducive to the Support of Media Development, especially a host agency mechanism for unified and efficient work.

6th Factor Lack of Serious, Sincere and On-going Promotion Processes Many children's media projects and many media personnel have been faced with lack of budget support or the lack of on-going support and have been forced to put off projects from their inspiration.

The benefits of programs for children and youth are in addition to being a children's program produced by children, which is "attractive" and "appealing" to children in the audience, the production process and the work procedures all contribute to the children's confidence, sense of identity and provide space as well as opportunity for them to express their potential.

3. Action by the National Health Assembly

The National Health Assembly is invited to consider the *Draft Resolution 1/9*.