

Facebook Page: The New Media in Provincial Public Relations Office

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สื่อใหม่เป็นการสร้างสรรค์ช่องทางหรือเครื่องมือที่ช่วยให้เกิดการสื่อสารระหว่างผู้ส่งสารไปยังผู้รับสาร ด้วยการสื่อสารเนื้อหา ภาพ เสียง และ ข้อความ ในรูปแบบสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ สื่อใหม่เข้ามามีบทบาทต่อการสื่อสารในฐานะของการสื่อสารมวลชน เป็นส่วนสำคัญต่อองค์กรไม่เพียงแต่ธุรกิจแต่ยังรวมถึงองค์กรภาครัฐ เพราะเครื่องมือและช่องทางที่สามารถให้ข้อมูลข่าวสาร สร้างการมีส่วนร่วมสร้างความผูกพันต่อองค์กรทุกภาคส่วน ทั้งในการเผยแพร่ข้อมูลข่าวสาร สร้างและต่อยอดภาพลักษณ์ที่ดีและน่าเชื่อถือ และโน้มน้าวใจในเชิงคุณค่า ซึ่งสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ที่นิยมใช้ร่วมกับเว็บไซต์หลักคือ เฟซบุ๊ก (Facebook) เมื่อศึกษาจากหน่วยงานภาครัฐก็จะพบว่าองค์กรภาครัฐจำนวนมากที่ใช้เฟซบุ๊กเพจ เมื่อนำมาจัดอันดับ 3 อันดับแรกคือ บริษัทไปรษณีย์ไทย มีแฟนเพจรวม 400,485 รองลงมาคือการไฟฟ้านครหลวง 338,452 อันดับที่สามคือ สถานทูตสหรัฐอเมริกา 278,240 ที่น่าสนใจคือกองทัพอากาศไทย เครือข่ายประชารัฐ กระทรวงต่างประเทศ ต่างก็ใช้เฟซบุ๊กเพจในการประชาสัมพันธ์องค์กร

Abstract

New media is the creation of channels or tools that create the communication between senders and receivers by communicating content, images, audio and text in social media. New media plays a role in communication as journalism. It is important not only for businesses but also for government organizations because the tools and the channels can provide information and create the relationship in all sectors of the organization by providing information, creating and reinforcing a positive and trustworthy image and persuading value. The social media that is commonly used with the main website is Facebook, and it is found that many government organizations use Facebook Page. The top three were Thailand Postal Service with a fan page of 400,485, followed by the Metropolitan Electricity Authority with the number of 338,452 fan page and US Embassy with 278,240 fan page. Interestingly, the Royal Thai Air Force, Pracharath Network and the ministry of foreign affairs all use Facebook Pages to promote their organizations.

Keywords: Facebook Page, New Media, Provincial Public Relations Office

Introduction

Nowadays one-way communication is changed to two-way communication via the network system. Multimedia media makes new media popular, not just in business, but also in government organizations. In other words, many organizations are turning to use new media in their organization, especially using

Facebook for public relations, because it is a channel or a tool that creates the communication from the senders to the receivers by communicating content both in audio and text that distributes the media in digital format through communication system that computers and mobile phones are central in social media.

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Concepts of new media

“Business and professional communication specialists need to adapt to a new media workplace ecology-one that requires proficiencies with technologies such as video production, digital animation, and sound.” (Lora Arduser, 2016 : 217), which is according to Logan, Robert K. (2010 : 5-7) that states, “New media is an interactive communication of digital communications with a variety of media. It is capable of compiling voice, digital video and multimedia, which is accessible by personal computers, including other communicative tools. The new media is a media that is capable of linking to other media as a medium of processing, easy to find and easy to access.” Similar to Lister, Dovey, Giddings and Kelly (2009 : 13), they identify, “We consider these here as some of the main terms in discourses about new media. These are: digital, interactive, hypertextual, virtual, networked, and simulated.” Thus, new media is a channel or a tool that generates the communication from the senders to the receivers by communicating content both in audio and text that distributes the media in digital format through communication system that computers and mobile phones are central social media.

Nowadays, the information age is growing with the advancement of technology and communication. New media plays a role in communication as journalism as Lister, Dovey, Giddings and Kelly (2009 : 35) states, “new media are networked in comparison to mass media – networked at the level of consumption where we have seen a multiplication, segmentation and resultant individuation of media use; dispersed at the level of production where we have witnessed the multiplication of the sites for production of media texts and a greater diffusion within the economy as a whole than was previously the case.”, especially the use of social networks through mobile phones whether it is for communication, for building knowledge or access to information. So mobile phones are useful and necessary for people of all ages as they are used as communicative tool to access new media through

social media.

The new media has expanded to all sectors, both in individual and in corporate level. It has become a significant part of the organization, not just in business but also in government organizations as Nutthanan Siricharoen (2558 B.E.: 100) states, “In conveying information, assigning tasks, reporting work performance, helping to build good the relationship between people in the organization and communicating to outsider by disseminating information and activities of the organization through a variety of new media.”

The importance of using new media in Provincial Public Relations Office

A Public Relations is a very important communication and has a role in government organizations because public relations can build credibility, reputation and corporate image. Therefore, a public relations is a mechanism to build reputation and create image, which will lead to the acceptance and commitment of the target audience to the organization as Poj Jaichansukkit (2555 B.E.: 64) says, “Most successful organizations in the world have focused on the strong communication strategic framework. This may be because they are aware of the importance of the corporate image and message. That is the clarity of corporate communication management, the ability to drive content, and self-identity that shows the identity of the organization.”

The new media is important for provincial public relations office because the tools and channels that can provide information will create the relationship in all sectors of the organization, which can be seen from “Over 400 religious and charitable organizations hire social media professionals for doing their public relations in order to promote the relationship and the trustworthiness. New media and public relations produce valuable work, which leads to continuous negotiation in public relations with digital media.” (John Lloyd and Laura Toogood. 2016 : 164).

The nature of new media use in Provincial Public Relations Office

When new media plays a role in shaping corporate image, the new media is an important tool in public relations. It is because the use of the original public relations did not work well as Keawkanda Tancharoen (2559 B.E.: online) states, “The behavior of consumers has more selections on receiving information. In other words, there are many channels for consumers to access information. So, consumers will choose more on the specialized media. As a result, the media nowadays must adapt in terms of content and work process.” There are three important aspects of the new media that show the importance of the technology and the communication: **Computing**, it is to assist in processing of content and structuring of communication; **Telecommunication networks**, it is to access to and link communication. There is no place or time limits; **Digitization of content**, it is to help transferring the content via network, forwarding content, developing content and integrating a variety of media presentations, including text, voice and video, which is similar to Thasnim Humida (2015: 69) who states, “New media are (currently) new to the extent that they combine (1) computing (which allows processing of content, such as retrieval through associations of words or other indices, and structuring of communication, such as conversational threads in newsgroups), (2) telecommunication networks (which allow access and connectability to diverse and otherwise distant other people and content), and (3) digitization of content (which allows transference across distribution networks, reprocessibility of the content as data, and integration and presentation of multiple modes such as text, audio and video)”, which has the nature of new media use in the public relations as follows:

1. Use of new media to provide information

Creating knowledge, understanding and building the good relationship is the key of public relations. New media, therefore, is used to deliver the corporate content to the target audience whether it

is a movement of an organization, corporate background, the vision of the management, including the activities in an organization. It is in accordance with Kwanruethai Saipradit (2551 B.E.: 46) who says, “Public relations disseminates information of an organization through new media, which aims to inform, provide knowledge and understanding, such as information about the operation of an organizations and knowledge of the organization history that is beneficial to the people.” Thus, “Public relation officer can provide information about the organization and its products to the target consumers directly and appropriate to the individual. The stories presented through various media, especially the online world, will directly and indirectly reflect the image of the entire organization” (Natha Changchootho, 2554 B.E.: 174).

2. Use of new media to create and reinforce a positive and trustworthy image

Use of new media to create and reinforce a positive and trustworthy image is a tool that creates love and relationship between an organization and a target audience. When it comes to a positive corporate image, it will lead to efficiency in driving various activities of an organization because of a good relationship and collaboration. Thus, new media has been employed in government organizations in accordance with Kwanruethai Saipradit (2551 B.E.: 46). She states, “To create a collaboration, to persuade to collaborate with an organization, to create a positive image towards an organization, to gain faith from the people.”

3. Use of new media to persuade value

Organizations can use new media for public relations by convincing their target audience to focus on and trust the organization. This will lead to the decision to accept the service from the information presented through the new media. As Natha Changchootho (2554 B.E.: 174) states, “New media can be used to convince people to trust the organization until any decision-making process occurs, which is due to the good information presented through new

media. It is because most consumers prefer to find information from online media or the Internet first.” Use of new media to persuade value is even employed in education institutions. In accordance with Nawapan Imduang (2554 B.E.: 5) who states, “The Thai education market has also focused on ‘new media’ which replaced ‘primary media’.”

From abovementioned, it shows that public relations with the new media not only results in the perception of information and creation of knowledge but also cooperation with an organization. The public relations through new media have created and reinforced the good image and credibility of the organization. In addition, the new media has also convinced the target audience to focus on and trust the organization. New media, such as the Internet, especially the social media is considered a modern media, has new ways to promote public relations in order for the target audience to access and manage the information at anytime, anywhere and anyone. As Apichat Pooksawat and Kulthip Sastraruji (2556 B.E.: 28) state, “Social media is a popular media in public relations and has continued to progress. It is also likely to gain more popularity in the future. Organizations use social media to promote their organizations and to enhance the traditional public relation media to increase efficiency.”

“Public relations today has developed and is more than news releases. It is managing a content and information to the target audience in its organization and the frequency is greater than the original” (Natha Changchootho, 2557 B.E.: 175). In addition, public relations officers who need to use the new media must have more understanding of the complexity of public relations rather than that of the traditional media whether it is a story presented through the media, content management, target audience, communication styles, media specificity, including social media skills and evaluation. Every organization needs a clear and concrete strategy and policy to use the new media. Therefore, “Public relations officer as a corporate communicator should

change the way of public relations whether it is a public relations process, a communication for public relations, a content for public relations and use of social media for public relations” (Sureerak Wongthip, 2557 B.E.: 88).

From above, it could be seen that public relations is different from the original that the public relations officer would distribute the news to the press, which can cause insufficient understanding of the public relations process through social media. Similar to Lloyd and Toogood (2016 : 163), they say, “While many public relations officers take new media innovations as an opportunity, but there is uncertainty and great anxiety about the form of communication.” To expand communication to all groups of people, it is best to cover the area with corporate information or activities distributed through social networks. A public relations officer should “consider what kind of new media is suitable to use for communication for each business, both internal and external, and also consider if the new media will be used as the main media or will be used in combination with the existing media in the organization.”

Facebook Page and Provincial Public Relations Office

Social media is a popular media in public relations and is likely to gain more popularity in the future. It can be seen from use of social media services, about one fourth of the time people spent online. According to Digital’s 2016 report, an online media of We Are Social, the Digital Agency in Singapore presented in January 2016 by Simon Kemp, it was stated, “The rate of Thai people who use Internet is 56% of the population who use social media. The average rate of using social media is 2 hours 52 minutes per day.” (Simon Kemp, 2016, online).

“Initially, people used social media as a hobby; for example, to play games, to talk, to exchange opinions and other personal activities and to communicate with each other. Later, the use of social media became broader. It was not only used

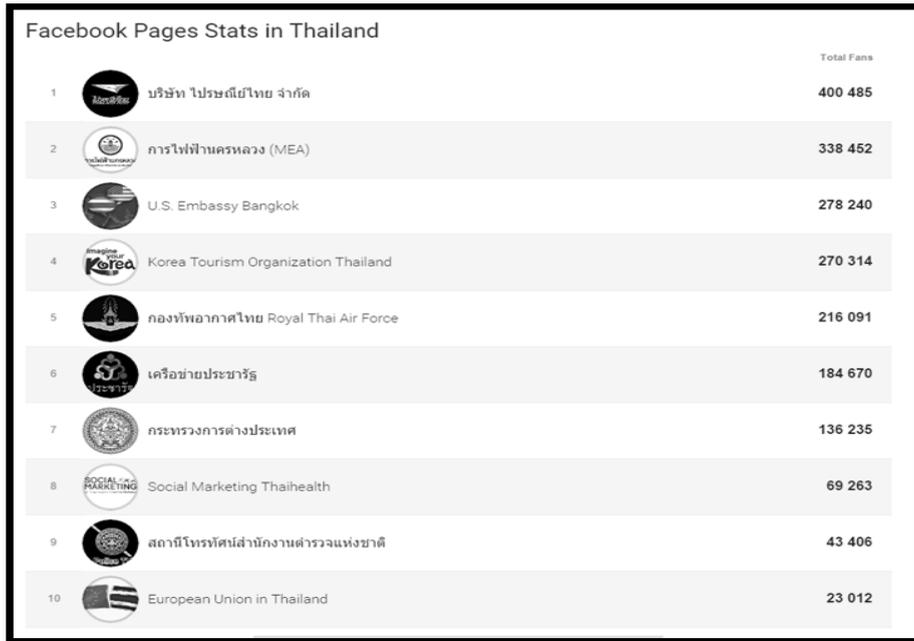
as hobbies, but also as a tool to access a broad group of people for non-hobby purpose. Social media is the media that senders share the messages which is in various forms to recipients through online network. It can be interacted between the senders and the receivers. Using social media can reach to people who are known and unknown, to the organization and to people who share the common interests” (Sureerak Wongthip.: 100-102). Also, “In public relations through social media should focus on changing of public relations process, including a content and use of social media for public relations in order to bring reputation, corporate image and support to an organization” (Apichat Pooksawat & Kulthip Sastrarui, 2556 B.E.: 25).

When considering the new media used in public relations, it was found that use of social media, Facebook, to use with the main site of the organization is a popular form of public relations. In the past, government organizations had their main websites to provide information to target groups as well as to other parties that were interested in, and there were ongoing public relations of corporate activities through the website, but later social media can link the network to the main website of the organization, thus Facebook which is a popular social media and the organization website were used together for public relations.

On 4 February 2004, Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg who at that time was a student in a field of Psychology at Harvard University and his associates in Computer Science, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. Initially, Facebook was only available to students at Harvard University. Later, it expanded to universities across America until to people around the world, who have an email account and are over 13 years of age. Facebook is now the most influential social media in the world. Chris Wells and Kjerstin Thorson (2015 : 45) state in the article “Combining Big Data and Survey Techniques to Model Effects of Political Content Flows in Facebook” in the magazine entitled “Social Science Computer Review”, “Facebook is not just a tool to communicate

just one’s own information, but It also includes the communication of friends and organizations relating to us, including an interest in public communication in individuals, organizations, and businesses that offer information that is beneficial to a group of individuals who shares the same interests. It will lead to an interest in individuals and organizations, which is a new form of news or public relations.” Interested parties will be directed to an information resource or website with detailed and insightful information. Therefore, integrating Facebook and the main organization website has become a proper medium media for receiving information, and this has been used in individuals, organizations, non-profit organizations, including government sectors. Therefore, it is needed that public communication of a corporate requires the use of Facebook and its website together. It is because the use of the main website is showing that an organization exists and the use of Facebook is enhancing the communication relationship with different activities.

Facebook is a social media site and one of the most popular social media sites in the world and in Thailand. It is because Facebook membership is free of charge. New applicants just apply for a membership under its conditions. This site provides services, such as publishing and receiving personal information, news and interacting with other members. According to Digital’s 2016 report of We Are Social, it stated that the most popular social media in Thailand was Facebook with members of 2,455,989. For Facebook used in government organizations, it is found that many government organizations use Facebook Page. The top ten were Thailand Postal Service with a fan page of 400,485, followed by the Metropolitan Electricity Authority with the number of 338,452 fan page and US Embassy with 278,240 fan page. Interestingly, the Royal Thai Air Force, Pracharath Network and the ministry of foreign affairs all use Facebook Page to promote their organizations as seen in the figure below.

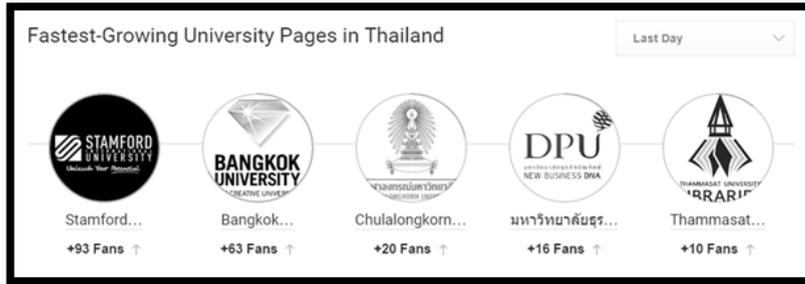


Source: socialbakers. 2016 : online

From the figure above, it corresponds to the research that discussed government’s communication in digital age of Melissa W Graham (2014, p. 361-376). She presented a research article on Government communication in the digital age: Social media’s effect on local government public relations in Public Relations Inquiry academic journal. Her findings were that public information officers (PIOs) in local governments used social media as a communication tool. It specifically addressed how social media was used as a public relations function to promote democratic, participatory, and transparency models in government and social media was highly regarded as a beneficial communication tool for local governments. Four primary themes emerged from the data analysis: dialogue promotion, engagement, unconstrained, and barriers. The first three themes focused on the opportunities that social media provided PIOs to communicate with citizens and the fourth theme presented the challenges faced by local governments that utilized social media. The insights shared by PIOs in local governments were useful for public relations professionals and scholars to help them understand

and apply social media practices to build relationships with citizens and enhance communication practices. Similar to Shinkafi Abubakar, M (2016) who conducted an exploratory study of social media usage and developmental outcomes by government and emerging political leaders in Nigeria for his PhD dissertation. The research found that new mediated ‘public’ spaces enable different expressions of public opinion Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, RSS feed, and YouTube. In addition, it was found that online media influenced and enhanced freedom of expression, freedom, responsibility, political participation and empowerment. Nigeria makes an important case study as it sits at the fulcrum of the battle between citizen freedoms and Government censorship.

When studying the growth of Facebook pages in provincial public relations office, it was found that Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University which are ones of the top universities in Thailand both use Facebook pages to promote their universities, and these universities are ranked in top 5 of the universities that have the fastest-growing of Facebook page in Thailand as seen in the figure below.



Source: socialbakers. 2016 : online

Conclusion

New media is the creation of channels or tools that creates the communication between senders and receivers by communicating content, images, audio and text that distributes the media in digital format through communication system that computers and mobile phones are central in social media. Nowadays, the information age is growing with the advancement of technology and communication. New media plays a role in communication as journalism. The new media has expanded to all sectors, both in individual and in corporate level. It has become a significant part of the organization, not just in businesses but also in government organizations. The new media is important for provincial public relations office, because the tools and channels that can provide information will create the relationship in all sectors of the organization by providing information, creating and reinforcing a positive and trustworthy image and persuading value. When considering the new media used in public relations, it was found that using Facebook, especially Facebook Page which is a popular social media and together with the main site of the organization is a popular form of public relations. For Facebook used in government organizations, it is found that many government organizations use Facebook Page. The top three were Thailand Postal Service with a fan page of 400,485, followed by the Metropolitan Electricity Authority with the number of 338,452 fan page and US Embassy with 278,240 fan page. Interestingly, the Royal Thai Air Force, Pracharath Network and the ministry of foreign affairs all use

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