

THE ROLE OF BLOGS AS NEWS SOURCES: A STUDY OF
AUDIENCES AND NEWS PROFESSIONALS IN THAILAND

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the use and perceived credibility of news blogs among news consumers and news professionals in Thailand. Data was obtained on three reader blog communities linked to Thai online newspapers – OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog. The study examined why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision, the attention of users to news blogs, the diversity and the quality of news blogs, and degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs and attitudes of users. Theoretically, it drew upon uses and gratifications and news credibility research.

This research employed three research methods: online questionnaires with news blog users, interviews with news professionals, and content analysis with the three reader blog communities.

The findings of the study indicate that news blogs were a component of mainstream news provision for some Thai news organisations. In order to attract visitors and use as sources, four out of 15 online newspapers (26%): Komchadluek, Bangkokbiznews, The Nation and ASTV Manager provided blogs for the general public where they could share news and interesting stories. News blog users tended to be male, 41–60 years old, highly educated, and self-employed, with a high income. They used the Internet, consumed television news and read newspapers both offline and online very often but scarcely consumed radio news. OKnation was by far the most popular news blog community. One out of two blog users wrote approximately one news blog story per week. Political surveillance and opinion seeking were the top two news blog use motives. News blogs produced by individuals were rated as less credible than mainstream news reports in the view of audiences and news professionals. Most of news professionals emphasised that news blogs helped them to improve the quality, but not the diversity, of mainstream news reports.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is primarily concerned with the phenomenon of news blogging with special reference to the way in which blogs are used and perceived by audiences and news professionals in Thailand. The purpose of this study is to deeply understand the role of news blogs among two groups of people who are involved in the news landscape in a country where this subject has not yet been investigated. Utilising online questionnaires, interviews and content analysis as research methods, and with the uses and gratifications approach and the concept of credibility as theoretical frameworks, the researcher hopes to contribute to a better understanding of new media, focusing on news blogs and their role in news production and consumption, in Thailand.

1.1 Contextual Background to the Study

According to Blood (2003, p.61) a weblog or blog for short is “a frequently updated Website, with posts arranged in reverse chronological order, so new entries are always on top”. The activity of posting blog story is called blogging. A full meaning of blogging refers to “the reverse-chronological posting of individually authored entries that include the capacity to provide hypertext links and often allow comment-based responses from reader” (Bruns and Jacobs, 2007, p.2-3). Blogs first came to public prominence as popular online news sources in the aftermath of a number of major events and crises such as the World Trade Centre attack on 11 September 2001, which marked the birth of news blogging (Allan, 2006; Tremayne, 2007; McNair, 2011). Subsequent catastrophes and political scandals, such as the Asian tsunami, the London bombings, Hurricane Katrina (Allan, 2006), the resignation of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (Johnson and Kaye, 2004) and

the 2004 election campaign in the USA (Tremayne, 2007), served to underline the distinctive value blogs could bring to the news landscape. As such, many news professionals and scholars, especially in Western countries, have begun to pay attention to the ways in which news blogs are produced and used in the news industry. The most significant current discussion is the question of whether or not blogs cause a threat to traditional news media (Allan, 2006; Rettberg, 2008). An obvious consequence of the increasing number of blogs is that some of them have become online news sources (Rainie, 2005; Gunter et al., 2009) which “are transforming the ways in which journalism is practiced today” (Andrews, 2003, p.63).

In the world of blogs, there are many different applications and authors. Most blogs are independent personal diaries maintained by individual bloggers. Some individuals’ blogs have been created to communicate news about specific events (Bruns, 2007; Allan and Thorsen, 2009). The obvious growing number of news blogging usually happens when the mass media could not provide adequate information of specific issues (Allan and Thorsen, 2009). Independent journalists write blogs to capture readers of their own when they do not work for a major company. News organisations have also chosen blogs as a way of reaching news consumers more actively. According to McQuail (2010), many journalists produce blogs independently or on behalf of their organisations, and news consumers read news blogs to obtain information and might use blogs to leave comments about current news stories. Outside the world of news media, other organisations might use blogs in their business. For example, public relations companies use blogs to post press releases on behalf of their clients, and commercial organisations use blogs to promote themselves. McQuail (2010) remarked that few blogs have large audiences, but the emergence of blogs poses a challenge to institutional control of public information.

News blogging, which is the main area of this study, emerged from several circumstances and has already affected mainstream news provision. According to Fedak (2007), the advent of the Internet, the spread of citizen journalism, and changing revenue models have forced print newspapers to innovate and adapt themselves to the changing conditions. Messner and DiStaso (2008) specified that a number of news professionals began to draw on blogs at the same time as the public began in large numbers to use blogs as news sources for major events. Some traditional newspapers in the US increasingly legitimised blogs as credible sources and used them in their political news production (Messner and DiStaso, 2008). There is strong evidence that media elites in the United States have consumed political blogs (Drezner and Farrell, 2004). Another example of news media trying to find witnesses and information from blogs is the incident of the Virginia Tech shooting on 16 April 2007, when a blog written by a blogger named 'ntcoolfool' in LiveJournal became the centre of global media attention because it had many clear references to the incident (Rettberg, 2008).

In Thailand, news blogging emerged from the progress of Internet technology and interest in political issues. According to Masaphant (2008), the Thai blog community began to emerge around the mid-2000s and its size has progressively expanded since then. Bloggang.com, Exteen.com and OKnation.net, which were the early blog service providers created and used by Thais, are examples of blog communities which have a high number of users. In 2009, Bloggang.com had 147,007 unique IP accesses, Exteen.com had 256,149 and OKnation.net had 73,051 (Truehits.net, 2009); however, various purposes of blog use are found, such as for writing personal diaries, sharing interesting topics and materials, exchanging ideas or discussion, and disseminating news or commentary related to news which the bloggers witnessed. Someone might only access blogs for consuming alternative

news sources or interesting information. The use of blogs as news sources has been frequently connected to the occurrence of political crises. Prachachart.net (2006) reported that during the 2006 Thai coup d'état, a group of people accessed <http://revolution.blogrevo.com>, <http://19sep.blogspot.com>, <http://2bangkok.com> and <http://bangkokpundit.blogspot.com>. These blogs were independent blog sites which immediately focused on this event (some blogs were created suddenly) by reporting on many aspects of it, whilst mainstream media such as CNN, CNBC and the BBC, including Thai television and radio, were blocked by the government.

Evidence has supported the notion that some Thai news professionals have used reader blogs as sources in their political news reports. A political event which involved the use of blogs and microblogs as news sources by news professionals was the 'red shirt' rally in Bangkok (an ongoing series of protests against the ruling government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva from early 2009 to May 2010). This incident fuelled widespread use of blogs among mainstream news media and also citizens. Some content from blogs was cited by mainstream news media in their news reports. For example, Bangkokbiznews.com, an online newspaper of the Nation Group, which basically focuses on political and business news, used two blogs as news sources to describe the reasons why a group of 'red-shirt' mob protesters stormed into Chulalongkorn hospital, and the way in which they treated a female reporter who worked in the area. A blogger who used the pseudonym 'Konsamkanprachammueng' (Important person resides in town) on OKnation.net indicated (Bangkokbiznews.com, 2010b):

During the night of 29 April, Payap Punket led a number of 'red-shirt' mob guards who stormed into Chulalongkorn hospital to search for troops whether

or not they were hiding inside. This action caused the hospital's staff, nurses, doctors, and patients to be very scared. The same was true for a female reporter. She was extremely shocked by the event. Previously, she was the person who put a question to Mr. Chatuporn Prompan (one major leader of the 'red shirt' protesters) ... asking if he had evidence about the ambush of troops in this hospital. After this question had been posed, he looked angry; then, he roused the mob and tried to force her to go with them to the hospital.

This blogger also quoted the speech of this female reporter. She said (Bangkokbiznews, 2010b):

I intend to find out the truth from his claim. If Chulalongkorn hospital did not provide hiding space for the troops, this action will disturb the patients. It will also cause chaos. So, I only need to know how much confidence they have especially in their information. But the response to my question is you must go there with us to find out the answer. After that, the turbulence happened. Mass protesters stormed this hospital... I felt very scared. I cried from fear. I could not come back home alone ... Some 'red-shirt' guards tried to find out who and where I was.

Meanwhile, a blogger named 'Crime Police' on OKnation.net wrote a different account of the same incident. He focused on the pictures he had seen during the chaos in the hospital and remarked on his blog that the face of one protester who had invaded the hospital looked like a man who was suspected of bombing the house of ex-Prime Minister

Banharn Silpa-archa on midnight of 25 April. But no one was arrested in spite of Bangkok being at that time under the emergency law (Bangkokbiznews, 2010b).

Some news media not only searched for stories from blogs but also used pictures published by bloggers to support their articles, such as Naewna.com (2010), who described the clash between the ‘red-shirt’ mob and soldiers that took place at the Thai National Memorial in Donmueng district on 28 April, by referring to a set of photographs and video clips which were posted by a blogger named ‘promzy’ on OKnation.net. These pictures showed a man in a black suit carrying a gun to fight with the troops. These photographs were not taken by this blogger, but originated from an Al Jazeera video clip on YouTube.

Between April and May 2010, when the ‘red-shirt’ rally reached its peak, many news journalists from all types of mass media employed a wide range of news sources, especially microblogging sites like Twitter, in their news. They used this application via their digital tools to report news and to follow issues. Komchadluek.net (2010) reported that around 50% of reporters on Twitter were staff of the Nation Multimedia Group, and @suthichai (Suthichai Yoon, editor in chief of the Nation Multimedia Group) had the largest number of Twitter followers. His followers rose from 40,000 to 70,000 during this incident. After the tension subsided, some journalists used Twitter and accumulated many followers on this platform. These journalists included Thapanee Ietsrichai, a reporter of “Khaosammiti” (Three Dimension News programme), who uses @tanpanee3miti as her account name; Satien Viriyapanpongsa, a Nation news agency reporter, who uses @satien_nna; Nattha Komonvathin, a Thai PBS reporter, who uses @nattha_tvthai; and Noppatjak Attanon, a Nation Channel reporter, who uses @noppatjak (Komchadluek, 2010). Ietsrichai claimed that her reports on Twitter were independent from her employer, and there are many reporters from different news agencies who use this application to

report news and follow each other (Bangkokbiznews.com, 2010a). This phenomenon shows that microblogging has also become an important tool in the Thai mainstream media's news production.

The above-mentioned evidence covering both global and local issues supports the notion that blogs are not only a form of web citizens' diaries but can also perform as news sources which can be influential in setting news agendas (Messner and DiStaso, 2008; Gunter et al., 2009). A study by Tutchanok (2009) found that some Thai news professionals used the Internet as a tool for searching information to write news reports. Moreover, it is the easiest and fastest method of communication between local journalists and global media professionals. Digital tools can also "give journalists increasingly effective techniques for finding diverse and reliable sources, checking facts and meeting the deadlines" (Pavlik, 2001, p.47). According to Deuze (2003), many studies have signalled that journalists often spend time using the Internet at their desks rather than finding news outside their offices.

Technical Support Director Piya Tantiwichien of the Internet Innovation Research Center, Co., Ltd. (Truehits.net) reported that online news consumption in Thailand is continuing to grow and reached its peak during the 'red-shirt' rally in Bangkok, especially between 17 and 21 May 2010. In addition to the mainstream news media's online editions, blogs, microblogs and other social media have co-contributed to the increasing usage of the Internet in Thailand on an unprecedented scale (Matichon Sud Supda, 2010; Manager 360 weekly, 2010). Hunter (2007) discovered that the number of bloggers is increasing in general because they have found a community through their blogs that provides either access to information or emotional support that could not be found in their offline lives. Political bloggers are primarily blogging in order to become citizen journalists. Hunter

(2007) remarked that bloggers are challenging the dominance of the mainstream media and attempting to become media players.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

There were three major reasons for choosing to study this topic. The first reason was that it was an appropriate time to study this topic in a country where blog research was very scarce in spite of there being an obvious increase in blog usage. As in other countries, the progress of the Internet – encouraged by Web 2.0 technology, which allows the actions of users (Briggs, 2007) – provided new discussion spaces in the form of blogs in Thai society. Thai citizens began consuming news and information and acting as a source by creating, sharing, discussing and commenting on several issues in the blogosphere, “the whole alternative public communication space occupied by non-institutionalized voices” (McQuail, 2010, p.549). According to Komchadluek.net (2010), Adisak Limparungpattanakij, President of the Nation Broadcasting Corporation, indicated that there were nearly one million blogs in Thailand in 2010. Focusing on Thai blog providers, it could be said that OKnation, Bloggang and Exteen were the three largest blog communities because they shared around 80% of the Thai blogosphere. From September 2007 to August 2010, OKnation blog users rose from 306,078 to 1,530,797 user IPs (a fivefold increase) (Truehits.net 2010b), Bloggang from 743,668 to 1,397,532 user IPs (a twofold increase) (Truehits.net 2010a), and Exteen from 755,942 to 1,940,530 user IPs (nearly a threefold increase) (Truehits.net 2010c). Although the amount of blog users has obviously increased, no research into the use of blogs as a news source has been conducted before in Thailand. So, this research can help to fill the gap in the knowledge of news blogs in Thai society. Furthermore, in the global arena “systematic audience research studies of

the use of news blogs have so far been rare” (Gunter et al., 2009, p.193) and there has been a lack of academic research on why blog users use blogs (Kaye, 2007).

The second reason for choosing to study this topic was the fact that questions have been raised about the perceived credibility of blogs. Findings from many studies have been mixed. Some studies found that online news (McQuail, 2005) including news blogs (Gunter et al., 2009) are perceived credible if they are produced by established news brands. Bucy (2003) found that younger users trust online sources more than other age groups. Johnson and Kaye (2010) discovered that politically interested Internet users visited blogs more than other news sources and trusted blogs more than online newspapers, online television and online radio news. So, this thesis can help in supplementing blog-credibility research.

The third reason for conducting this thesis in Thailand was the unique media monitoring system in this country. News media and citizens have been guaranteed by Thailand’s constitution for their rights and freedom to present news and express opinions without any mandate of any Government agency, State agency, State enterprise or their owner (For further details, see Chapter Three: 3.3 Rights and Freedom of Citizens and the Media in Thai Democracy). In practice, messages published by major Thai newspapers¹ are monitored by The National Press Council of Thailand (NPCT) whereas information broadcasted by major Thai television and radio stations² are monitored by The News Broadcasting Council of Thailand (NBCT) (Limpattamapane, 2014). Although major Thai

¹ Thai newspapers who have registered as members of NPCT comprise Thansettakij, Dailynews, TelecomJournal, Thaipost, Thairath, The Nation, Bangkokbiznews, Komchadluek, Naewna, Banmuang, Bangkokpost, Posttoday, ASTV Manager, Dailyworldtoday, Siamturakij, Siamrath, Saiklang, etc.

² Thai television and radio stations who have registered as members of NBCT comprise Thai TV3, Royal Thai Army and Television Station, MCOT, NBT, Thai PBS, Nation Broadcasting, TNN, INN, TNews, Media of Media, Siam Inter Multimedia, Spring News, CU radio, Voice TV, etc.

mainstream news media's rights and freedom have been guaranteed by Thailand's constitution and that their content are monitored by the self-censorship system, the study of Boonsiripunth (2005) found that, during major political events in the past, the Thai government often controlled the content of the mainstream news media. Unlike mainstream news media, news blogs are independent from gatekeeping system, standards of journalistic practices, and the power of business mechanisms. Individual bloggers have also been guaranteed for their rights and freedom to publish any stories as long as they do not violate the Computer Crime Act B.E. 2550 (2007) (Limpattamapane, 2014). Moreover, there is no study indicating that the Thai government controls news blogs. So, it is worth studying news blogs, a form of UGC where general public can disseminate news and information to the mass audiences like the mainstream news media but with a lesser restricted condition.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This current thesis not only aims to fill a gap in blog research, but also aims to make a significant contribution to the uses and gratifications and credibility research. It is expected that analysing the uses and credibility of news blogs from the perception of news consumers and news professionals, including an examination of the existing formats of news blogs through the framework of these concepts, will offer an understanding of how news blogs are used, what they present and how important they have become in the news environment.

1.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

There was very few blog research in the existing literature (Gunter et al., 2009), the question of what news blogs look like, how they are used, and whether they are credible in

the perception of users (Johnson and Kaye, 2004) are the major justifications for the current study. Hence, this study focused on the use of blogs as news sources and their credibility from the perspective of news consumers and news professionals. To achieve this goal, this study employed the uses and gratifications approach and the concept of credibility as a theoretical framework.

The purpose of revisiting the uses and gratifications approach was that it is a branch of research on media effects which offers an understanding of news receivers, and why they use specific media (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). This approach considers mass media audiences as active receivers – free to select, be involved in and use the media with a different degree of activity (Levy and Windahl, 1984). Media exposures among active receivers are fundamentally driven by their personal needs, motives, social influences, etc. (Levy and Windahl, 1984). This approach can help in explaining the reasons why mass audiences like specific news publications, broadcasts, or the Internet (i.e., Ruggiero, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; and Charney and Greenberg, 2001), including blogs (i.e., Kaye, 2005, 2007; Chung et al., 2007; Sweetser et al., 2008). To measure audiences' motives, this thesis adapted the blog-use motivation items of Kaye (2007), which originated from previous studies framed by the uses and gratifications approach.

In terms of the study of news blogs' credibility from the perspective of news consumers and news professionals, this thesis applied the concept of credibility, which is an aspect of news objectivity. The perceived credibility of news media can vary, and a news source that is perceived as non-credible might not necessarily be non-objective. The judgement about the credibility of the news can be subjective and dependent on the starting point of the news consumer. According to Johnson and Kaye (1998), perceived credibility is one main reason for news exposure. Meanwhile, Stempel III, Hargrove and Bernt (2000)

similarly claimed that the use of media depend on their credibility. Johnson and Kaye (2004) defined media credibility as “the worthiness of being believed” (p.627), which can be measured by multidimensional constructs such as believability, accuracy, fairness, and depth of information. According to Gunter (1997), the perceived credibility of news blogs can be determined by audience criteria, which are derived from public opinion surveys, and professional criteria, which refer to the way news reporters and news editors select news to publish. Hence, the concept of credibility was employed as a core construct in measuring whether news blog users trust news blogs.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to examine the uses of news blogs and their credibility from the perspective of audiences and news professionals in Thailand, considering the uses and gratifications approach and the credibility concept, five research questions were developed, as follows:

‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’

The first research question will help to examine to what extent and why Thai online newspapers allow reader blogs to appear on their websites. It will also help to discover how and to what extent news professionals employ reader blogs in their journalistic tasks, including whether the presence of blogs on newspapers’ websites is regarded as important by readers.

‘How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?’

The second research question will aim to reveal the characteristics of news blog users of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog, which are the three reader blog communities that appear on Thai mainstream online newspapers, including the way they use news blogs and how much attention they pay to the three reader blogs.

‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’

The third research question aims to explore whether news blogs in the three blog communities have a variety of topics, including asking news professionals about the capacity of news blogs created by citizens to enhance the diversity of news topics of mainstream news media. The term ‘diversity’ can refer to the range of different content produced by mass media: “the more difference, the more diversity” (McQuail, 2010, p.555).

‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’

This fourth research question concerns the credibility of news blogs from the perspective of news consumers and news professionals, including the ways news professionals check the credibility of news blogs before using them as news hints and sources. The credibility of news blogs in this thesis focuses on perceived accuracy and fairness.

‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’

The fifth research question will help to examine degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs and attitudes that have been reported, especially those taken from a one-off survey with news blog users.

1.6 Research Methodology Design

This thesis used three data collection methods. An online questionnaire obtained information from news blog users concerning their demographic characteristics; offline and

online traditional media use; news blog use; news blog use motives; and credibility perceptions concerning news reports produced by mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists, independent journalists and other individuals. The data from the in-depth interviews with two news-organisation leaders and five news professionals revealed the organisational policy in relation to embracing UGC. These news professionals also provided the information about why news blogs were a component of their mainstream news provision, the attention of users to news blogs, the role of news blogs in enhancing diversity and quality of news, including degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs and news consumers' attitudes. The results of content analysis detailed the presence of UGC formats on 15 Thai newspaper websites, the characteristics of news blogs which appear on Thai newspaper websites and news blog comments. Conducting this three-pronged approach yielded sufficient results to answer all the research questions. The connections between each research method and the research questions were as follows.

The online questionnaire was concerned with answering research question one – ‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’ – because it will provide information on the way audiences participate with news blogs on newspaper websites. For example, do they just read the news blog story, or do they also read the comments, post an opinion, or ask the blogger a question? For research question two, ‘How much attention do news blog users pay to those news blogs?’, the questionnaire will provide information on the extent to which news blog users read, create and share opinions about news and public issues on news blogs; their demographic characteristics, including their exposure to mainstream news media; and their motives for using news blogs. For research question three, ‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’, the questionnaire will

provide information on the extent of news blog topics that audiences identified they have posted on blogs. For research question four, ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’, the questionnaire will provide information on the perceived credibility of news blogs that have been posted by journalists, by independent journalists and by individuals, comparing them with mainstream news reports. Finally, the questionnaire will answer research question five: ‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’ The questionnaire will provide information on the relationship between claimed use of news blogs and other reported behaviour and attitudes. The questionnaire also aimed to find out how the use of news blogs affects the time spent on reading online newspapers.

The in-depth interviews related all five research questions but from the perspectives of news professionals. For research question one, ‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’, the interviews provided information on the organisational policy towards reader blogs on newspaper websites and the extent to which news professionals use reader blogs as news hints and sources. For research question two, ‘How much attention do they pay to those news blogs?’, the interviews examined the characteristics of news blog users, and the popularity of news blogs on the websites of newspapers from the perspective of news professionals. For research question three, ‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’, the interviews explored the views of news professionals on the capacity of news blog stories to add a greater variety of topics to mainstream news reports. For research question four, ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’, the interview examined the views of news professionals on the credibility of news blogs and find out how, and to what extent, they use news blogs as news sources for their news reports. And

for research question five, ‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’, the interview investigated news professionals’ opinions on the impact of news blogs on news consumers’ attitudes and behaviours.

The content analysis provided information on the extent to which newspaper websites embrace reader blogs. This information was designed to support research question one: ‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’ The content analysis also provided information on the number of blog authors, blog readers and comments, which addressed research question two: ‘How much attention do they pay to those news blogs?’ The content analysis looked at blog topics, which will support research question three: ‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’ The responses with regard to the extent of the sources of information that news blog authors identified in their stories supported research question four: ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’ Finally, the extent of audiences’ opinions with regard to news blog stories/authors supported research question five: ‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part is the research framework and background of the study. Chapter 2 will begin with the context of blogging. The definition of blogs, types of blogs, history of blogs, birth of news blogs, debates of the uses of blogs as news sources, and news blogging and the public sphere will be discussed. Then, the uses

and gratifications approach and related research, news objectivity and the concept of credibility and related research will be clarified, as they will be used to interpret the findings of this study. Diagram of the conceptual framework of the study will be illustrated at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 3 examines the landscape of news media in Thailand by focusing on Thai newspapers both offline and online. Next, the blogging phenomenon in Thailand will be described. This section will include the history of blogs and the emergence of news blogs in Thailand. The rights and freedom of citizens and the media in Thai democracy and the political polarisation of the ‘Shirts’ in Thailand will also be detailed.

Chapter 4 presents a description of the methodology. The three parts of the methodology – online questionnaires with news blog users, interviews with news professionals, and content analysis with the three reader blog communities – will be described.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from the online questionnaires, which asked news blog users of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog about their use of news blogs, their characteristics and their attention to general news media. The similarities and differences between heavy and light blog users in terms of both their demographic characteristics and their general news-media consumption patterns will also be distinguished.

Chapter 6 presents further findings from the online questionnaires, which asked news blog users from the three blog communities about their news-topic interests, their news blog use motivations, and their perception of news and news blogs’ credibility. Similarities and differences between heavy and light blog users concerning news blog use motivations; similarities and differences between heavy and light blog users concerning

news blog credibility; correlations between news-media frequency of use and the credibility of news and news blogs; and significant predictors of news blogging will also be presented.

Chapter 7 presents the findings from the interviews with two news-organisation leaders and five news professionals who have used at least one of the three news blog communities. It will reveal the perceptions of news professionals in relation to the importance of blogging as a component of mainstream news provision, media professionals' perceptions of news blog users, perceptions of the diversity of news on news blogs, perceptions of the quality of news on news blogs, and perceptions of the impact of newspaper-linked blogs on news consumers.

Chapter 8 presents the findings from the content analysis instrument. It will demonstrate the format of 'user-generated content' on Thai newspaper websites, the characteristics of news blogs on Thai newspaper websites, and the different characteristics of the three blog communities.

Chapter 9 discusses the findings as a whole and their implications for theory and for newsmakers. It will revisit the research questions and assess how effectively they were answered. The findings will be compared with those from relevant published literature and the theoretical frameworks to interpret the results. The final conclusion including the limitations to the study will also be discussed and some recommendations that flow from it will be made.

PART ONE

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework of the Study

This chapter will examine the emergence and nature of blogging on the Internet. It will consider in particular the importance of blogs, even early on, as information sources. The significant role that blogs can play as alternatives to mainstream news sources has been underlined by their application when major catastrophes and conflicts have occurred. Most blogs are personal diaries. Some blogs, however, have become established as influential and widely used sources of news. This phenomenon has emerged over the past few years in Thailand, but little systematic research has so far been carried out to investigate how they are used, what they present, how much credibility they have and how important they have become in the news environment. The current study aims to fill this gap.

2.1 The Context of Blogging

This research focuses on blogs and news journalism. So, this section primarily discusses the context of blogging in terms of the definition of blogs, types of blogs, history of blogs and how blogs have grown in significance in the context of news and debates of the uses of blogs, as well as news blogging and the public sphere.

2.1.1 Defining Blogs

A blog is “a personal website or web page on which an individual records opinions, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2013). It is also “a web page made up of usually short, frequently updated text blocks or entries that are arranged in reverse chronological order” (Bowman and Willis, 2003, p.23). At the top of page users can see the most recent information. A blog may have lists of other useful blogs,

which are called blog rolls, directing audiences to relevant resources; podcasting, a form of distribution of sound recording; and videocasting or vodcasting, video files that can be downloaded or streamed to the computer (Newson, Houghton, and Patten, 2008). Kaye (2007, p.129) described blogs as “a combination website/bulletin board/e-mail ... used as one-way and two-way forms of communicating”. Blog users might read, click the links, send opinions or engage in the dialogue that a blogger has shared with his/her readers (Kaye, 2007).

According to Briggs (2007, p.54), a blog comprises the following characteristics:

1. A frequently updated online journal, written in a conversational style, with entries displayed in reverse chronological order (most recent stuff on top);
2. Links to other news and information found on the web complemented with analysis from the blogger (or bloggers);
3. A “comments” link that allows readers to post their own thoughts on what the blogger is writing about. Not all blogs allow comments, but most do.

A blog is different from other websites because it “allowed users to post entries into predesigned templates [which] led to an explosion of short-form diaries, but the reverse-chronological format has remained constant” (Blood, 2003, p.61). It has encouraged online populations to have a high level of social engagement (Mika, 2007) and has the power to mobilise them to influence social and political change, such as in the case of Trent Lott’s resignation (Kaye, 2007). Blog users or bloggers are sometimes “acting as journalists and therefore potential news-providers or simply offering opinions on particular topics” (Bivens, 2008, p.110). They spend only minimal financial expense to publish written work, and they are not subject to an editorial gatekeeping process (Messner and DiStaso, 2008),

“the process of selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009, p.73).

For Bowman and Willis (2003, p.9), a blog is a form of participatory journalism: “The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.” Ordinary citizens who bear witness to and capture event pictures, video clips, or sound clips from the scene and post on blogs might be called amateur news reporters, instant reporters, citizen journalists, citizen reporters, and so on (Allan, 2009). For another writer, blogs that are “maintained by news organisations, by professional journalists outside news organisations and by individuals with an interest in politics and policy issues [are] often referred to as citizen journalist blogs” (Touri, 2009, p.171).

2.1.2 Types of Blogs

There are different ways to categorise blogs. According to Newson, Houghton and Patten (2008, p.4-5), blogs can be divided into groups such as “academic, arts, business and professional, entertainment, financial, food, jobs and careers, technology, personal, sport, politics or others”. Blogs can also be classified by styles of writing, such as diary-style blogging; filter blogging, or blogging which brings certain items to readers’ attention while ignoring others (Tremayne, 2007); and topic-driven blogging (Rettberg, 2008). For Bruns (2007, p.11), “the practice of covering the news through blogging – whether by doing original reporting or by providing commentary on the news as it is reported in other news

sources” is called news blogging. In the world of blogs, not all blogs are about news and journalism. However, this thesis focuses on the role of blogs in relation to news provision.

According to Blood (2003), blogs produced by journalists, industry professionals, eyewitnesses, and individuals who provided information about news or public events can be called journalism blogs. Ulicny and Baclawski (2007) indicated that most news blogs are commentaries on news. They largely provide hyperlinks or refer to direct or indirect quotations from traditional news sources. Hundreds of thousands of bloggers around the world post views about the news (McNair, 2011). Gunter et al. (2009, p.200) pointed out that “blogs may not offer ‘pure news’ but they have an important role to play in assisting news consumers to organise, interpret and make sense of the growing volumes of news that the internet has facilitated”. Gunter et al. (2009) also classified blogs which provide contents that relate to, comment on, interrogate, analyse and sometimes influence the mainstream media news agenda as journalism blogs, or jblogs for short, because news reporting is only one kind of journalism.

2.1.3 History of Blogs

The term ‘blog’ was first used in the early 1990s. At that time, blog was known as the log of visitors on the web, and it is a simple publishing channel for everyone (Rettberg, 2008). The term ‘blog’ is the short form of ‘weblog’, which was coined by Jorn Barger in December 1997 (Allan, 2006). He described a ‘weblog’ as “a format that was slowly being formalized into a daily net journal” (Allan, 2006, p.45). The term ‘weblog’ is a combination of ‘web’ and ‘log’, the latter word meaning “the record of the traffic for a web server” (Allan, 2006, p.45).

Which blog was first produced on the Internet is still unclear (Newson, Houghton, and Patten, 2008). Allan (2006) pointed out that the decision as to which blog was the first to appear depends on how a blog is defined. The first website, which was built by Tim Berners-Lee (<http://info.cern.ch/>), might be considered as the first blog (Allan, 2006). Meanwhile, Barlow (2007) argued that ‘Bulletin Board Systems’, the personal publishing systems which were used a decade before the existence of the World Wide Web, had similar features and could be seen as the predecessors of blogs. These personal publishing systems provided users an ability to communicate with people far away, but the model was local.

Nowadays, the majority of blogs in the blogosphere are personal blogs which are authored by a single person, although there are other types of blogs in existence, such as a ‘content aggregator’ (Allan, 2006). Interestingly, the world of blogs has had much growth since it first emerged. In 2007, there were more than 70 million blogs in the blogosphere (Sifry, 2007).

2.1.4 The Emergence and Debates of the Uses of Blogs as News Sources

It is more than a decade that blogs have existed in the world of online news. Several news organisations in different countries have also fit blogs and other formats of user contributions in their news websites. The prevalence of blogs on the Internet has led to a question of ‘whether or not they cause threat to traditional media’ (Allan, 2006; Rettberg, 2008; Meyers, 2012). Some scholars claimed that news blogs can provide first-hand reports, up-to-date stories, rare evidences, and critical comments. Keen (2007) and Meyers (2012) argued that established news media have been intervening by blogs, whereas Ulicny and Baclawski (2007), Pavlik (2008) and Tremayne (2008) argued that most of news blog

stories are commentaries and second-hand reports. Although some studies have indicated that blogs have been found to refresh news stories and drawn them to the attention of mainstream news media, this thesis argues that a small number of news blogs can become news agenda. This part of thesis will discuss these debates and several aspects regarding news blogs. It will start with the definition of news blog, the origin of news blog, factors that have driven the spread of blogs and the way general public and journalists used blogs.

McQuail (2005, p.562) defined news as “the main form in which current information about public events is carried by media of all kinds. There is a great diversity of types and formats as well as cross-cultural differences, but defining characteristics are generally held to be timeliness, relevance and reliability.” The origin of information or sources of news covers general people, often officials, experts, news agencies and organisations (Berkowitz, 2009). In line with the definition of news, blog stories which give information about current public events can be a format of news. However, news blogs differ from news reports produced by professional journalists in many points. In order to keep their reputation, news professionals have to adhere to the standard of practices. They present news content in the format of inverted pyramid (begin with headline, followed by lead, neck and body of the text) and cannot put their personal opinion into the news. For news blog authors, they have no need to follow the journalistic standards. As Gunter et al. (2009) highlighted, news blog stories are not necessary to report pure news in a professional journalistic sense. They were mostly found providing opinion of current events rather than giving original reports (Lasica, 2003; Fenton and Witschge, 2011).

A number of news blogs have obviously emerged out of eyewitness crisis reporting of major disasters, political events and wars. They will have a very high amount of use if mainstream news media have traffic problems, cannot answer the audience’s questions, or

have a vacuum of information (Allan and Thorsen, 2009). Most of bloggers who perform as citizen journalists briefly summarize the issue or event before adding their own views. They usually publish minor updates, so the audience can catch up with the most recent stories and backtrack to the original report (Bruns, 2007). Bloggers often post issues about politics, war, media, social issues and topics that can fulfil the gap of news. They often notice and write about the important issues that journalists may miss (Singer, 2007). Singer (2007) called this kind of bloggers as “Watchdog on the watchdog” (p.28). This role of news bloggers is compatible with Andrew (2003) and Heinonen (2011)’s debate. Andrew (2003) indicated that bloggers can offer news hints and point out mistakes of stories produced by journalists. Heinonen (2011) argued that blogs and other social media users can provide feedback about what journalists have already produced. They are commentators, co-workers of news professionals, or community members who talk about things that they are interested in. Renowned news organisations like CNN and BBC realised the usefulness of blogs by regularly visiting the blogosphere in order to gauge public opinion on controversial issues (Bruns, 2007). However, Fenton and Witschge (2011) contended that journalists use the blogosphere occasionally, not a regular basis.

It could be said that the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 marked the birth of news blogging for the wider news-consuming public, and there were many major events subsequently that fuelled news blogging, such as the aftermath of the Asian tsunami of December 2004, the London bombings (Allan, 2006; Tremayne, 2007), and the Wenchuan earthquake in south-west China in May 2008 (Nip, 2009). Some news blog stories were not only caught the attention of the public but could also become a source of news for professional journalists (Schrobsdorff, 2005; Nip, 2009). Some reporters use Twitter, a kind of microblogging website, to find news sources/witnesses of specific events, such as the

aftermath of a plane crash at the airport in Buffalo, New York (Hambleton, 2009). In some cases, bloggers could affect events collectively, such as in the case of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, who quit his leadership position following the growing pressure from a number of bloggers (Johnson and Kaye, 2004).

Before the widespread of blogs, news organisations have formerly utilised general public and the Internet into their journalistic tasks. Between 1994 and 2001, more than 20 per cent of 15 hundreds daily newspapers in the US practised civic journalism (Pew Center for Civic Journalism, 2002). Some traditional news media used the Internet as an additional resource, providing services and information on it and checking the truth of information which is gained from other news sources (Manning, 2001). According to Deuze (2003), journalists in the USA use the Internet as searchable archives, databases and news sources. Pavlik (2001) suggested that journalists can use the Internet as a news source, but should use reliable websites which are created by known people.

Bowman and Willis (2003) argued that media companies could earn benefits if they empower audience. Blog is a form of user contribution on the Internet. Blog users can provide tips, information from the place where news media cannot cover. As of 2008, seven out of ten newspapers in the US (PEJ, 2008), nearly half European news organisations and about nine out of ten UK news organisations (Oriella PR Network, 2008) were proposing journalist blogs. According to Lasica (2003, p.72), MSNBC, The Providence Journal, The Dallas Morning News, and Christian Science have embraced blogs because they realised that this kind of web community “offer[s] an opportunity for news rooms to become more transparent, more accessible, and more answerable to their readers”. In an online survey of 200 professional journalists in 30 countries carried out in June and July 2008 – mostly from the US, Canada and UK– Bradshaw (2010) claimed that blogging was useful for their

journalistic process. Bradshaw (2010) explained that when generating an idea, the perception of audience needs, interests and visitor statistics resulted in the selection of topics, angles of story and story developing. In the gathering information stage, readers could help with research, clarifying and fact-checking. In the production stage, the journalist's writing style changed to more personal and less formal. And in the post-publication stage, interactivity and conversation on blogs helped in fixing errors, and blogs could be frequently updated. Bradshaw (2010) also highlighted that blogs led to more personal relationships with readers and journalists were no longer anonymous figures. Journalists also felt more pressure to be responsible for their news consumers and less overconfident. Website ranking and cheap ways to get lots of content online were the other two advantages to having blogs on news websites.

Various information and perspectives from different kind of people can be found from blogs. Salam Pax, as the role of independent journalist blogger, went to Iraq to bear witness and write blog stories about Iraq war. His travel expenses were funded by his blog readers (Rettberg, 2008). On the same event, Lieutenant Smash in his role of an American soldier in Iraq posted stories relating to the war zone on his personal diary blog (Rettberg, 2008). An individual blogger with the pseudonym 'ntcoolfool' could draw attention of global news media by writing first-hand reports and constantly updated stories about the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings on 16 April 2007 in LiveJournal blog (Rettberg, 2008). Some news organisations have encouraged their news crews to share information on blogs in order to get valuable feedback from the audience (Singer, 2007). Gunter et al. (2009) underlined that blogging can reduce the power of information control of mass media, which is healthy for democracy. However, it could have a specific agenda.

The characteristics and behaviours of blog users were revealed by some studies. Their findings indicated that general blog users were young adult, well-educated and used blogs as a hobby. Lenhart and Fox (2006) reported that 57 million American adults or 39 per cent of Internet users read blogs. The majority of American bloggers (37%) used blogs as a personal diary, 11% used blogs for the topic of politics and government, and only 1 in 20 bloggers said they covered general news and current events. Most bloggers in this survey were under 30 years of age (54%), used a pseudonym as their blogger name (55%), and spent time on blogs as a hobby (84%). When they posted a blog, 56% of them spent extra time on verifying facts that they wanted to include and nearly all of them (95%) got news from the Internet. Technorati (2011a and 2011b) surveyed 4,114 bloggers around the world between September 13 and October 4, 2011 and found that they were more male than female, most of them had age 25-44 years old, finished graduate degree, and a quarter being self-employed and under half were employed full-time. They had 2-4 years blogging experiences and blogged up to three hours per week. It is obvious that these studies usually examined general blog users. They did not particularly focus on news blog users. So, the characteristics of news blog users and their specific behaviours are still not so clear. As Gunter et al. (2009, p.193) identified, systematic studies of the use of news blogs among audience “have so far been rare.”

However, media scholars described that news blog users can be both active producers and consumers of content. Bruns (2007, p.6) called a hybrid of producer and user of information a “produser”. Bruns (2007, p.6) stated that the blogosphere is a place where massively distributed collaborative “produsage” of information and knowledge can be found. For mainstream news websites, there are many terms that have been used to describe the contribution of users such as user-generated content, citizen journalism, produsage, and

participatory journalism (Singer et al, 2011). Hermida (2011) identified that news organisations have provided many formats of space for user contributions but few of them have allowed users to control the selection of the messages. The opportunity of user contribution mostly came at the end of news process – comment on news – that journalists have already published. News crews perceived their audience as an active recipient of news and a source of information (Hermida, 2011).

A recent study by Singer (2014) emphasised that user contributions are an important component of mainstream news websites. Singer (2014) found that 114 out of 138 US newspapers have offered 4 or more options for user contribution. 77 newspapers have offered ‘Comment on news’, 34 (24.6%) offered ‘Email’, 22 (15.9%) offered ‘Shared on Facebook’, 13 (9.4%) offered ‘Popular photos/video’, 8 (5.8%) offered ‘Forums’, 2 (1.4%) offered ‘Blog’ and 2 (1.4%) offered ‘Search’. These options could help increasing their website traffic.

Singer (2014) also pointed out that news professionals are not always at the heart of the process as several users of US newspaper websites are playing the role of secondary gatekeeper. The ‘two-step gatekeeping process’ has already existed in the online news environment. In other words, the initial editorial decisions could be rejected or accepted by users before they reproduce the content on blog (Singer, 2014). Users of mainstream news media use blogs, social media and other websites, to “upgrade or downgrade the visibility (of news) for a secondary audience” (Singer, 2014, p.55). Singer (2014) noted that the newsworthiness of news was judged again by users but the meaning of newsworthiness in the perception of news professionals and users might not be the same. Users might copy entire content or partially copy it. They can also add other information and write their opinions. Hence, the gatekeeping practices have already shifted to gatewatching. Journalists

can only watch the gates where the information passes from news sources to the public (Bruns, 2007). However, previous evidence indicated that user-generated content usually had problem about the lack of balance (Thurman, 2008), the inaccuracy of information and the poor writing (Singer, 2010).

2.1.5 News Blogging and the Public Sphere

The role of blogging in the public sphere is not major focus of this current thesis. However, this section provides this context in order to show that blog is a free space where a large audience can discuss a variety of topics. So, news blogging can be associated with the notion of public sphere.

The term ‘public sphere’ was first used by Jürgen Habermas in a book namely ‘The structural transformation of the public sphere: an investigation of a category of bourgeois society’ in 1962 (German language), which was translated into English and published for the first time in 1989 (Gripsrud, 2009). Habermas (1989, p.27) defined “bourgeois public sphere” as “the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules’ governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour”.

Habermas (1989) examined bourgeois public sphere in Western Europe between the 16th and 19th century. In brief, before the expansion of maritime trade the feudal superiors had the absolute power over the territory. Between the late of 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, the widespread of merchants and ideologists had changed the economic and society of the territory. They transmitted their experience and knowledge to the citizen. Coffee shop, salon, and theatre became public space where private people came together as

a public. They exchanged their opinion and talk about public issues. Letters, brochures, announcement papers, and newspapers had been used as the mediated publics. This change made the feudal superiors lose their absolute power. However, since the second half of the 19th century, the media had served commercial enterprise instead of performing as a political forum for rational-critical debate (Habermas, 1989).

The concept of public sphere proposed by Habermas has been redefined and criticised by many scholars. Dahlgren (1993, p.3) defined the public sphere as “a special social space that offered the possibility of citizen to engage in discussion on the state’s exercise of power”. McQuail (2010, p.569) defined public sphere as “the conceptual space that exists in a society outside the immediate circle of private life and the walls of enclosed institutions and organizations pursuing their own (albeit sometimes public) goals”. It is also considered as a forum that allows all citizens to communicate about and debate social issues (Gripsrud, 2009).

Dahlgren (1993) explained that the concept of public sphere is an appendage of democracy theory. It arose in Western countries during the capitalism period. Dahlgren (1993) criticised that although the work of Habermas in 1962 is undeniable pathbreaking, it is unclear for many points: (1) his thesis did not identify its patriarchal character; (2) a big theoretical vacuum remained because alternative, common class, informal or oppositional public sphere were never mentioned; and (3) the work did not explain how people continue the conversation and arrive at political view. Dahlgren (1993, p.1-2) proposed that the study of “post-bourgeois public sphere”, a variety of actors, factors and contexts as indicated by Habermas together with the institutional configurations within the media, social order and their connection to the democratic participation of citizens have to be employed as a cohesive theoretical framework.

It is not only the main concept that has been contested, but also the notion that the media are at the heart of the public sphere. Dahlgren (1993) specified that when talking about media's role in the public sphere, the question of "how and to what extent the media can help citizens to learn about the world, debate their response to it and reach informed decisions about what courses the action to adopt" has been raised (Dahlgren, 1993, p.1). Curran (1991) explained that the media, in liberal democratic countries, usually perform as a space between the government and society: they inform choices for election times, form forum for public opinion, and so forth. By referring to these practices, the media are an important institution of the public sphere. Curran (1991, p.29) also explained about the role of media as public sphere in radical democratic countries. In this case, the media are the battle ground between contending forces. This performance affects "the balances of social forces and the distribution of rewards in society". Rettberg (2008) added that the mass media in democratic countries cannot perfectly perform as public sphere because very few people could share their ideas via mass media. Additionally, issues that have been allowed to be published or broadcasted have to be filtered by editorial policies. As same as Thailand, Boonsiripunth (2005) who studied about freedom of the mass media since the first newspaper happened in Thailand. She found that reporters and gatekeepers seem to serve their investors, their sponsors, politicians or their owner rather than their audiences. So, it is not easy for ordinary people who want to spread their opinions via mainstream media (Boonsiripunth, 2005).

With the progress of the Internet and communication technologies, the democratisation of media became more realistic, and millions of people can now easily publish words and pictures not only from their laptops but also from their mobile phones to the public, anywhere and anytime. Additionally, the costs of distributing content online are

very low, low enough for anyone to afford (Bowman and Willis, 2003). In the online world, blog is a kind of social network website (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). It is a kind of mediated public because it is an “environment where people can gather publicly through mediated technology” (Boyd, 2007a, p.2). The mediated public has at least four special properties: 1. Persistence – the conversations are recorded and can be accessed at any time; 2. Searchability – users can find or track the conversations and activities; 3. Replicability – the materials can be copied into other places so it is difficult to distinguish the original from the copy; and 4. Invisible audiences – audiences can run across the conversations at any time so it is difficult to ascertain who the audiences are (Boyd, 2007a, p.2-3).

Many forms of mediated public in the online world could enhance democracy. The study of the influence of digital media on democracy, which has been discussed since the 1990s, has indicated that Internet technology can open up a new dimension and format of public discourse (Gripsrud, 2009). The Internet has also separated communication spheres, decentralised the monopoly of established media and provided diversification of public discourse (McNair, 2011). Dahlgren (2005, p.151) explained that the Internet has extended and pluralized the public sphere because it offers “available space for many forms of civic initiatives”. Dahlgren (2005) divided the online public sphere into five sectors: e-government domain; advocacy/activist domain; civic forums; pre-political domain; and journalism domain (individual blog sites belong to journalism domain).

McNair (2011) accepted that the ‘Fourth Estate’ or the mass media is being undermined by amateurs who use various forms of mediated public. Individual bloggers have the potential to produce news but their stories are “frequently inaccurate, opinionated without being authoritative, and add little to the stock of knowledge in the public sphere”

(McNair, 2011, p.44). Keen (2007) argued that Web 2.0 revolution has empowered people's voice and brought a new democratized system. The growing number of amateurs is gradually replacing the journalists, editors, professional critics, and other experts (Keen, 2007). They are threatening the long-lasting intellectual traditions and institutions. However, they often spread rumours and propaganda which result in the decline of quality and reliability of information. Keen (2007) remarked that information users must keep in mind that they can be the victims and suffer from misinformation from these noble amateurs.

Dahlgren (2005) highlighted that there are two perspectives on the role of online public sphere. One perspective believed that it changes the way democracy works, but another perspective argued that "the Internet becomes not only relevant but central" especially it has "the capacity for the horizontal communication of civic interaction" (Dahlgren, 2005, p.154-155). Some studies revealed the role of online discussion space provided by mainstream news media and the public sphere. Zhou, Chan, and Peng (2008) examined the quality of public debate on Guangzhou Daily newspaper namely 'Dayoo.com' by referring to the concept of the public sphere. They found that a political public sphere was emerging on this platform, but it was in the beginning stage. The discourse on this website had quality but the complexity of dialogue and the exposure of disagreement were not yet full-grown. This study shows that even in a non-democratic country like China, citizens can now discuss various issues and share opinions online instead of waiting for the opportunity to debate to be provided by the mass media, such as air time of TV broadcasting, air time of radio, and pages of print newspapers.

Focusing on news blogging and the public sphere, according to Rettberg (2008, p.85), "Blogs provide a means of publishing and distributing that is cheap and simple

enough for everyone.” Blogs are the area of public discourse around news which can frame and change news reports (Gunter et al., 2009). Bloggers could serve as “a corrective mechanism for bad journalism – sloppy or erroneous reporting” by researching and writing in more detail (Andrews, 2003, p.63). Albrecht (2006) insisted that blogs have democratised the news because they provide space for everyone to present their voice and join a global network. In line with Singer (2011), participatory journalism allowed general public to express diverse voices; however, Singer did not explain what diverse voices look like and how they democratised the news. This thesis argues that although diverse opinions concerning news issues can be expressed via blogs, there is a few chances that their voices can be selected to present on mainstream news media. As Hermida (2011) argued, the opportunity of user contribution mostly came at the end of news process. It was only a few chances that bloggers could engage in the stage of news production.

A study of citizen journalism in China demonstrated that citizen journalism can have a valuable function. It aided mainstream journalism to perform the Fourth Estate role. But citizen journalism is also a tool of hate speech (Xin, 2011). Xin (2011) argued that citizen journalism alone could not drive social change, but it could work together with mainstream journalism to limit the power of the political party in this country to control online information flows.

In the UK, some editors and managing editors accept user-generated content can help to increase the level of traffic to the news website and can provide a source of content for news stories (Thurman, 2008). However, space for readers to express their views or participate in online news websites has many formats. Thurman and Hermida (2010) surveyed mainstream UK news websites over three periods (April 2005, November 2006 and May and June 2008) and found that there were nine ‘user-generated content’ formats

on twelve UK news websites: ‘Blogs’, ‘Comments on stories’, ‘Have your say’, ‘Messageboards’, ‘Polls’, ‘Q&As’, ‘Reader blogs’, ‘Your media’, and ‘Your story’. Among these UGCs, 80% were pre-moderated before publication. Thurman and Hermida (2010) also explained that the journalistic norm is still an important part of the implementation and regulation of the content which is generated by readers. The reason for editing came from the editor’s need to keep the quality of these materials.

This section has reviewed the definition of blogs, their types, how they emerged, how they have existed as one kind of news source for both mainstream news providers and general people, their classification as potential news sources, some critical debates, including the role of blogs and the public sphere. The next part of this chapter examines the importance of audience motives in the use of blogs. It is already known that consumption of news is associated with specific motives. This idea has previously been explored by researchers most often under the heading of ‘uses and gratifications’. The work that has emerged under this heading has yielded mixed evidence on the significance of audience motives as drivers of media behaviour. There have also been methodological weaknesses in some of this research in respect to the degree of sensitivity to human motives as specific measures of gratifications display.

2.2 Understanding Blog Users’ Motives: A Uses and Gratifications Approach

2.2.1 *Basic Concept of Uses and Gratifications*

In the study of any new media phenomenon that encompasses an investigation of audiences and how they become engaged with that medium, it is essential to know something about the motives that underpin their media-using behaviour. In the study of media and

communications, much of research on audience motives has been theoretically discussed and empirically investigated under the broad heading of ‘uses and gratifications’.

The uses and gratifications approach is “the idea that media use depends on the perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes or motives of the prospective audience member” (McQuail, 2005, p.423). This approach has been used by a number of researchers to investigate why people use traditional news media, online news media (i.e. Ruggiero, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; and Charney and Greenberg, 2001) and blogs (i.e. Kaye, 2005, 2007; Chung et al., 2007; Sweetser et al., 2008). The researchers who have used this approach have perceived audiences as active receivers because they can find out information from the media to satisfy their needs (Levy and Windahl, 1984; Kaye and Johnson, 2002). This basic assumption is different from an earlier approach that saw audience members as homogeneous passive receivers of media messages (Kaye and Johnson, 2002). This approach seems to be suitable for this thesis because it can help in explaining why a group of Thai people use news blogs.

2.2.2 History of Uses and Gratifications Research

Empirical research which paid attention to the gratifications that media provide their audiences appeared in the early 1940s (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974; McQuail, 2010). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) argued that the studies in early years, which discovered lists of functions that media provided audiences (i.e. the study of Herzog in 1942 about quiz programmes and soap operas on radio, the study of Berelson in 1949 about the functions of newspaper readings, etc.), employed open-ended methods to gain statements about media functions from the respondents. Those statements ignored the distribution of the populations and they did not show the link between gratifications and

socio-psychological needs. They also failed to demonstrate the connections among media functions. So, the previous studies “did not result in a cumulatively more detailed picture of media gratifications conducive to the eventual formulation of theoretical statements” (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974, p.509).

In the 1960s and 1970s this approach was revived, this time connecting gratification with the socio-psychological origins of audiences’ needs (McQuail, 2010). Before the revival of gratifications studies, Lasswell (1964) proposed surveillance, correlation, and cultural transmission as the functions that media provided society, and Wright (1960) proposed the function of entertainment. The function of the media continued to be investigated, such as in the study of McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972). McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) studied several television and radio broadcasting programmes in the UK. They proposed that people use the media for surveillance, personal connections, personal identity and entertainment.

In relation to the essence of the uses and gratifications approach, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974, p.510) described the process of media selection of individuals: “(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones.” Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) also clarified that this model can work backwards from gratifications to needs and remarked that this model has five components:

1. The audience is conceived of as active...;
2. In the mass communication process much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies

with the audience members. This places a strong limitation on theorizing about any form of straight-line effect of media content on attitudes and behavior...; 3. The media competes with other sources of need satisfaction...; 4. Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members...; and 5. Value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms..... (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974, p.510-511)

According to McQuail (2010), the model of the uses and gratifications approach was developed by several studies, for instance, the studies of Becker (1979) and Rubin (1983), which focused on media-use motivations. Becker (1979) compared four pieces of research in order to distinguish similarities and differences in media-use motives. Becker (1979) also detailed that there were three distinct strategies for measuring media gratifications among audiences. First, by inference – “information needs of audience members based on locator variable i.e. sex, age”; second, by self-reported measures – “a list of gratifications developed from earlier research sessions and asked to indicate which of the gratifications applied to them”; and third, by experiment – “subjects could be instructed to pay attention to a given message for a specific reason ... These subjects then could be compared to others having been given different instructions—or gratifications—to learn of the implications of the gratifications on subsequent behavior” (Becker, 1979, pp.54–55). Becker (1979) remarked that the study of Blumler and McQuail in 1969 tended to cover the range of political motivations that led audiences to use television and newspapers. These

motivations comprised vote guidance and surveillance, reinforcement seeking, and communicatory utilities items.

Rubin (1983) employed the uses and gratifications approach to investigate TV-use motivation and found that 'passing the time and entertainment' could effectively predict viewing patterns whereas 'escaping/forget personal problem' did not produce a positive relationship with television affinity. Rubin (1983) also found that the entertainment motivation contributed to the use of television's content and 'to seek information, learn and not for escape' were motivations for TV use, especially the watching of talk-interviews, news and game shows. Rubin (1983) suggested that future research should study social consequences or interpersonal interaction and TV viewing in order to develop a 'TV use model'.

Since the Internet has become a new popular medium, audiences' use motives have been investigated by the uses and gratification approach. Researchers have continued studying why people use several resources on the World Wide Web. Ruggiero (2000) indicated that in the twenty-first century, the study of the use of old media and new media, especially any forms of computer-mediated communication among news consumers, must use this approach. With technology support in this century, "audiences are much more active than ever before" (McNair, 2011, p.42).

Some studies have examined the differences between the use of the Internet and other media, whereas other researchers have examined motives of using specific types of content online and blog usage. Between 1995 and 1999, Stempel III, Hargrove and Bernt (2000) studied the growth of the Internet and its effect on the use of media. They found that although the Internet was widely used, it was not the main reason for the decline of local TV, network TV and newspapers. Internet users were information seekers. They went

online for news. Moreover, they tended to use other media more than non-Internet users did. Stempel III, Hargrove and Bernt (2000) remarked that it was beyond their study to answer why old-media use was in decline while Internet use had dramatically increased, but they postulated that the use of media might depend on the credibility of each type of media. Kaye (2007) also examined the use of the Internet as a medium and found that individuals connected to the Internet for amusement, diversion and social interaction, and to kill time. There has also been research that has examined the motives of using content online. Kaye and Johnson (2002) found that four principal motivations of online political information exposure include guidance, information-seeking/surveillance, entertainment, and social utility were among audiences.

Looking at previous studies which are closer to this thesis, the study of Kaye in 2005 is the earliest study of blog use that applied the uses and gratifications approach. It employed an open-ended online questionnaire asking respondents to identify up to three separate reasons for their use of blogs. Kaye (2007) found that there were 28 reasons for using blogs that could be divided into six factors: Information Seeking/Media Check, Convenience, Personal Fulfilment, Political Surveillance, Social Surveillance, and Expression/Affiliation. In order to disclose additional blog use motivations, Kaye (2007) employed open-ended questions asking blog users. Finally, there were 62 motivational items found. Kaye (2007) suggested that the level of agreement of these 62 reasons should be calculated and a factor analysis should be done in order to prove the strength of the motivational blocks and the validity of the research instruments. Sweetser et al. (2008) examined blog-related motivation but focused on an activity-based concept of use to understand how the communication industry had integrated blogs. They found that journalists and public relations practitioners rarely to occasionally used blogs. The majority

of journalists who used blogs maintained a blog for work. Chung et al. (2007) found that professional journalists from different types of organisations and in various occupations had various uses of blogs. The most prominent blog use among professional journalists was reading blogs as part of daily news consumption, followed by reading for alternative viewpoints, and by reading additional information on an issue/topic.

Evidence has shown that some journalists use blogs not only for the purpose of consuming but also because they intend to be bloggers themselves. J. D. Lasica who was senior editor of Online Journalism Review, sometimes wrote his reviews on a blog because it has enough space to include the whole story of his journal articles (Bowman and Willis, 2003). Before officially publishing anything, some journalists need to get feedback from readers (Bowman and Willis, 2003). Some people become bloggers because they need to use blogs as a tool for keeping and sharing personal and company knowledge. Through feedback or comment from readers, interaction and refinement of ideas could occur (Bowman and Willis, 2003). Meanwhile, Fenton and Witschge (2011) argued that professional journalists do not generally believe that the interactivity and participation characteristic of a Web 2.0 environment are a positive development.

This part has demonstrated the main concept of uses and gratifications including the study of blog-use motivations. Thurman (2008, p.154) suggested that future studies need to find out “the extent to which users are interested both in participating themselves, and viewing other readers’ contributions”. McQuail (2010) remarked that although the uses and gratifications approach was developed, it was criticised, as the link between audiences’ motives and media-use behaviour is frequently unstable. It is also difficult to find “a logical, consistent and sequential relation between the three factors of liking/preference, actual choosing and subsequent evaluation” (McQuail, 2010, p.425). This thesis aims to

contribute to the uses and gratifications model by focusing on the motives of news blog audiences, including examining whether audiences' demographic characteristics; their Internet and mainstream news-media using behaviour; and their credibility perception could affect their news blog-use behaviour.

The next section will examine the issue of objectivity and consider its relevance in the context of blogs as news. Then, the concept of credibility and related studies will be clarified, as credibility is more related to the measurement of quality of news blogs from the perspective of news consumers. The justification for examining news objectivity first is that it is the key issue in relation to the definition of news blogs and in determining whether they actually represent news. To do this, they must observe a number of the cornerstone principles of good journalism. Among these is an adherence to objectivity in their reporting.

2.3 The Concepts of News Objectivity and Credibility

2.3.1 *The Basic Concept of News Objectivity*

According to McQuail (2010), "objectivity" is the ideal standard of practice for news professionals in collecting, processing and disseminating quality news information, and it helps to increase public trust towards the information and the media that offer it. In general terms, the objectivity standard comprises "factual accuracy, lack of bias, separation of fact from comment, transparency about sources, and not taking sides" (McQuail, 2010, p.565).

News people understand that news objectivity is a concept that they should follow; however, they have their own perception of it, and each news organisation also has its own rules of practice. The study of Boyer (1981) found that balance; accuracy; presentation of entirely key relevant points; separation of opinion from fact; minimising the influence of

the writer's view; avoiding slant and rancour; and being honest were the main features of news objectivity in the view of editors. The responsible press of American journalism follows three standards in order to pursue the truth: avoiding bias and sensational information; providing issues from all sides of a story; and representing facts completely (Pavlik, 2001). In a renowned news organisation like the British Broadcasting Corporation, accuracy and impartiality are the two ethical standards of news crews (Thompson, 2005).

The accuracy which the BBC's news crews have to achieve consists of using original sources, cross checking the facts, confirm the genuineness of materials, and verifying claims made by any sources (Thompson, 2005). Regarding impartiality, Thompson (2005) indicated on the website of BBC's news that it comprises several aspects. For example:

- We seek to provide a properly balanced service consisting of a wide range of subject matter and views broadcast over an appropriate time scale across all our output. We take particular care when dealing with political or industrial controversy or major matters relating to current public policy.
- We strive to reflect a wide range of opinion and explore a range and conflict of views so that no significant strand of thought is knowingly unreflected or under represented..... (Thompson, 2007, p.26–27)

According to Westerstahl (1983), news objectivity means news which is factual and free from bias. In his conceptual framework for the analysis of objectivity, factuality means cognitive value, which consists of truth and relevance, while impartiality means evaluative

value, which comprises neutrality and balance. McQuail (1992) suggested that truthfulness of news reports can be measured by three criteria:

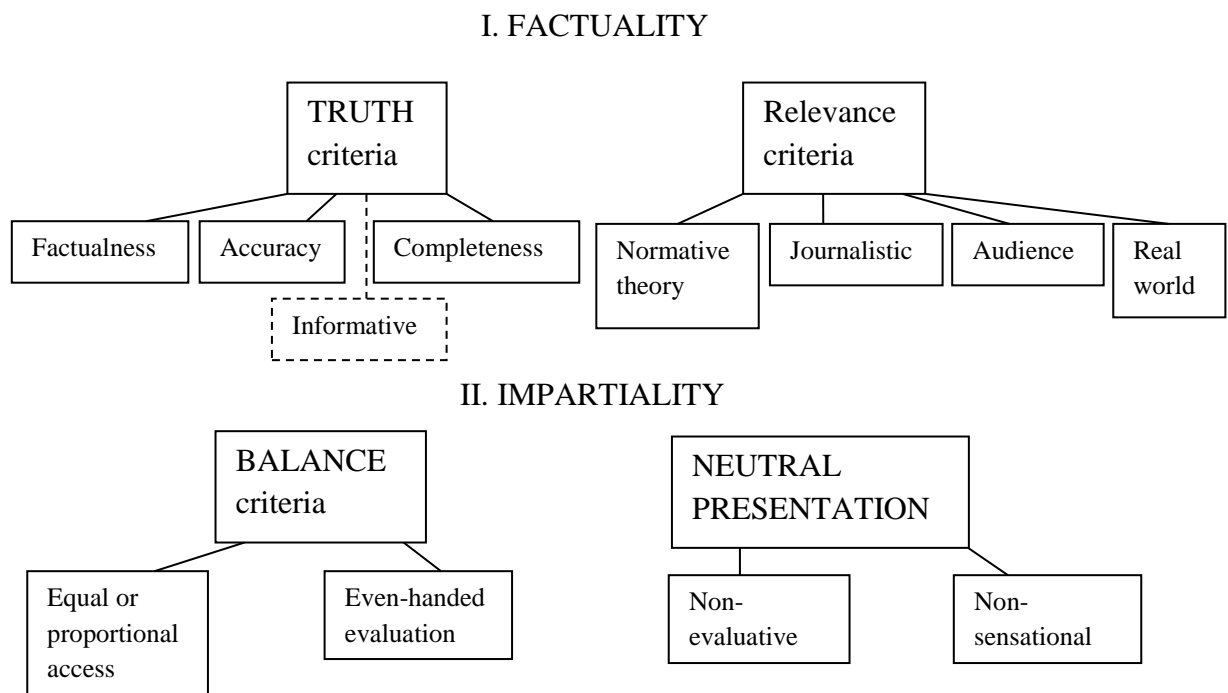
“factualness, in the sense of clearly distinguishing fact from opinion, interpretation or comment, backing reports by reference to named sources, avoiding vagueness and redundancy; accuracy, a matter of correspondence of report to reality, or to other reliable versions of reality, especially on matters of fact or quantity (numbers, names, places, attributions, times, etc.); and completeness, or fullness of account, on the assumption that a minimum amount of relevant information is required for understanding” (McQuail , 1992, p.197).

Meanwhile relevance means that news must be of value to audiences and reflect matters of current concern. In practice, this relevance judgment is made by news professionals in the news-selection process (McQuail, 1992).

Numcharoen (2006) indicated that newsworthiness consists of: 1) immediacy or timeliness; 2) proximity; 3) prominence; 4) consequence or impact; 5) mystery; 6) oddity or unusualness; 7) conflict; 8) sex; 9) human interest or emotion; and 10) progress or development and news selection normally influenced by mass media policy, competition between media, space, editor views, sponsor, situation, and government control, as well as political, economic and social change. According to Gunter (1997, p.16), “The news selection process, in practice, is conducted by news professionals who observe certain intuitive rules and guidelines about what represents ‘newsworthy’ material about which audiences would or should want to know.”

As already mentioned above, the first main element of objectivity is factuality, while the second main element of objectivity is impartiality or non-bias, which means that news reports must not take sides when there is more than one point of view (McQuail, 1992). The initial framework of objectivity analysis proposed by Westerstahl (1983) can be expanded to the following model of tasks for research suggested by McQuail (1992, p.203):

Figure 2.1 Dimensions and Criteria of Factuality and Impartiality



Source: McQuail (1992)

According to Gunter (1997), impartiality of news can be determined by four criteria: audience criteria, professional criteria, output criteria and external criteria. Audience criteria derive from public-opinion surveys about their perception of the credibility and impartiality of news. It can assess the relevance aspect in news, which members of the public can be asked directly. Professional criteria refer to the gatekeeping

role or the story selection of journalists and their editors, which is most related to newsworthiness criteria. Output criteria embrace a content analysis methodology to examine biases in news. In this thesis, to answer all research questions the researcher employed audience criteria, professional criteria and output criteria to analyse news blogs.

It is clear that mainstream news providers are expected to adhere to certain professional standards whereby the news they put out is accurate, comprehensive, believable, up to date, etc. Being credible in terms of the story telling is an aspect of this expectation. News bloggers might be expected to adhere to these standards. This thesis attempts to reveal to what extent users trust news blogs. Accuracy and fairness might be the two objectivity elements that news blogs might have. Hence, the participants were asked to rate their opinion on these two objectivity elements to disclose whether or not they trust news blogs. In the next part, the concept of credibility and related research will be discussed in order to demonstrate to what extent different news contents and media have been judged credible and to look at the strategies that previous researchers have used to measure the credibility of news media.

2.3.2 The Credibility Concept and Related News Credibility Research

The perception of credibility is a major factor of news exposure (Johnson and Kaye, 1998). It is “a quality which is related to accuracy, as well as to the perceived independence and neutrality of the news” (Gunter, 1997, p.129). Kioussis (2001) defined media credibility as the perceptions of believability towards news channels, whereas Johnson and Kaye (2004, p.627) defined media credibility as “the worthiness of being believed”. For Bucy (2003), media credibility was different from source credibility, because the latter focuses on the characteristics of message senders, such as trustworthiness and expertise. Believability,

accuracy, fairness and depth of information were used to assess media credibility by Gaziano and McGrath (1986), Meyer (1988) and Newhagen and Nass (1989). These variables, which were identified as a multidimensional construct to use in judging the credibility of news media, were also employed to measure the credibility of blogs in the study of Johnson and Kaye (2004).

Since the Internet became popular in the mid-1990s, a number of studies have examined the perception of online news credibility among audiences (e.g. Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Flanagin and Metzger, 2000; Kiouisis, 2001; Belo Interactive, 2004; ABAC Poll Research Center and Thai Journalists Association, 2009 and news people (e.g. Cassidy, 2007). The study of Johnson and Kaye (1998) found that offline media were perceived to be slightly less credible than online media. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) discovered that online information was as credible as most of offline mass media. Kiouisis (2001) found that respondents in Austin, Texas, ranked newspapers' credibility highest, followed by online news and television. Belo Interactive (2004) surveyed four online news sources and found that 7 out of ten perceived that online news source was credible if it was associated with traditional news brands they knew. In Thailand, ABAC Poll Research Center and Thai Journalists Association (2009) surveyed newspaper readers in Bangkok and found that only 26.7 per cent considered newspapers impartial while 62.4 per cent followed online news. Cassidy (2007) interviewed US journalists of both print and online daily newspapers about online news credibility. He found that, overall, interviewees rated Internet news as moderately credible, but online journalists trusted this information more than their print counterparts, while demographic characteristics of both groups of journalists did not influence their perceptions of online news credibility. Meanwhile, Fenton and Witschge (2011) found that professional journalists believed that their output

were more valuable, more reliable and had more factual information than that of non-professional news producers.

At a time when citizens can easily act as news senders on the web, scholars began researching the content online that was generated by readers. Thurman (2008) discovered that particular concerns about ‘user-generated content’ among news professionals include the standard of writing, accuracy and balance, and its influence on mainstream news media. Singer (2007) distinguished the perception of truth between news professionals and bloggers. News professionals understand truth as “something that can be seen or heard, by themselves or by someone else who is a reliable source, and that can be verified and corroborated”. But bloggers value truth by acknowledging that “everyone hold his or her own version of the truth; brought together, those views form a subjective, multi-faceted but cohesive whole” (Singer, 2007, p.14-25). “The blog is an open forum in which information is offered, revised, extended, or refuted; the more who participate in the process of generating truth, the merrier” (Singer, 2007, p.25). Rettberg (2008) argued that the truth of stories produced by individuals was not guaranteed because they were subjective and independent; however, audience feedback in the form of commenting, email or remarks made on other blogs was the mechanism that could help to correct their mistakes (Bowman and Willis, 2003).

According to Rettberg (2008), traditional news media always rely on the institutional standard whereas blogs rely on personal authenticity. Some evidence showed that blogs were more credible than mainstream news media (e.g. Blogads, 2004). Meanwhile, Messner and DiStaso (2008) found that the New York Times and the Washington Post increasingly used blogs as credible news sources in their political news

production. Chung et al. (2007) found that professional journalists from different types of organisations and in different positions had various perceptions on blogs.

Johnson et al. (2008) surveyed the Internet users who were interested in US politics about their perceived credibility of blogs. This group of blog users perceived blogs more credible than mainstream media. Singer and Ashman (2009) focused on the study of ‘user-generated content’ credibility by taking the concepts of authenticity, autonomy, and accountability, which are journalistic norms, to examine how print and digital Guardian journalists assess and incorporate this source in their journalistic tasks. They found that most journalists agreed that citizen journalists challenged their authority. On the one hand, they appreciated the fact that more voices could be heard, which is healthy for democracy; on the other hand, ‘user-generated contents’ could be full of unbelievable issues. They perceived that ‘user-generated content’ encouraged them to increase the attention they paid to the accuracy of their work, but it could not threaten their autonomy. These news professionals insisted that there was more honesty, transparency, and trust in their work compared to that of amateur reporters, because the quality of an issue was their occupation.

Blogs have been questioned concerning objectivity. One regional newspaper editor (quoted in Fenton and Witschge, 2011) highlighted that

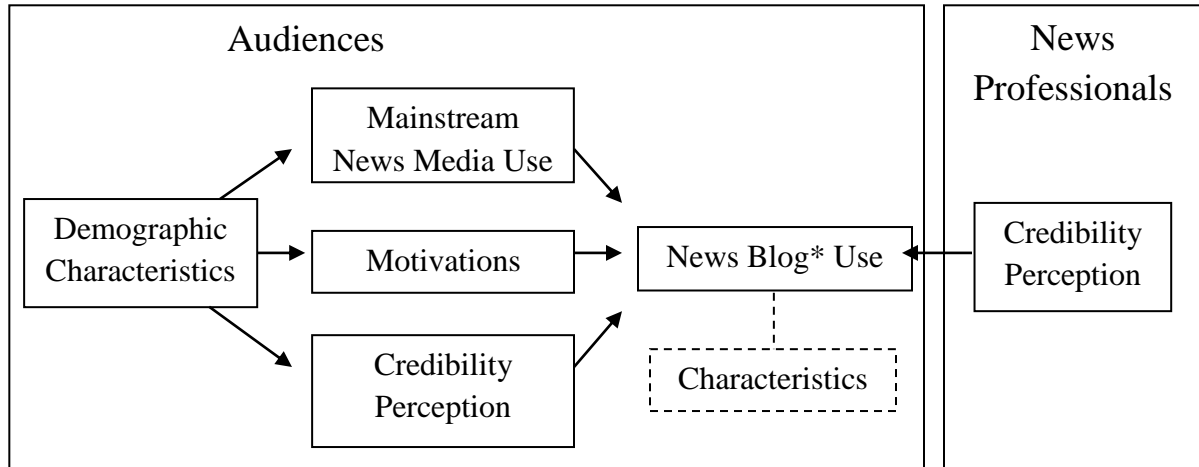
Blogs are an agenda, they’re one person’s point of view, and as I say you’ll get a balance [in a newspaper]. You’ll also get inaccuracies filtered out. Blogs have inaccuracies in them. Journalism, of course there are always mistakes made but I don’t think half the members of the public realize how we kill ourselves to make sure the story’s balanced. We would always ask for an opposing view (Fenton and Witschge, 2011, p.153).

Technorati (2011a and 2011b) studied the perceived credibility of news produced by amateurs by providing a survey on 4,114 bloggers around the world between September 13 and October 4, 2011. This author found that most of these bloggers trusted traditional media less than five years ago. Approximately 50 per cent trusted newspaper, television and radio news whereas 30 per cent trusted the information from blogs. These statistics reflected that approximately one out of 3 bloggers believed that blogs are trustable. Blogs have already shared some news consumers with the mainstream news media.

This thesis employs the concept of credibility, which is an aspect of the news objectivity concept to measure the credibility of news blogs (focusing on accuracy and fairness) among audiences and news people in Thailand. This thesis tries to find out why people use news blogs by employing credibility criteria, blog-use motivation factors, demographic characteristics and exposure to mainstream news media as dependent variables to study news blog use. Potentially, the idea of gratifications expected (motives) and obtained might be important, because if a medium repeatedly fails to deliver gratifications that were expected, its reputation could suffer. If credibility is an important need, then this could affect people's opinions about it as well. Figure 2.4 shows the area and conceptual framework use in this thesis.

2.4 Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 2.2 Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of the Study



*This thesis focuses on news blogs that appear in online newspapers

The conceptual framework is outlined here to illustrate the analysis of newspaper blogs framed by the uses and gratifications approach and the news credibility concept. This thesis aimed to answer five research questions and to measure which factors lead to news blog use among audiences and news professionals.

This chapter discussed the context of news blogs and the role of blogs in the public sphere, the uses and gratifications approach, the news objectivity concept, the news credibility concept, related studies and an outline of this study. The next chapter will examine the news-media landscape in Thailand, where the current research is situated. It is essential to comprehend the structure and history of the news industry in Thailand, how news blogging has emerged within that setting, relevant laws and the recent political situation that influence news media exposure among audience.

Chapter Three: Background of the Study: News Media and Blogging in Thailand

This chapter focuses on the context of news media and blogging in Thailand. It aims to provide an overview of the structure and historical development of news media in this country. This background will provide an important context for understanding how blogging has emerged in this country and its particular role as a news-related phenomenon. Hence, this chapter will be divided into four sections: Thai newspapers, blogging in Thailand, the rights and freedom of citizens and the media in Thai democracy, and the political polarisation of the ‘Shirts’ in Thailand.

3.1 Thai Newspapers

3.1.1 The History of Thai Newspapers

Newspapers in Thailand have a very long history. Like other countries, the first mass media to emerge in Thailand was the newspaper. The first newspaper was called “The Bangkok Recorder”. This monthly Thai newspaper was first published in 1845 by Dr. Dan Beach Bradley, an American missionary who came to teach religion in the country (The Government Public Relations, 2001). On 15 March 1858, “The Royal Thai Government Gazette”, which was the first newspaper produced by Thais, was published; it mainly informed government officials on public affairs (Vithayarat, 2003). Newspapers in the early years were mostly read by Thai nobles and well-educated people. They became popular among middle-class readers during the middle to the end of King Rama V’s period. During this time newspapers also started to have a relationship with social change and political change (Boonsiripunth, 2005).

“During the age of King Rama V, Western and Chinese publishers launched daily and other types of newspapers for 59 brands. In the next reign, newspaper enterprises made much more progress because daily, weekly, tri-monthly, biweekly, and monthly newspapers in Thai, English and Chinese language had emerged, totalling approximately 133 newspaper brands” (Eiamtham, 1977, p.10–11, quoted in Boonsiripunth, 2005, p.19–20). It could be said that the reign of King Rama VI was the golden age for newspapers in Thailand; however, after the Siamese Revolution of 1932 (when the system of government in Siam changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy), which took place in the reign of King Rama VII, press freedom was limited under the constitution (Boonsiripunth, 2005).

As of 2001, there are 38 national newspapers, four weekly political magazines, four monthly political magazines, two Chinese newspapers, one newspaper for Muslims, and two English newspapers. A survey in 1998 found that 70 per cent of households in Bangkok subscribed to daily newspapers and that the most popular newspapers were Thai Rath, Daily News, Matichon, and Khao Sod (The Government Public Relations, 2001).

3.1.2 Print Newspapers

Newspaper organisations in Thailand are private businesses and can be divided into four categories (Numcharoen, 2006):

1. Individual ownership. This type of ownership is usually operated by a small-sized business. The owner, the editor and the manager are the same person, who controls all sections.

2. Partnership

- 2.1 General Partnership

2.2 Limited Partnership

3. Cooperation. This type of ownership is popular among daily newspapers because the owners can easily expand or combine the business or transfer the properties.

4. Chain Ownership

4.1 Chain or Group Ownership. This is a large enterprise and the owners have more than one kind of print media. Information resources are shared among media. For example, Matichon Group owns Matichon newspaper, Khaosod newspaper, Prachachart Turakij newspaper, Matichon Sudsapda Magazine, Silapa Wathanatham Magazine, Technology Chaobaan Magazine, and Duangsesthi Magazine.

4.2 Cross Media Ownership. Entrepreneurs own different types of media such as radio broadcasting, television broadcasting, newspapers and news online. For example, Nation Multimedia Group owns Bangkokbiznews newspaper, Komchadluek newspaper, The Nation newspaper, Nation Sudsapda Magazine, Nation Radio, Nation Channel, etc.

4.3 Media Conglomerate. These entrepreneurs own not only newspapers but also other businesses that are not related to the media world.

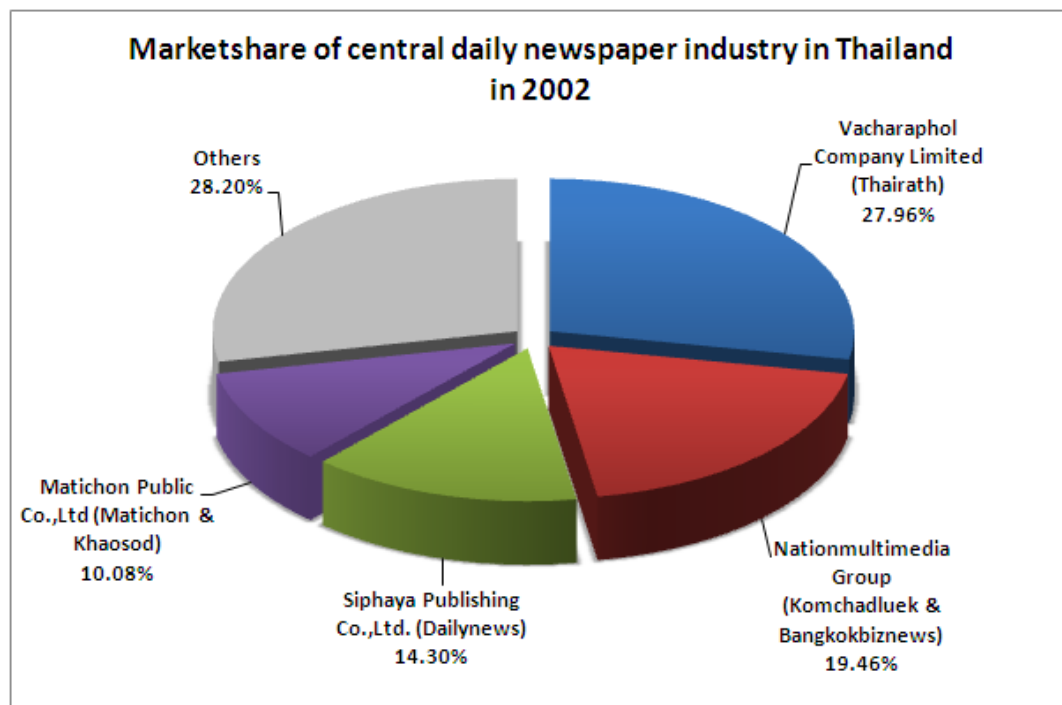
In general, there are three main divisions inside newspaper organisations: management, editorial and production. According to the press law, these divisions are the responsibility of the owner, the publisher, the advertiser and the editor. Inside the editorial division there are several subdivisions: 1) news; 2) articles and features; 3) pictures; 4) editorials; 5) art and layout; and 6) information centre (Numcharoen, 2006).

News employees – news editors, rewriters, and reporters – have the duty of producing news content. The news editor is the person who decides which news should be published. Some newspapers have sub-editors, such as a front-page editor, other pages editor, city editor, foreign editor, etc. Rewriters have to write the content which is received

from reporters to produce a standard news format. Reporters collect facts that have news value and send them to the editorial department. Most commonly, reporters consist of news department staff, correspondents and freelancers.

According to Mingkwan (2005), there are 25 central traditional newspapers from 16 companies. Most revenue in the central daily newspaper industry is clustered around four companies: Vacharaphol Co., Ltd. is the leader (27.96% of market share), followed by Nation Multimedia Group (19.46%), Siphaya Publishing Co., Ltd (14.30%), and Matichon Public Co., Ltd. (10.08%).

Figure 3.1 Market Share of Central Daily Newspaper Industry in Thailand in 2002



Source: Mingkwan (2005)

Unlike television, newspapers in Thailand are not under government supervision. They are private businesses which can be split into three types (Vithayarat, 2003): 1)

general newspapers that basically report general news covering a variety of content, such as Thairath, Matichon, Daily News, Khaosod, Naewna, and Siamrath; 2) business newspapers that mainly report political and economic news, such as Bangkokbiznews, ASTV Manager, Prachachart Turakij, and Thansettakij; and 3) specialised newspapers that emphasise specific content, such as Star Soccer News, Sport Pool, Kick Off and Golf Digest.

3.1.3 Electronic Newspapers

In Thailand, “Traditional print newspapers are the first mass media to appear online by launching newspaper websites. Print newspapers use the Internet as a supplemental channel to distribute their contents to a wider group of readers” (Tutchanok, 2009, p.276). There are at least 20 central traditional newspapers with a presence on the Internet (The Government Public Relations Department, 2013). Traditional newspapers and online newspapers are both similar and different in content and format. They are the same in terms of the content of the important news, political news, and economic news, but the content of entertainment news, breaking news, and current news, including the format of motion pictures, sound clips, and interactive functions, only appears in online newspapers (Thongprayoon, 2008).

Wongthangsawat (2006b) found that online newspapers in Thailand emerged from the popularity of information technology from overseas. Traditional newspapers aim to use online editions for building image, creating alternative channels and reporting in real time. They also need to increase audience volume, to reach receivers who live in distant areas, and to get readers’ feedback. Wongthangsawat (2003) discovered that online newspapers in Thailand are mostly developed and operated by computer sections or information centre staff. There are three procedures for online news producing (Wongthangsawat, 2003):

1. Retrieving the original news contents and pictures from databases which are stored in the company's server;

2. Transforming the contents and pictures from Macintosh format to Personal Computer (PC) format, encoding and resizing the picture files and putting them into the design template;

3. Uploading the complete files into the Website server and publishing them on the Internet.

The Bangkok Post, an English-language newspaper owned by the Post Publishing Public Company Limited, pioneered an online edition named BangkokPost.com (Wongthangsawat, 2006b). A few years later, other newspapers followed, including Thairath (www.thairath.co.th), Daily News (www.dailynews.co.th), Khaosod (www.khaosod.co.th), Matichon (www.matichon.co.th), Komchadluek (www.komchadluek.net), The Nation (www.nationmultimedia.com), Manager (www.manager.co.th), Krungthep Turakij (www.bangkokbiznews.com), Thai Post (www.thaipost.net), Naewna (www.naewna.com), Prachachat Turakij (www.prachachat.net), Siamrath (www.siamrath.co.th), and Post Today (www.posttoday.com).

According to Truehits.net (2013), on 13 February 2013 nine online newspapers were ranked among the top 20 news-media websites accessed: manager.co.th (453,583 UIP), thairath.co.th (372,997 UIP), dailynews.co.th (192,760 UIP), matichon.co.th (177,653 UIP), khaosod.co.th (126,611 UIP), komchadluek.net (122,994 UIP), bangkokpost.com (62,011 UIP), bangkokbiznews.com (57,720 UIP) and Naewna.com (48,207 UIP).

Thongprayoon (2008) found that online newspaper readers were different from readers of printed newspapers. Most of them were under 30 years old and lived in a rural area or abroad where the printed copy was not available. Thongprayoon (2008) suggested

that the characteristics and needs of online newspaper readers had to be examined because people were going online more and more. But Thongprayoon (2008) insisted that the sale volume of printed newspapers was not affected by the use of online newspapers because the readers of printed newspapers and online newspapers were clearly from different groups. If the paper costs went up or the price of print newspapers increased, there would be an impact.

3.2 Blogging in Thailand

After having set the scene by describing the media landscape in Thailand, this section will examine the topic of blogging in Thailand. It will detail the history of blogs and the emergence of news blogs in Thailand.

3.2.1 *The History of Blogging in Thailand*

The blogging community in Thailand visibly emerged around 2005 (Masaphant, 2008). According to a well-known business magazine entitled *Positioning* (2006), in 2006 approximately 100,000 people per day accessed blogs. This figure came from 80,000 blog users that were detected by Truehits.net (Thailand Web Directory and Advance Web Statistics) and 20,000 blog users from diarys.com, blogdd.com and other blogs' users combine.

The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) found that Internet usage in Thailand was continuing to increase and a number of people paid attention to and shared political opinions on the web (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2008). NECTEC conducted an online survey between August and September 2008 to investigate the characteristics and behaviour of Internet users including

social networking. The survey showed that among 11,758 respondents 69.7% had their own blogs, 49.1% read other blogs to gather information, 23.4% wrote memoranda and articles, and 18.1% used blogs for presenting themselves (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2008).

According to Komchadluek.net (2010), there were nearly a million blogs in Thailand in 2010. Focusing on Thai blog providers, it could be said that OKnation, Bloggang and Exteen are the largest blog communities, because together they contain around 80% of the Thai blogosphere. Truehits.net reported that from September 2007 to August 2010, OKnation blog users gradually rose from 306,078 to 1,530,797 user IPs (a fivefold increase) (Truehits.net, 2010c), Bloggang from 743,668 to 1,397,532 user IPs (a twofold increase) (Truehits.net, 2010a), and Exteen from 755,942 to 1,940,530 user IPs (nearly a threefold increase) (Truehits.net, 2010b).

3.2.2 The Emergence of News Blogging in Thailand

Some news-media elites in Thailand have begun to utilise blog in their businesses. In 2007 Niran Yaowapa, ASTV Manager's webmaster, indicated that since 2005 Mblog has been launched on ASTV Manager's website in order to provide its online readers free space to share stories and opinions (Business Thai, 2007). Suthichai Yoon, editor-in-chief of the Nation Multimedia Group, has created his own blog, named "Ka-Fair-Dam" (black coffee), in OKnation blog. In 2009 his blog was ranked 42nd among the most accessed blogs in Thailand (Truehits.net, 2009).

Piranya (2007) pointed out that mainstream media has begun adopting changes, because the boundary of journalism has broadened beyond the editorial works. For instance, today physicians can write stories and share experiences related to their jobs on

their blogs. These issues are more interesting and clearer than those disseminated by reporters because they are generated by the experts. In addition, eyewitnesses at the scene of an event can take photos and report stories via the Internet immediately at a tiny cost. News from citizens might be livelier than news reported by journalists who reach the location afterwards. Choowat Rueksirisuk, editor of Prachathai news agency (www.prachathai.com), believed that the growth of blogging, with its easy-to-use functions, encouraged everyone to be a citizen journalist. Media forces who don't dare to report news caused by either idiocy or self-censorship must review themselves, because not everything can be concealed (Prachachart.net, 2006).

In a study of communication patterns for the two most popular blog communities, Bloggang.com and OKnation.net, Masaphant (2008) found that they have three communication patterns: 1) news and information; 2) journalist's writing works; and 3) diaries. Bloggang's content mostly focuses on personal information and general issues, whereas OKnation emphasises news and political issues. In addition, bloggers on these blogs trust and connect with each other because of the close intimacy with the authors. They exchange phone numbers and keep in contact with one another – even meeting in the real world. In terms of the language style, OKnation used more official language, including some technical terms, and the language used was more direct and stronger in the politics category. Moryadee (2008) employed in-depth interviews and content analysis to investigate the characteristics of OKnation by focusing on development, the content creation process, management, format and content presentation, and the cross-media content relationship between the website and other information media (both newspaper and Internet) of the Nation Multimedia Group. She found that this platform fits the profile of citizen journalism, as bloggers can independently publish their stories; express opinions;

filter, edit and verify contents; and report news which blog audiences can evaluate. However, the issues on this platform are mostly concerned with personal interest and originate from mainstream news media. Most of them take one side, and have no reference or subjectivity. Moryadee (2008) argued that OKnation blogs could not fulfil a role in the public sphere because they could not mobilise further movements on public issues. This blog platform is also an information source for both the public and the Nation Multimedia Group staff.

From a primary observation by the researcher, it was found that six out of fifteen traditional daily newspapers' websites have already created blog space: OKnation of Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews, The Nation Weblog of The Nation, Mblog of ASTV Manager, Postblog of Bangkok Post, and Blogs&Columnists of Bangkokbiznews. However, among these sites there are only four online newspapers which host blogs that can be created by both professional journalists and citizens: OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog.

Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews, the Thai-language daily newspaper of the Nation Multimedia Group, has opened OKnation (<http://www.OKnation.net/blog>). As of 18 April 2010, it had 64,065 members and 464,814 stories. OKnation has 33 categories: law, camera/photos, cartoons, politics, sport, games, education, hobbies, music, stars/singers/celebrities, diaries, upcountry, abroad, police/crime, travel, general, volunteer reporter, house and garden, fashion, movies/drama, cars, literature/poems/poetry, science/IT, religion, economy, pets, health/beauty, food, art/culture, jokes, nature and environment, blog kids, and students.

The Nation, the English-language daily newspaper of the Nation Multimedia Group, has opened The Nation Weblog (<http://blog.nationmultimedia.com>). There were no access

figures as of 18 April 2010. It has 26 categories: games, education, hobbies, music, celebrities, diaries, politics, foreign affairs, crime, travel, general, citizen affairs, home & garden, fashion, movies & soaps, autos, literature, science and IT, religion, economy, pets, health & beauty, food, art & culture, sports, and Black Hole.

ASTV Manager, a Thai-language daily newspaper which principally reports business and political news, especially the People's Alliance for Democracy movement, provides a blog site named Mblog (<http://mblog.manager.co.th>). As of 18 April 2010 it had 28,433,060 hits, with 3,476 blogs and 31,879 stories. Mblog has 13 categories: politics, sport, family, life and society, abroad, travel, entertainment, science, art and literature, environment, games, economy, and IT technology. Since 27 March 2008, some articles from Mblog have been chosen to be published in the ASTV Manager daily newspaper every Monday on the conspectus page (ASTV Manager, 2008).

This section has detailed the origin of news blogging in Thailand. The next section will discuss the topic of rights and freedom of Thai citizens and the media. Although bloggers and blog readers exist online, they must follow Thailand's constitution like offline people. This section will illustrate what rights and freedoms citizens have when they write blogs, post pictures, or even comment on blogs.

3.3 Rights and Freedom of Citizens and the Media in Thai Democracy

After the democratic revolution in 1932, Thailand's regime changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy with a Prime Minister as the leader of the government. The three major independent authorities holding the balance of power are executive, legislative, and judicial. Since November 2007, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2550 (2007) has been enacted. This latest constitution has replaced the

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (Interim), B.E. 2549 (2006) (The Prime Minister's Office, 2007).

In the democratic regime, 'right to know' and 'right to express' are the basic rights of all citizens and the media. Chapter III (Rights and Liberties of the Thai People) part 7 of the 2007 Constitution has guaranteed the liberties of expression of persons and mass media (see Appendix D). In short, Thai citizens have the liberty to express opinions (section 45) whereas mass media also have the freedom to present news and express opinions without any mandate of any Government agency, State agency, State enterprise or their owner. But the liberty is limited if it contravenes the security of the State, safeguarding the rights, liberties, dignity, reputation, family or privacy rights of other persons. Additionally, mass media should perform under their professional ethics. They can have the right to establish organisations; protect rights, liberties, and fairness; and establish self-regulatory mechanisms within professional agencies (section 46).

Boonsiripunth (2005) conducted documentary research concerning the history of Thai mass media freedom since the first newspaper emerged in Thai society (the period of King Rama III). She found that the performance of mass media is not caused by the political philosophy alone but also depends on the opportunity which each government gives to its people. In her view, mass media in liberal democratic countries do not need to give people the same pattern of rights and freedom to communicate. However, she affirmed that Thailand's mass media, especially newspapers, have more freedom in the twenty-first century than other countries in the region. BBC News (2012) reported that Thailand's media "are free to criticise government policies, and cover instances of corruption and human rights abuses, but journalists tend to exercise self-censorship regarding the military, the monarchy, the judiciary and other sensitive issues".

According to Media Situation Report 2009 (Thai Journalists Association, 2009), amid a highly divisive political and social environment in Thailand in 2009, the media were questioned on their performance. Additionally, many people tend to believe that the media has significantly contributed to the escalation of the conflicts. However, one important and interesting incident worth noting during this event is the Web 2.0 phenomenon. It opened up a chance for people to write news on many social network applications such as Twitter, Facebook, Wordpress, MySpace, etc. Two-way and interactive communication between people on the web is widespread. It looks like these new patterns of news media have taken away news spaces and are ending the news monopoly held by the mainstream media. So, it could be said that citizen journalism in the form of blogging began democratising news issues in Thailand. Thai people can access the enormous online community to consume or produce news and debate easily. They have no need to be forced to adopt imbalanced, semi-factual, and ambiguous issues or the ignorance of useful information. However, not all issues can be published on the Internet in Thailand. There are three types of websites which are subject to filtering in Thailand: (1) pornographic sites; (2) anti-monarchy sites; and (3) anti-government sites (BBC News, 2012).

3.4 The Political Polarisation of the ‘Shirts’ in Thailand

As previously mentioned, news blog stories are mostly about catastrophe and politics (Allan, 2006; Tremayne, 2007; Nip, 2009; Allan and Thorsen, 2009). In Thailand, the use of news blogs is often involved with politics especially related to the conflict between the ‘red shirt’ and the ‘yellow shirt’ political movement groups. This section will discuss the political polarisation of ‘shirts’ in Thailand and the use of media in their political participations in order to help explaining some findings of this thesis.

For many years, ‘yellow-shirts’ and ‘red-shirts’ are the two opposite groups that have driven many major protests in Thailand (BBC News, 2012). The BBC News (2012) reported that the ‘yellow-shirt’ protesters led by media mogul Sondhi Limthongkul and Former General Chamlong Srimuang. The group staged the first huge street protest that led up to the military coup of September 2006. Since then, protests by ‘yellow-shirts’ have continuously happened. During May 2008, the group was on the street by claiming that the government was a shadow of Former PM Thaksin Shinawatra. In November 2008, the group spent a week-long sit-in at Bangkok’s two airports that had shut down air traffic and restricted the tourism industry. And in June 2011 the parliament was blocked by the group urging to postpone debate on a conciliation bill designed to ease a six-year political crisis because they feared that a proposed amnesty would allow the return of Former PM Thaksin. The BBC News (2012) also reported that there were many major demonstrations led by the ‘red-shirts’ as well. In April 2009, they forced the government of PM Abhisit Vejjajiva to cancel a regional political summit in Pattaya city by invading the summit area. In March 2010, the group occupied Bangkok’s historic and commercial areas in order to force PM Abhisit to flee. In April 10, 2010 at least four soldiers and 17 civilians were killed in clashes as the army tried to disperse the ‘red-shirts’ mob.

Wangkulam (2010) studied the origin and the background of supporters of the ‘yellow-shirts’, she found that People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or known as ‘yellow-shirts’ (yellow has been used as the representative of the group because it is the colour of Monday, the day that King Bhumibol was born) emerged on February 4th, 2005 with the aim to call for the resignation of PM Thaksin Shinawatra. The group tended to be the middle class people: business men, SME entrepreneurs, doctors, nurses, scholars, consultants, and administrators (Wangkulam, 2010). The group was led by middle class

leaders and driven for middle class's advantages. The BBC News (2012) clarified the PAD members as "a loose grouping of royalists, ultra-nationalists and the urban middle class". Meanwhile, National United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) or known as the 'red-shirts' emerged in 2007 with the aim to counter Thai coup d'état on 19 September 2006, to support Former PM Thaksin, Pheu Thai party and allies to fight back the PAD and to fight for the equality in society, politics and economic sphere. The UDD also produced the discourse of 'the Nobleman-Siamese Common Men' for its movement (Kanpunpong, 2010). The members of the UDD tended to be rural workers from outside Bangkok, left-wing activists and some business men "who see attempts by the urban and military elite to control Thai politics as a threat to democracy" (BBC News, 2012).

The 'yellow-shirts' and 'red-shirts' movements are different. According to the study of Wangkulam (2010), the PAD or the 'yellow-shirts' movement originated from the feeling that the middle class people did not gain the advantages under the governing of Former PM Thaksin. The movement stemmed from:

(1) The enactment of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand in 1997 that allowed the new capitalists (mainly coming from the telecommunication sector) to be the member of the parliament as 'party-list proportional representation';

(2) The populist policy created by the government;

(3) The conflicts of advantages between the old capitalists (mainly coming from financial institutions) supported by middle class people and the new capitalists supported by low class people;

(4) The use of violence operation scheme and the violation of human rights; and the inadequate loyalty to the King.

Kanpunpong (2010) studied the political legitimacy on political movement of the PAD and the UDD. This author found that the PAD protesters claimed they acted as the citizen of the nation by basing on the rational/legal authority, social belief, knowledge, and the change of situation while the UDD protesters claimed that their movement based on the rationale of political discipline, the belief of the relationship between power, and the rationale of the change of situation.

Some studies examined the relationship between the use of media and the movement of the two groups of 'shirts'. Reong-arom (2008) employed questionnaire asking 364 respondents who lived in Bangkok and other six regions of Thailand. He found that satellite TV, free TV, and radio broadcasting (respectively) were the top three popular media among the PAD supporters. These people agreed that the media could influence their attitudes and encouraged them to participate. However, they insisted that not all issues can convince them. The study of Reong-arom (2008) also found that the characteristic of the PAD leaders, their issues and confidence to the media were other influential factors. On the part of the 'red-shirts' group, Sangkham (2012) studied the influence of Rak Chiang Mai 51 Community Radio (92.5 Mhz.) on political movement of the 'red-shirts' in Chiang Mai province. She found that 98 per cent of 100 listeners who participated in political activities held by the station agreed that the station stimulated political movement, 89 per cent agreed that the station supported particular political party, 82 per cent agreed that the station played a part in assembling the people for political gathering, 94 per cent agreed that the station aroused people to participate better than the government, and 100 per cent agreed that the station promoted true democracy.

Apart from mainstream news media, blogging has been used as a political public forum. By employing in-depth interview with 20 political bloggers in OKnation,

Maneerojchai (2010) found that this place is a virtual community where individual bloggers interested in politics exchange information and opinions. Maneerojchai (2010) concluded that OKnation is an online public sphere where citizen reporters can use to spread news and interesting stories. This community has been used by journalists for news hints and clues as well. However, the study of Maneerojchai (2010) did not reveal to what extent the PAD and the UDD supporters participated in this community.

The characteristics of Thai blog users and their expectation of blogs use were examined by Lunpa (2008). She used questionnaires with 400 Internet users and found that most of them have age 26-35 years old, with a bachelor degree, are private company employees, earned 5001-15,000 baht per month. The blog users expected that blogs could help them to manage knowledge, relax and entertain, communicate and fulfil their job respectively. However, the study of Lunpa (2008) revealed some information about general blog users. She did not focus on news blog users.

Previous research indicated that attitudes and available technology have affected the ways of media use among information consumers. People will be exposed to the media by basing on their taste, and their point of view. If they are interested in politics, they will give ear to people whom they agree (Sunstein, 2007). On blog, readers will read the stories produced by their favour bloggers who have the same bias (Sunstein, 2007). Sunstein (2007, p.1) pointed out that technology in this day and age “has greatly increased people’s ability to filter what they want to read, see and hear”. Some media have the capacity to memorize the taste of their users and propose the stories to them. ‘The Daily Me’, an online daily newspaper customized for an individual’s flavours, is an obvious instance (Sunstein, 2007).

In conclusion, the political polarisation of the ‘shirts’ has taken place in Thailand since September 2006. The ‘yellow-shirts’ and the ‘red-shirts’ have different origins. They used different kind of media for different purposes. Some Thai researches disclosed the types of media that the two political groups had used. The relationship between the use of media and attitudes and behaviours of the ‘shirts’ were also shown. Sunstein (2007) provided some relevant factors that can influence media use among people. It is expected that the information detailed in this section could help in explaining some of the findings in this thesis because this thesis was conducted in Thailand where this political conflict has situated.

This chapter has examined how blogging is situated within news provision more generally in Thailand. Mass media represents an important news source for the people of Thailand, but so far only newspapers have incorporated blogging within their online news platforms. This chapter also examined the nature of Thai society and the significance of mediated communications to the people. Thailand’s constitution guarantees that its citizens have rights and freedom to communicate and to present their opinions on the condition that they do not violate others, breach moral codes within the society or insult the monarchy or government. Such rules place restrictions on mainstream mass media and what they may publish. These restrictions can influence the nature of news reporting. Lastly, the political polarisation origin and the use of media have been clarified as this thesis studied the uses and the perceived credibility of news blogs during the period of political conflict among the ‘shirts’. The next chapter will turn to the methodologies used in this study. It describes the nature of the methods used and the rationale underlying the design of the study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches used in this thesis and examines the reasons for the choices made in relation to the forms of data collection and the sequencing of the different stages of the study. The main objectives of this research were to explore the role of news blogs in Thailand with special reference to blogs produced on newspapers' websites. The research conducted an investigation of news professionals to obtain explanations about why some newspapers have adopted blogging as an activity. It also aimed to outline the ways news consumers use these news blogs and their opinions about them. Finally, the research planned to provide an analysis of the blogs themselves. These different components meant that the research comprised a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

4.1 Research Questions

The thesis was designed to find out the answers to five major questions concerning blogs associated with major newspapers in Thailand. 1. 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?' 2. 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?' 3. 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?' 4. 'Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?' and 5. 'What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?' The current study aims to answer these questions through a combination of perspectives including the opinions of news providers and news consumers and by analysing the content of newspaper blogs themselves.

4.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

In media studies, “what” questions can be explored by quantitative methods while “why” and “how” questions can be investigated by qualitative methods (Tutchanok, 2009). Quantitative methods tend to involve breadth and representativeness whereas qualitative methods provide depth and detail (Madianou, 2009). The use of multiple research techniques can strengthen studies by taking advantage of the distinct strengths of each approach in order to yield greater reliability (Jensen, 2002). According to Hussein (2009, p.4), methodological triangulation is a kind of triangulation approach which has “a great possibility of neutralizing the flaws of one method and strengthening the benefits of the other for better research results”. Due to these benefits and in order to answer all the research questions, this thesis employed quantitative and qualitative methods.

The quantitative approach was conducted in the audience analysis stage of the research. Here, users of news blogs were asked about their experiences via a standardised questionnaire. This approach enables comparisons to be made between different types of users and also yields dominant patterns of opinion and behaviour among users (i.e., Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Chung et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Sweetser et al., 2008). The quantitative approach was also employed to analyse blogs themselves, in the form of content analysis. This approach has been used before by researchers interested in articulating the nature of online news outputs (i.e. Tutchanok, 2009) and blogs (i.e. Singer, 2005; Masaphant, 2008; Moryadee, 2008). Finally, the qualitative stage of this research comprised open-ended interviews with news professionals. This approach has been used effectively before by researchers seeking explanations for decisions that are made about news production practices (i.e. Thurman, 2008; Singer and Ashman, 2009; Tutchanok, 2009).

The research methods of previous studies were examined in order to examine their strengths and weaknesses. It was found that most studies concerned with the uses and credibility of online media employed one method. For instance, Johnson and Kaye (1998), Cassidy (2007), Kaye (2007), Chung et al. (2007), Johnson et al. (2008) and Sweetser et al. (2008) employed online questionnaires; Kiouisis (2001) employed a questionnaire; Abdulla et al. (2002) used a telephone survey; Singer (2005) used content analysis; and Singer and Ashman (2009), Thurman (2008) and Moryadee (2008) used in-depth interviews. Some studies used mixed methods; for example, Masaphant (2008) used observation, content analysis and in-depth interviews.

One strength of an online survey is the convenience it offers in reaching online respondents economically, but its weaknesses include a high level of non-response rate (Cassidy, 2007), it is difficult to generalise (Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Johnson et al., 2008; Sweetser et al., 2008), and it has a low-response rate for the area where the Internet penetration rate is low (Kiouisis, 2001). All observed studies suggested that further studies should employ different methods so that the level of agreement of the research findings can be cross-checked, reduce the weaknesses of each method, obtain different aspects of research findings, etc. Hence, this thesis employed three research instruments in a single study.

Table 4.1 presents a summary of the methods that have been deployed by previous studies.

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
Cruising is believing?: comparing Internet and traditional sources on media credibility measures (Johnson and Kaye, 1998)	Whether Internet users who are interested in politics view online publications as credible as their traditionally delivered counterparts.	Posted the link of online Q/N to politically oriented websites (2 weeks before and after the 1996 presidential election). Notices were also sent to media & politically oriented discussion groups, forums, Usenet groups and listservs.	Online media were perceived as being slightly more credible than print media.	Cannot be generalised. Future studies should be conducted among general population.
Public trust or mistrust?: perceptions of media credibility in the information age (Kioussis, 2001)	Which type of news medium will respondents rate most credible? Will media use be related to perceived channel credibility?	A cross-sectional survey conducted on a sample of randomly selected residents in Austin, Texas, from 26 February to 8 March 1998.	People rated newspapers with the highest credibility, followed by online news and TV news.	Sample size was much smaller for online news opinions than newspaper and TV news, as Internet penetration rate was low.
The credibility of newspapers, TV news, and online news (Abdulla et al., 2002)	What are the primary components of newspaper, TV news, and online news credibility? What similarities and differences are found in the credibility dimensions of newspapers, TV news, and online news?	A national telephone survey of people aged 18 or older.	Newspaper and TV news are perceived as being more credible than online news. Similarities & differences - Newspapers: balance, honesty, and currency. - TV news: fairness and currency. - Online news: trustworthiness, timeliness, and bias.	Further studies should focus on demographic characteristics of respondents.

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies (cont.)

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
The political j-blogger: normalizing a new media form to fit old norms and practices (Singer, 2005)	How the increasingly popular blog format affects long-standing journalistic norms and practices.	Content analysis of 10 national and 10 local journalist blogs. Blogs which are updated five days a week, are political or civic during a month were counted. (The 2004 presidential primary season)	Most journalists were normalising blogs as components. Blogs were enhancing traditional journalistic norms and practices.	
Online news credibility: an examination of the perceptions of newspaper journalists (Cassidy, 2007)	How print and online daily newspaper journalists perceive credibility of online news information, and the influence of several factors on those perceptions.	Invitations to participate in an online survey were sent to print newspaper journalists and online newspaper journalists via email. Two reminder messages were sent one and two weeks after the initial mailing.	Journalists perceived online news as more credible than in the past. They have begun to reshape gatekeeping roles, and used the Internet as a prominent news source.	High level of non-response rate. Future studies should include other types of journalists.
It's a blog, blog, blog, blog world: users and uses of weblogs (Kaye, 2007)	What are the primary reasons that blog users say they use blogs?	Open-ended Q/N with 239 random bloggers identified by Yahoo! & Google searches, links from 131 blogs, & 14 blog-oriented bulletin boards/emails and snowballs.	28 reasons in 6 factors which motivated users to use blogs.	Future research should examine level of agreement of these reasons.

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies (cont.)

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
Uses and perceptions of blogs: a report on professional journalists and journalism educators (Chung et al., 2007)	<p>How frequently do journalism professionals & educators participate in blogging activities?</p> <p>Are there differences in the way they use blogs?</p> <p>How do they perceive blogs?</p> <p>Are there differences in the way they perceive blogs?</p> <p>What factors are associated with blog use and certain blog perceptions?</p>	<p>Online Q/N: News professionals: use Newslink and member directory of the Online News Association.</p> <p>Journalism educators: use the list of mass communication institutions in the annual enrolment report by Becker, Vlad, Coffey, and Tucker.</p>	<p>News professionals used blogs significantly more than educators.</p> <p>Educators had similar views on blogs, but news professionals uses and perceived blogs differently depending on the type of organisation they worked for and their occupational position in their news organisation.</p>	<p>Future studies should use paper-based surveys to account for the weaknesses of web surveys.</p> <p>Pay closer attention to the unique forms of blogs in examining their various roles and functions.</p>
Blog has its day: politically interested internet users' perceptions of blog credibility (Johnson et al., 2008)	How will politically interested Internet users judge credibility of blogs in comparison to traditional & online versions of newspapers, broadcast TV news, and cable TV news?	The link of online Q/N was sent to media-focused and politically focused websites, electronic mailing lists and bulletin boards, blogs, and snowballs.	Blogs were judged as moderately credible. Mainstream media or online sources were evaluated as less credible than blogs.	Non-probability sampling made the study could not random the samples from all blog users.

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies (cont.)

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
Credibility and the use of blogs among professionals in the communication industry (Sweetser et al., 2008)	<p>How credible do communication industry professionals find blogs?</p> <p>Is there a difference between them in the level of credibility assigned blogs?</p> <p>Do distinct blogging activities predict perceptions of credibility among professionals? etc.</p>	<p>Online Q/N: use an activity-based standpoint (motivation). Random sampling from</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newslink & Online News Association directories 2. PRSA directory. 	<p>Communication industry professionals were using blogs as extensions of their works. Credibility could increase their use of blogs.</p>	<p>Difficult to generalise.</p> <p>Future studies should measure believability, fairness, bias, & completeness/depth of information.</p>
User-generated content and journalistic values (Singer and Ashman, 2009)	<p>How do print and digital Guardian journalists assess and incorporate this source in their journalistic tasks?</p>	<p>Interviews with 33 print and digital Guardian journalists; brief Q/Ns also enabled journalists to provide up to three words or short phrases associated with credibility, responsibility, autonomy and competence.</p>	<p>Citizen journalists challenged the journalists 'authority. More voices could be heard, which is healthy for democracy, but the UGC were full of non-credible issues.</p>	
Forums for citizen journalists? Adoption of user-generated content initiatives by online news media (Thurman, 2008)	<p>Analyses conflicts between editors' traditional roles and their awareness of, and experiments with, UGC.</p> <p>Examines legal, commercial, human and technological factors that have shaped how news websites adopt UGC.</p>	<p>Interviews editors and managing editors of 9 UK news websites to reveal debates of journalists (their changing roles, challenges of meeting commercial expectations, legal obligations, and the innovations happening in online newsrooms.)</p>	<p>The adaptation of established news websites to employ the UGCs was driven as much by local organisational and technical conditions as it is by any attachment to traditional editorial practices.</p>	

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies (cont.)

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
Patterns of online communication in Web blogs: case study of Bloggang and OKnation Blog (Masaphant, 2008)	What is the development of the relationship among bloggers and the language style as used in Weblogs?	1. Observation, 2. Content analysis 3. In-depth interview.	<p>The two blog sites comprised news and information, journalists' writing works and diaries.</p> <p>Communications found comprise the exchange of opinions and self-expression, and greeting through bloggers' forum box.</p> <p>Content in Bloggang was bloggers' writing on personal and general issues. OKnation, content focuses more on news, information and political issues.</p>	Future studies should employ online Q/N to examine the characteristics of blog users and the way in which they are blogs.
OKnation blog as citizen journalism (Moryadee, 2008)	What are the characteristics of citizen journalism as they appear on the "OKnation" website?	In-depth interview and content analysis. Focusing on development, content creation process, management, format and content presentation, and cross-media content relationship between the website and other information media of the Nation Multimedia Group.	OKnation fit the profile of citizen journalism. Bloggers could express opinions, filtered and edited content, verified, and reported news for further evaluation by a blog audience. Its content is diverse and flexible.	

Table 4.1 Methodologies of Previous Studies (cont.)

Research topic	RQ(s)/objectives	Methods	Findings	Limitations/ Suggestions
Blog and its role as a political public forum for people participation: a case study of political blog www.oknation.net/blog (Maneerojchai, 2010)	1. To study blog as a political public forum. 2. To study format and how people participate and criticise in political issues. 3. To study the use of blog to participate and criticise in political issues.	In-depth interview with bloggers (14 individual bloggers in political group and 6 journalist bloggers)	<p>OKnation was a virtual community and public sphere. It was a place where general public who have common interest shared, participated and communicated about political issues.</p> <p>OKnation was also a place where citizen reporters shared news from their own experience which professional journalists can used as news hints and sources especially when they could not reach to the scene and information.</p>	Future studies should employ content analysis to study the blog site. The study of blog users in the aspect of their characteristics (i.e. gender, age and occupation) and blog use is also needed.

4.3 Research Methodology Design

As already indicated above, most of the studies employed one research method, and there was no single study which measured the uses and credibility of blogs among media professionals and the public in the same period. Hence, this study adopted three methodological parts: 1) a survey of blog users; 2) interviews with media professionals who work for newspapers that utilise blogs; and 3) analysis of the content and format of a sample of Thai news blogs operated by major newspapers. This three-pronged approach allowed a degree of triangulation in relation to the major research questions to be addressed by this project.

4.4 News Blog Users' Survey

An online survey was conducted in order to understand the role of blogs as news sources for online audiences and newspaper professionals and to measure their trust in news blogs that appear in online newspapers. Its aim was to explore news blog users' characteristics, their use of mainstream news media, the extent to which they use news blogs, their opinion concerning news blog users' motives, and the perception of credibility of news from mainstream news media and from news blogs written by independent journalists, dependent journalists, and citizens. The details of how the online questionnaire was conducted are divided into seven topics: 1) rationale and purposes; 2) advantages and disadvantages; 3) samples of the study; 4) research sites and dates; 5) methods of data collection; 6) pilot testing; and 7) research ethics issues.

4.4.1 Rationale and Purpose of the Online Questionnaire

The study used an online survey with a questionnaire (as one of three research methods). It can be used to explain phenomena by documenting public opinion on a specific topic, it also provide indications about behaviours and analyse the relationships between variables in an analytical way (Gunter, 2000). This study employed a cross-sectional survey because it can provide snapshots of the status of public opinion and behaviour at a given point in time (Gunter, 2000).

The questionnaire involves large samples of people, and its data, in the form of variables, “provide operational measures that can be quantified and manipulated by researchers” (Gunter, 2002, p.210). Hence, a survey among blog readers was a good idea because it enabled the researcher to obtain standardised data from a large sample of people and make precise comparisons between sample sub-groups in terms of their opinions about blogs and their blog-use behaviour.

4.4.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Questionnaires

Conducting an online survey has a number of advantages. According to Wright (2005), the advantage of the online questionnaire is the capacity to reach distant areas where respondents live and whom it is difficult to contact face to face. Moreover, collecting data with this method is convenient because it has the qualification of having automated data collection. Time, cost and effort to collect the data for the research will be saved. However, it has some disadvantages. It may have some uncertainty, such as the validity of the data, sampling issues, design, implementation and evaluation. Wright (2005) stated that it is difficult to know the actual size of online populations for probability sampling because only some members of online groups identified their email addresses. So, the findings from the

research cannot be generalised. Access issues are another challenge in conducting an online survey. Invitations to participate in a survey might be rejected, but the researcher can solve this problem by offering something to the community, such as informing them that the research findings will be shown on the page of the online community (Wright, 2005).

Wright (2005) suggested that the questionnaire should acquire the respondent's email address in order to avoid multiple responses. Incentives e.g. books can be employed to increase the response rate. Wright (2005) also suggested that financial incentives should be avoided in order to increase the credibility of research findings. According to Wongthangsawat's (2006a) online news research in Thailand, a prize draw could attract a high number of respondents. When deciding whether to use this method, Gunter (2002) suggested that the researchers should consider some cautions. First, they cannot control the respondents to complete the questionnaires; second, the respondents may ignore to answer or make a delayed response, and third, the guideline and the way to do the questionnaire should be clear and easy to understand because the respondents have to answer every question by themselves.

4.4.3 The Survey Sample

The target samples of this study are OKnation, The Nation Weblog and/or Mblog's users who read or write blogs that related to news, commentary upon news, and social issues.

According to Kumar (2011, p.206), "Non-probability sampling designs are used when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified." Kumar (2011) identified that market research and journalists usually used accidental sampling because it is convenient to reach the sample of population. Hence, non-probability sampling design was employed in this thesis because the actual size of the

population (total news blog users on the three blog sites) was unknown. News blog users on the three reader blog communities who accidentally found the link of online questionnaire were recruited to do the self-completion online questionnaire.

As the entire population is unknown, and there is no previous research that studied about Thai news blog users in the quantitative way, it is difficult to estimate the sample size. Moreover, the sample size formula usually used for probability sampling (know the total population). Hence, this thesis follows the general rule “the greater is the sample size, the more accurately your findings will reflect the true picture” (Kumar, 2011, p. 212). The researcher estimated that the sample size should not lower than 300 cases so that the data will not be too small for representing the association between variables. It is remarked that the respondents were not selected from the entire population, so, the findings can only describe opinions and behaviours of the samples but cannot generalise.

4.4.4 Sites and Dates

The questionnaire banner, containing a link, was posted on the homepages of OKnation, Mblog, and The Nation Weblog between 15 September and 14 October 2011. OKnation’s webmaster allowed the questionnaire’s banner including a link to be displayed in the PR news section on the left-hand side of OKnation’s homepage; the Nation Weblog’s webmaster posted it in the news-feed section on the centre of The Nation Weblog’s homepage; and Mblog’s webmaster displayed the questionnaire hyperlink in the PR news section and also on the homepage of ASTV Manager adjacent to the Mblog logo. In order to get more participation, the questionnaire’s notification and hyperlink were also posted on the news feeds of the three blog sites three times per week. As an incentive, a message about a prize draw of 20 small gifts for participants was also included.

4.4.5 Methods of Data Collection

1.) Questionnaire Structure

News blog users, who were the target sample of this research, answered the questionnaire, the structure of which was as follows.

This questionnaire had five sections. Each section contained several items that were statements designed with the goal of determining mainstream news usage, online mainstream news usage, news blog usage, credibility perception of news that was produced by four news providers, and the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

1.1 Usage of mainstream news media

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions to measure the respondents' usage of mainstream news media. Respondents were asked several questions regarding mainstream news media (television, radio, and newspaper) exposures, and the frequency of each media exposure. For the questions relating to frequency, the researcher employed a four-point rating scale for the respondents to choose from, from 1) Never (zero points) to 4) 5–7 days a week (3 points).

1.2 Usage of online mainstream news media

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions that measured the respondent's usage of online mainstream news media. Respondents were also asked several questions regarding online mainstream news media (online television, online radio, and online newspaper) exposures, frequency of each media exposure, and type of overall mainstream news they were exposed to. For the questions on frequency, the researcher employed a four-point rating scale for the respondents to choose from, from 1) Never (0 points) to 4) 5–7 days a week (3 points).

1.3 News blog usage

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of questions that measured the respondent's news blog use. It consisted of frequency of news blog use from each blog provider they had been exposed to, favourite news blogger, news blog topics they consume, news blog use reasons, other behaviours concerning news blogs, and news blog use motivation. For the questions concerning frequency, the researcher employed a four-point rating scale for the respondents to choose from, from 1) Never (zero points) to 4) 5–7 days a week (3 points). For the questions concerning the use motivation, the researcher employed a five-point rating scale for the respondents to choose from, from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

1.4 News blog credibility perceptions

The fourth part of the questionnaire consisted of lists of 16 questions. The researcher used a five-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) to measure the respondents' attitudes regarding the quality of news of four online news providers: news websites operated by mainstream media, and news blogs written by journalists associated with mainstream media, journalists working independently, and individuals. According to Robinson and Kohut (1988), measurements of credibility and equality of news stories mostly employ a Likert scale with lists of adjectives for rating.

1.5 Demographic characteristics

The fifth part of the questionnaire consisted of a list of questions to learn the respondent's gender, age, education, occupation, income and online experience.

2.) Data Collection

In order to encourage a high response rate from the general public who use news blogs, the researcher asked the editors of three blogs to post a questionnaire banner containing a link to the questionnaire online; sent the purpose of the research, together with a hyperlink to the questionnaire, to all bloggers who had provided contact information or email addresses on their own blogs; and posted messages in news feeds on the three blog sites.

Data were collected through the self-completion questionnaire. A banner containing a link to the questionnaire was posted on the blog homepage of the three target newspapers mentioned earlier. After the respondents clicked on the link, they reached the statement on research objectives, the instructions, and ethical issues. Once they had read the introductions and clicked accept to participate, the first question appeared. When they had responded to it, the next question followed.

The respondent's attention was captured by the prize-draw advertising banner. Non-financial incentives were used for the prize draw to achieve a high response rate. All participants were offered entry into a free prize draw – the prizes that were arranged for this purpose were USB memory sticks (20 prizes).

4.4.6 *Pilot Testing*

Both the Thai and the English versions of the questionnaire were created via 'Speedsurvey.com', and tested by loading and viewing them on three Internet browsers – Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari – run on both 15- and 17-inch computer screens. Before actual loading on the three online newspapers, the questionnaire was pilot tested with 30 individuals by sending the link to their email. These pilot participants included

lecturers of the School of Communication Arts in Thailand who used OKnation, The Nation Weblog or Mblog and some users of the three blog sites who had provided email addresses.

The pilot testing aimed to find out whether respondents understood the questions and whether the fixed-response answers that were given to them to use represented the kinds of answers they would give to those questions. Pilot testing also helped to measure the loading time and the duration of completion. The respondents were allowed to respond freely and without any of the constraints imposed by a pre-structured questionnaire. The researcher gave respondents the opportunity to provide feedback by paper, email and telephone on any problems they experienced with the draft questionnaire.

4.4.7 Ethical Issues

The respondents of the questionnaire were all adults (people who are more than 18 years old). All respondents were human subjects, who gave their consent to take part. They were informed about the purpose of the survey and checks were run to ensure they understood what they were being asked. Before answering the survey, all online questionnaire participants had to click ☒ I agree to participate and give my consent to the researcher to use the data in her project (see Appendix A).

4.5 In-Depth Interviews with News Professionals

This study employed semi-structured face-to-face interviews with news-organisation leaders, weblog editors and journalist bloggers of three reader blogs – OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog – in order to understand the reasons why news blogs exist in online newspapers and to provide an opportunity to compare what the producers had to say

about the way they thought users responded to blogs with the way users themselves actually responded to the survey. This study also compared what news professionals said about the attributes of the blogs linked to their newspapers with what the content analysis showed those blogs to contain. Hence, news professionals' perceptions of their blogs could be validated.

4.5.1 Rationale and Purpose of In-Depth Interviews

The study chose to conduct in-depth interviews with news professionals. This method is well suited to the type of exploration of opinions and perceptions required in this context (Guion, 2001). It is different from other data collecting methods, because the questions are worded so that respondents cannot simply answer yes or no. Some pre-planned questions (semi-structured format) can be included to allow the interview to flow naturally, responses can be recorded, and non-verbal behaviour can be observed (Guion, 2001).

4.5.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of In-Depth Interviews

The interview phase of this research used open-ended questions with news professionals. The open-ended nature allowed respondents to formulate their own answers in their own words. This approach enabled media professionals to reflect at length on complex issues relating to the changing news environment and the significance of new interactive features of online news such as news blogs. The advantage of the in-depth interview is that the interviewees will feel comfortable speaking, but the procedure of transcribing and analysing the results is time consuming, the results cannot be generalised because the samples are small and are chosen by selective sampling (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

4.5.3 Interview Participants

News people who are news-organisation leaders, journalist bloggers and editors of central daily newspaper blogs were chosen by purposive sampling based on their roles as decision makers in the news-production process and the fact that they are also blog users (see examples of journalist blogs in Appendix G). Interviewee names and positions are as follows:

- Adisak Limparungpattanakij, President of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed 19 August 2011.
- Charlee Waradee, New Media Editor of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed 19 August 2011.
- Varit Limthongkul, Director of Website Operations, ASTV Manager, interviewed 5 September 2011.
- Chai Seeho, Assistant Editor of OKnation, Nation Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed 19 September 2011.
- Chakkrish Permpool, Editor of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed 27 September 2011.
- Chaleaw Kongtuk, Executive Editor of Crimewatch 24, Nation Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed 13 September 2011.
- Kittinan Narkthong, ASTV Manager Reporter, interviewed 1 September 2011.

4.5.4 Sites and Dates

The newsrooms of Nation Broadcasting Corporation and ASTV Manager were the locations for in-depth interviews after each appointment was accepted. The dates of the in-depth interviews (August to September 2011) were mentioned in the previous section.

4.5.5 Methods of Data Collection

(1) Design

Prior to interviews, an interview schedule was designed by linking with the major research questions stated at the beginning of this chapter (see Appendix B).

(2) Data-Collection Procedure

All interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes per interviewee and were audio-recorded with the participant's permission. They were conducted at their work location. Audio recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

(3) Transcribing/Translating

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and translated into English, which was proofread by a native speaker of English who works in the academic area.

4.5.6 Data-Analysis Procedure

The data-analysis process involved reviewing, summarising and grouping the important information to answer research questions.

This study was concerned with the trustworthiness and credibility of interview data. Information given by the participants that has been indicated in this thesis was returned to each interview participant for checking, giving them the opportunity to verify the interpretation of interview data.

4.5.7 Ethical Issues

All participants in this part of the research were fully informed in advance of the nature and purpose of the study. They were asked to sign a consent form having been informed of their rights as participants (see Appendix B).

4.6 News Blogs' Content Analysis

A content analysis of news blogs was conducted to examine their content, format attributes and link (i.e., to a reputable newspaper, the journalist giving their name, proper naming of sources as in mainstream news stories, and so on). This methodology enabled a standard set of measures to be applied to a range of blog-post content with the aim of establishing a sense of the typical nature of such communications to Thai online newspapers on the part of their readers. The context of news blogs was employed as a framework to study the characteristics and patterns of discussion on news blogs.

4.6.1 Rationale and Purpose of Content Analysis

According to McQuail (2010, p.552), content analysis is “a technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media text, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for effects and making comparisons between media and over time or between content and reality”. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p.18). This method helps “to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimension of texts to be able to say something about the message, images, representations of such texts and their wider social significance” (Hansen, 1998, p.95). Since the 1940s, this method has been used as both a stand-alone research technique and in partnership with other research methodologies, such as surveys (Gunter, 2000). Hence, this technique was employed here because it could provide standard and objective measures of the nature of news blogs. These measures could be used to assess the extent to which blogs observed the usual conventions of reporting of good journalism.

4.6.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Content Analysis

According to Hansen (1998), content analysis is used to analyse some implications of media text. Busch et al. (2005) specified that content analysis is usually employed to examine communication messages because it can indicate the central idea of social interaction. This method helps to interpret and provide historical or cultural insights. Busch et al. (2005) also specified the disadvantages of content analysis: it can be time consuming, more errors could happen for a higher level of interpretation, it usually lack of a theoretical base, it is difficult to computerise, and so forth.

4.6.3 Samples and Unit of Content Analysis

As the content analysis should be based on a defined sampling frame for the selection of media outputs over a time period, the sampling frame of news blogs' outputs in this research was all of the latest posts of blogs filed with three online newspapers during three one-week periods in August 2011, September 2011, and October 2011. According to Kenix (2009, p.78), the period of seven days reflected "the ethereal and plentiful nature of the blogosphere". The homepages of Komchadluek, Bangkokbiznews, ASTVManager, The Nation and another 11 online newspapers were also investigated for the formats used to encourage contributions from the public.

In an initial scoping exercise, the researcher explored the number of new blog posts in the three blog communities during one week from 30 October to 5 November 2010. This analysis found that OKnation had approximately 1,635 blogs, Mblog had 98 blogs and The Nation Weblog had 14 blogs. So, blog posts on these three online newspapers totalled around 1,700 posts during this single week. It might be expected then that if this rate of

blogging were typical of any given week, a three-week period could yield a total blog sample of around 5,100 posts.

The unit of analysis was the individual blog that was visited at each point in time. Blogs are dynamic sites that are constantly changing. Hence, a number of snapshots of each blog were taken. Three coding sheets for each time were used to identify critical features of each blog in terms of its contents and format (one for each time the researcher visited it).

4.6.4 Coding Frame

A coding frame was designed to capture the core ingredients of blog posts. The measures used here addressed the attributes listed below. One aim of this analysis was to provide a means of cross-referencing with specific responses made by survey respondents in the blog-user survey. Hence, some of the measures used in the coding frame examined elements about which survey respondents were questioned. The coding frame contained the following elements:

I. Formats used to encourage contributions from the public

1. Name of online newspaper
2. Comments on news stories
 - 2.1 Personal information needed before commenting
 - 2.2 Have pre-moderate system
3. Messageboards/webboard
 - 3.1 Register or fill in personal information before commenting
 - 3.2 Have pre-moderate system
 - 3.3 Registration before posting new topic
 - 3.4 Have pre-moderate system

4. Polls on homepage
 - 4.1 Personal information needed before voting
 - 4.2 Have pre-moderate system
5. Polls on news stories
 - 5.1 Personal information needed before voting
 - 5.2 Have pre-moderate system
6. Reader blogs

II. Reader blog story

1. Case number
2. Blog story title
3. Blog date
4. Blog posting time
5. Blogger's email address
6. Blogger's name
7. Number of readers
8. Total stories
9. Language
10. Story is related to news or public issue
11. Blog topic
12. Story has copied or refers to other news sources
13. Hyperlink to related information
14. Post photos or picture related to the story
15. Comment box
16. Have comments from reader(s)

III. Blog reader posts

1. Continue from case number
2. Total reader comments
3. Reader comment case
4. Question to blogger
5. Opinion

4.6.5 Methods of Data Collection

Fifteen online newspapers were coded by coding sheet 1, and all blog posts on the three blog communities associated with online newspapers during three periods of time (one week before, during and after the implementation of the survey) were coded by coding sheets 2 and 3.

4.6.6 Reliability of Coding Instruments

The concept of reliability is crucial for content analysis. In order to achieve acceptable levels of reliability, three steps were recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2000). First, category boundaries with full detail have to be defined, especially examples of unit of analysis with a brief explanation. Second, the coding instrument and the category system must be trained to coders. The results of the sample and the purpose of the study should be discussed among coders. Then, disagreements should be analysed and a manual of detailed instructions and coding examples should emerge at the end of the training session. Third, a pilot study must be conducted and tested for reliability.

The following formula is the intercoder reliability formula (percentage of agreement) that was devised by Holsti in 1969 (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000, p.151) for determining the reliability of nominal data.

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N1+N2}$$

M = the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree.

N1 and N2 = total number of coding decisions by first and second coder.

For the purpose of content analysis, instruments must be clear enough in respect of what exactly should be measured. The three steps proposed by Wimmer & Dominick (2000) to achieve acceptable levels of reliability and intercoder reliability testing were employed in this thesis. The pilot study was conducted. A small sub-sample of the total sample of content (5 per cent of the first phase or 85 posts of 1,700 posts) was analysed by two coders. In 85 posts, recent blogs on the three websites were counted and sampled by proportion. The proportion of samples among three websites depended on the number of new blog stories on each site at that time. One coder was the researcher and the other one was trained by the researcher. The two coders worked independently over the same period. Afterwards the two coders compared findings across the coding frame measures. At least 75% agreement in each item in the coding frame was accepted. Where there was a lot of disagreement, the coding frame or its instructions (Appendix C) were revised. Then a retest was run on these measures to be confident that any changes made to the coding frame had ensured that all its measures could be used by different coders in a consistent way. The results of intercoder reliability testing of this study were as follows:

Table 4.2
Inter-coder Reliability Testing of Coding Sheet One:
User-Generated Content on 15 Thai Newspaper Websites

Coding item	2 Coders agreement
1. Name of online newspaper	100%
2. Comments on news stories	100%
2.1 Reader's personal information has to be filled in before commenting	100%
2.2 Have pre-moderate system	100%
3. Messageboards/webboard	100%
3.1 Register or fill in personal information before commenting	100%
3.2 Have pre-moderate system	100%
3.3 Register before posting new topic	100%
3.4 Have pre-moderate system	100%
4. Polls on homepage	100%
4.1 Fill in personal information before voting	100%
4.2 Have pre-moderate system	100%
5. Polls on news stories	100%
5.1 Fill in personal information before voting	100%
5.2 Have pre-moderate system	100%
6. Reader blog	100%

Table 4.3
Inter-coder Reliability Testing of Coding Sheet Two: Reader Blog Story
(OKnation 221 items, The Nation Weblog 3 items and Mblog 7 items)

Coding item	2 Coders agreement
1. Case number (N=231)	100%
2. Blog story title (N=231)	100%
3. Blog date (N=231)	100%
4. Blogger's email address (N=231)	100%
5. Blogger name (N=231)	100%
6. Number of readers (N=231)	100%
7. Total stories (N=231)	100%
8. Story is related to news or public issue (N=231)	90%
9. Blog topic (N=231)	87%
10. Story has copied or refers to other news sources (N=231)	98%
11. Hyperlink to related information (N=207)*	100%
12. Post photo or picture related to the story (N=207)*	100%
13. Comment box (N=207)*	100%
14. Have comments from reader(s) (N=207)*	100%

* For items 11 to 14, 24 cases were excluded from 231 cases because the two coders disagreed that they are blogs which related to news.

Table 4.4
Intercoder Reliability Testing of Coding Sheet Three:
Reader Comments (Total 738 items*)

Coding item	2 Coders agreement Total 738 items
1. Continue from case number	100%
2. Total reader comments	88%
3. Reader comment case	100%
4. Reader name	100%
5. Question to blogger	96%
6. Opinion	90%

* One blog could have more than one reader comment

4.7 Conclusion

Table 4.5 summarises how the three research methods were integrated in order to analyse the data gained from the study and thus help to answer the research questions.

Table 4.5 Cross-Reference Checking Summary

RQ 1 Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?

Interview (news professionals)	Content Analysis (online newspapers and reader blog)	Online Q/N (news audiences)
1.1 What are the user-generated content formats that encourage contributions from readers on your newspaper's website? 1.2 When do you open each UGC format? Why do you open them? 1.3 Which ones need to be registered and pre-moderated before (both for comment and to create a story)? Why? 1.4 How can readers register and how do you pre-moderate them? 1.5 How important are journalist blogs and reader blogs as a component of your online	Coding sheet 1: formats used to encourage contributions from the public in online newspapers	14. How often do you do these following activities on online newspapers? (Comments on stories, Messageboard/webboard, Polls, Journalist blogs) 16. How often do you consume news blogs from OKnation nowadays? 18. How often do you consume news blogs from Mblog nowadays? 20. How often do you consume news blogs from The Nation Weblog

<p>newspaper for four journalistic processes: generating ideas, gathering information, production and post-publication?</p> <p>1.6 Do you encourage your news crews and your readers to use or create news blogs? If yes, why? How?</p> <p>1.7 Do you think news blogs (both in and outside news organisations) will diminish the gatekeeper role of newspapers in Thai society?</p>		<p>nowadays?</p> <p>26. How often do you usually create news blogs/ commentary posts of your own?</p>
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RQ 2 How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?

Interview (news professionals)	Content Analysis (news blog)	Online Q/N (news audiences)
<p>2.1 How many journalist bloggers, reader bloggers and blog readers are in your online newspapers nowadays?</p> <p>2.2 How many news topics, news blog stories, and comments were created per day? How much different is it from the size of your online newspaper readers?</p> <p>2.3 What are your newspaper's blog-users' characteristics? In what way do they use it? Why do they use it? Are they satisfied with your newspaper blog?</p> <p>2.4 How much attention do they pay to those news blogs? Did the number of news blog usages relate to major crisis events? If yes, please give examples and explain why.</p> <p>2.5 Do you think that news readers become more engaged in the news via your blogs?</p>	<p>Coding sheet 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of blog posts per day - Number of readers - Number of reader comments 	<p>16. How often do you consume news blogs from OKnation nowadays?</p> <p>18. How often do you consume news blogs from Mblog nowadays?</p> <p>20. How often do you consume news blogs from The Nation Weblog nowadays?</p> <p>26. How often do you create news blogs/ commentary posts of your own?</p> <p>28. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following comments that others have made concerning why they use news blogs?</p> <p>30.–37. Demographic Characteristics</p>

RQ 3 Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?

Interview (news professionals)	Content Analysis (news blogs)	Online Q/N (news audiences)
3.1 Do you think that other news blogs, as sources, can help or improve news reports of your own news operation from the aspect of diversity of news? If yes, how?	Coding sheet 2 -Type of blog story	25. Which type of news or news commentary have you posted on a blog?

RQ 4 Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?

Interview (news professionals)	Content Analysis (news blogs)	Online Q/N (news audiences)
4.1 To what extent does your newspaper use the blog posts of your readers as sources of news stories? 4.2 Do blog posts of your readers enhance the quality of your news reports? Give examples. How often? 4.3 When you use the content from news blogs, how much credibility do you give to them and how do you evaluate the credibility of these sources? 4.4 Have you ever experienced problems with story credibility or accuracy from the use of news blogs? If yes, give examples. 4.5 Do you think your news consumers trust news blogs which appear in your online newspaper?	Coding sheet 2 - source of content	29. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Each statement is followed by four news sources. We would like you to state your agreement or disagreement with each statement (accuracy and fairness) in respect of each of the four listed news sources. (29.1–29.16)

RQ 5 What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?

Interview (news professionals)	Content Analysis (news blogs)	Online Q/N (news audiences)
<p>5.1 Do you think the use of news blogs has resulted in a reduction in the amount of time news consumers devote to online newspapers, they share a mutual benefit or their function is not the same as online newspapers? Why?</p> <p>5.2 Do you think that readers believe the news more when they read about stories in your newspaper's blog(s)? Do you have any evidence of this from what your readers have told you?</p> <p>5.3 What is/are other impact(s) that newspaper-linked blogs have had on news consumers?</p>	<p>Coding Sheet 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal view or other information related to the issue - Ask questions to bloggers 	<p>22. In relation to OKnation, Mblog or The Nation Weblog, how often do you do any of the following things?</p> <p>22.1 Simply read issues</p> <p>22.2 Read comments</p> <p>22.3 Comment on story</p> <p>22.4 Ask blogger a question</p> <p>23. What is the effect from the use of news blogs on online newspaper reading?</p> <p>1., 3., 5., 7., 9., 11., 16.</p> <p>frequency of general media and news blog usage.</p>

This chapter has described the methodology of the study. The next chapter will discuss the first half of the findings from the online questionnaire. It will examine data about news blogging behaviour, demographic characteristics of news blog users, and news blog users' attention to general media. It will also illustrate whether or not heavy blog users and light blog users have similar demographic characteristics and comparable general news consumption. These findings help to answer the following research questions: 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?', 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?' and 'What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?'

PART TWO

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Chapter Five: The Uses of News Blogs on the Part of News Consumers

This thesis was primarily concerned with understanding Thai news consumers' and news professionals' use of news blogs that appear in leading online newspapers. Chapters Five and Six will discuss the findings from 305 news blog users who answered a self-completion online questionnaire by clicking on a link found on the homepage of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog between 15 September and 14 October 2011. This survey was designed to answer five research questions. This chapter will show the findings that aids to answer four research questions: 1. 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?', 2. 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', 3. 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?' and 5. 'What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?'

In this survey, users of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog were asked several questions related to their use of news and/or news commentary. These questions included their demographic characteristics, their use of offline and online mainstream news media, their news blog use motivations, and their perceptions of news blog credibility. This chapter will be divided into six sections: 1) the use of news blogs; 2) demographic characteristics of news blog users; 3) similarities and differences in demographic characteristics between heavy and light blog users; 4) attention to general news media; 5) similarities and differences in general news-media consumption patterns between heavy and light blog users; and 6) summary and discussion.

5.1 The Use of News Blogs

The respondents were asked several questions related to their use of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog. They were asked how often they used these three blog communities, whether they could remember the blog authors' names, how often they performed certain behaviour in relation to the three sites, what effects the use of news blogs had on the time they spent reading online newspapers, whether they had created or posted a blog story related to news or news commentary, what topics they had posted, how many news stories they had posted, and which sources of information they had used for writing a news blog.

The findings indicate that the respondents reportedly used OKnation often, whereas they rarely used The Nation Weblog and never or scarcely used Mblog, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 News Blog Exposure

News blog exposure N=305	5–7 days a week %	2–4 days a week %	Once a week or less %	Never %	Total N=305 %	Scale 0–0.74 never/scarcely 0.75–1.49 rarely 1.50–2.24 average 2.25–3.00 often
OKnation	67.9	18.4	7.9	5.9	100.0	2.48 (often)
The Nation Weblog	13.8	13.4	12.1	60.7	100.0	0.80 (less)
Mblog	9.2	11.8	15.4	63.6	100.0	0.67 (never/scarcely)

The respondents were also asked if they could remember the name(s) of the blog author(s) they had followed. Table 5.2 shows that most respondents could not remember the blog author's/authors' name(s).

Table 5.2 News Blog Authors that the Reader can Remember

Blog site	Remember %	Cannot remember %	Total %	Blog author name
OKnation	45.9	54.0	100.0 N=287	Canthaimueng (52), Sutthichai Yoon (43), Vincentoldbook (10), Panumas Taksana (10)
The Nation Weblog	17.5	82.5	100.0 N=120	
Mblog	12.6	87.4	100.0 N=111	

The respondents were then asked how often they performed certain behaviours in relation to the three blog sites. The findings from this question were compared for two groups of news blog users: ‘heavy blog users’ and ‘light blog users’. These two groups of respondents were classified in order to distinguish whether or not they differed from each other in terms of their blogging behaviours. The respondents who visited the three blog communities 5–7 days a week were named as ‘heavy blog users’ while the respondents who visited the three blog communities less than 5–7 days a week were grouped and named as ‘light blog users’. After this grouping, there were 215 heavy blog users (70.5%) and 90 light blog users (29.5%).

The findings indicate that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users read comments from other readers every time they read blogs (51.6%) whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users read comments most time they read blogs (45.6%). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=10.193$, 3, $p < .05$). Overall, the respondents read comments at high levels, as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Behaviour:

Read Comments

Read comments	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale 0–0.74 never/scarcely 0.75–1.49 low 1.50–2.24 average 2.25–3.00 high	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never do this	1.4	4.4	2.3	2.27 (high)	10.193 ^a , 3, .017
Sometimes	14.0	16.7	14.8		
Most times	33.0	45.6	36.7		
Every time	51.6	33.3	46.2		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Table 5.4 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users posted opinions sometimes when they read blogs (38.6% and 42.2% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=5.479$, 3, $p>.05$). Overall, they posted opinions or other information related to the issues at a low level.

Table 5.4 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Behaviour:

Post Opinion

Post opinion	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale 0–0.74 never/scarcely 0.75–1.49 low 1.50–2.24 average 2.25–3.00 high	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never do this	26.0	33.3	28.2	1.14 (low)	5.479 ^a , 3, .140
Sometimes	38.6	42.2	39.7		
Most times	23.3	20.0	22.3		
Every time	12.2	4.4	9.8		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Table 5.5 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users (42.8%) never asked bloggers a question whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users (47.8%) did sometimes ask a question when they read blogs. A chi-square analysis showed that there

was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=5.597$, 3, $p > .05$). Overall, they scarcely asked bloggers a question.

Table 5.5 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Behaviour:

Ask Blogger a Question

Ask blogger a question	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale 0–0.74 never/scarcely 0.75–1.49 rarely 1.50–2.24 average 2.25–3.00 often	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never do this	42.8	45.6	43.6	0.74 (scarcely)	5.597 ^a , 3, .133
Sometimes	40.5	47.8	42.6		
Most time	11.6	4.4	9.5		
Every time	5.1	2.2	4.3		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

According to Limthongkul (2011), the first reader blog that was associated with a Thai online newspaper was Mblog. Since 2003 a link to Mblog has appeared on ASTV Manager's online newspaper. In 2005, the Nation Broadcasting Corporation launched two reader blogs, OKnation (Thai language) and The Nation Weblog (English language). Links to OKnation could be found on Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews online newspapers, while the link for The Nation Weblog could be found on The Nation online newspaper (Limparungpattanakij, 2011). At the time that this thesis was conducted, there were only three reader blog communities which were associated with mainstream online newspapers. OKnation has by far the largest group of users in comparison to the other two, which had a very high number of users from the start (Truehits.net, 2009).

Gunter (2010) identified that the appearance of a new medium can affect the time people spend with an existing medium. There is simple time displacement of one medium by another (increase–decrease relationship). Functional displacement occurs when two

media satisfy the same gratifications and one does so better than the other (functional displacement). Alternatively, greater use of one medium can be positively correlated with use of the other (mutual relationship). So, this study also explored the effect of reader blogs on time spent reading online newspapers. From the findings, there was little evidence that reader blogs reduced the time people spent reading online newspapers. They both drew in news consumers and shared mutual benefits. Most respondents (70%) confirmed that the use of news blogs produced no reported effects on online newspaper reading, perhaps because blogs and other news content served different functions. Just one in four (23%) said that it resulted in a reduction in the amount of time devoted to online newspapers, and very few (8%) identified that it resulted in an additional amount of time devoted to it. This finding was consistent with Reese et al. (2005), who discovered that the blogosphere contained very few first-hand news reports, most blog authors heavily relied on mainstream news reports. According to Tremayne (2007), the traditional function of news media will not be replaced by blogs, except for bloggers who can provide all the services that traditional news media covers on a daily basis. However, blogs continue to cover the issues that traditional media covers. Furthermore, some evidence has indicated that the number of newspaper readers and TV news viewers is continuing to fall, so sooner or later traditional media will be affected. Sussman (2009) also reported that there was an ever-increasing overlap between blogging and mainstream media consumption. For this reason, Tremayne (2007) suggested that mainstream news media can turn this incoming threat to opportunity by incorporating news consumers into their journalistic tasks.

The questionnaire also asked the respondents whether they had ever posted news blogs. The findings indicated that half of the respondents did post, with the most popular issue across the three blog sites being politics. Table 5.6 shows that 69.0% of bloggers

posted on political issues on OKnation, 76.5% did so on The Nation Weblog and 72.3% did so on Mblog.

Table 5.6 News Issues that Blog Authors have Posted across Three Blog Sites

News blog topic post (The respondents could identify more than one topic)	OKnation (N=145) %	The Nation Weblog (N=68) %	Mblog (N=65) %
Politics	69.0	76.5	72.3
Environment	37.2	32.4	32.3
Education	28.3	32.4	35.4
Economics/Business/Finance	24.1	19.1	30.8
Entertainment	18.6	14.7	18.5
Technology	16.6	19.1	18.5
Foreign affairs	16.6	14.7	12.3
Health	14.5	10.3	18.5
Crime	8.3	14.7	6.2
Sport	11.0	8.8	6.2
Weird/supernatural issue	4.8	7.4	6.2

Table 5.7 shows that both heavy and light blog users also cited ‘politics’ as a primary topic when they posted (51.6% and 17.6% respectively). Overall, of the respondents who had posted news blogs (153 blog authors in total), 69.3% cited ‘politics’ as a primary post topic. This result is similar to the finding of Lenhart and Fox (2006), who found among American news consumers that apart from ‘my life and experiences’ (37%), the most popular blog post topic was ‘politics’ (11%).

Table 5.7 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
News Blog Topics that Blog Authors have Posted

News blog topic post	Heavy blog users %	Light blog users %	Total (N=153) %
Politics	51.6	17.6	69.3
Environment	26.1	10.5	36.6
Education	20.3	8.5	28.8
Economics/Business/Finance	17.6	7.8	25.5
Entertainment	13.7	5.9	19.6
Technology	11.8	6.5	18.3
Foreign affairs	14.4	2.6	17.0
Health	10.5	4.6	15.0
Crime	8.5	2.0	10.5
Sport	7.8	2.6	10.5
Weird/supernatural issue	3.9	0.7	4.6

The respondents who had posted news blogs were also asked how often they posted information. The results indicated that by far the largest proportion of the respondents (73.9%) stated that they posted one story per week or less, around one in five (20.9%) posted 2–6 stories/week and very few (5.2%) posted more than one story per day. This finding supported the study of Smith (2008), which found that the majority of bloggers worked on their blogs like a hobby. They did not write blogs on a daily basis. Nardi et al. (2004) also discovered from their ethnographic research that some bloggers posted many times a day, whereas others might post only once a month. Similarly, Lenhart and Fox (2006) found that most bloggers posted blogs occasionally, and just 13 per cent posted new material every day. They also found that most bloggers (55%) often or sometimes blogged after they read, listened to or watched something reported by news media, and 54 per cent used another blog as a news source. These findings are similar to the sources of information that bloggers in this study claimed to normally use.

On the question of which source of information news blog users used for writing news blogs, most heavy and light blog users identified that they used direct experience or eyewitnesses from the scene as sources (54.9% and 20.9% respectively). Overall, most of the news blog users used direct experience or eyewitnesses from the scene (75.8%), more than half (56.2%) used online mainstream news media, followed by social media (49.0%), mainstream news media (45.1%), friends/family/relatives (30.1%), government websites (22.2%) and other websites (6.5%), as shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Sources Used for Writing News Blogs

Sources for writing news blogs (The respondents could identify more than one source)	Heavy blog users %	Light blog users %	Total (N=153) %
Direct experience/eyewitness from the scene	54.9	20.9	75.8
Online mainstream news media	40.5	15.7	56.2
Social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, other blogs, etc.	36.6	12.4	49.0
Mainstream news media	31.4	13.7	45.1
Friends/family/relatives	25.5	4.6	30.1
Government websites	17.0	5.2	22.2
Other websites	4.6	2.0	6.5

5.2 Demographic Characteristics of News Blog Users

To understand more about the background of news blog users in Thailand, the respondents were asked questions concerning their demographic characteristics, which comprised gender, age, education, occupation, income, length of time of Internet usage, frequency of Internet usage, and time spent on the Internet.

The findings demonstrated that the survey sample comprised more male respondents (64%) than female respondents (36%). This finding was in agreement with Greenspan's (2003) finding that blogs seemed to be read mostly by men, and Sussman's (2009) finding which showed evidence that six in ten bloggers were males. However, the current finding differed from Sysomos (2010), who found that the blogosphere appeared to be a gender-neutral environment.

In terms of age breakdown, more than half of the respondents (55%) were aged 41 to 60 years, with around one in three (35%) being 26 to 40 years old. Just a few (6%) were older than 60 or under 25 years of age (4%). This finding was slightly different from other studies which found that most bloggers in the blogosphere are young adults; for instance, Sussman (2009) revealed that most bloggers were between 18 and 44 years old, Lenhart and Fox (2006) found that more than half (54%) of bloggers were under the age of 30, and Sysomos (2010) discovered that more than half of bloggers (53.3%) were between 21 and 35 years old.

Regarding education, more than half of the respondents (53%) were studying for or had finished their Bachelor degree, around three in ten (31%) were studying for or already had a Master's degree, a few (9%) had finished secondary school/college or had a doctoral degree or higher (8%), and very few (0.3%) had finished primary school. This result was

consistent with the finding of Sussman (2009) which revealed that most bloggers were well educated.

Concerning occupation, three in ten (30%) were a business owner/self-employed/freelancers, more than one in four (27%) were private company employees, around one in five (21%) were official/state officers, and a few (9%) were unemployed/retired people and others, e.g. teachers (8%). Very few were editors-in-chief/editors/sub-editors (3%), students (3%) and journalists (1%).

In terms of monthly income, more than half of the respondents (53%) had high incomes. They earned more than 30,000 baht a month (approximately 700 GBP), which was the highest range of income specified in the questionnaire. Around three in ten (31%) earned 15,001–30,000 baht, with a few (13%) earning 5,000–15,000 baht and very few (4%) earning lower than 5,000 baht. This result was consistent with Sussman (2009), who discovered that one in three bloggers were wealthy (earning a household income of \$75,000 per year or higher).

With regard to the length of time respondents had been using the Internet, most blog users had spent many years on it because by far the largest group of respondents (92%) had used the Internet for more than four years; just a few (8%) had used it for at least six months but less than four years; and very few (0.3%) had used it for less than six months. This result was in agreement with Greenspan's (2003) study which specified that nearly three in four of blog readers (73%) had been online for more than five years.

In terms of frequency of Internet usage, the respondents used the Internet very often. The results showed that by far the largest group (97%) of respondents used the Internet 5–7 days per week and very few (3%) used it 2–4 days per week. The respondents

spent on average 33.35 hours per week on the Internet, ranging from 2 hours to 130 hours per week.

5.3 Similarities and Differences in Demographic Characteristics between Heavy and Light Blog Users

This section compares the heavy and light blog users across the three blog sites in order to distinguish whether or not they differed from each other demographically. The results indicated that most heavy and light blog users were male (67.9% and 55.6% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=4.214$, 1, $p < .05$), as shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Gender

Gender	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Female	32.1	44.4	35.7	4.214 ^a , 1, .040
Male	67.9	55.6	64.3	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

The biggest proportion of heavy blog users were aged 41–60 years old (59.1%) whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users were 26–40 (45.6%) and 41–60 years old (45.6%). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=7.818$, 3, $p < .05$), as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Age

Age (years old)	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
18–25	3.3	5.6	3.9	7.818 ^a , 3, .050
26–40	31.2	45.6	35.4	
41–60	59.1	45.6	55.1	
>60	6.5	3.3	5.6	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Concerning education, Table 5.11 shows that the biggest proportion of the heavy and light blog users had finished or were studying for a Bachelor degree (54.9% and 47.8% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=7.818$, 3, $p > .05$).

Table 5.11 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Education

Education	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Primary school	0.0	1.1	0.3	4.749 ^a , 4, .314
Secondary school/college	9.3	6.7	8.5	
Bachelor degree	54.9	47.8	52.8	
Master's degree	28.8	35.6	30.8	
Doctoral degree	7.0	8.9	7.5	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

In relation to occupation, Table 5.12 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users were business owners/self-employed or freelance (28.4% and 31.1% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=9.349$, 7, $p > .05$).

Table 5.12 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Occupation

Occupation	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Journalist	0.9	2.2	1.3	9.349 ^a , 7, .229
Editor	2.8	2.2	2.6	
Private company employee	27.0	25.6	26.6	
State officer	23.3	16.7	21.3	
Business owner/freelance	28.4	31.1	29.2	
Student	3.3	1.1	2.6	
Unemployed/retired person	9.3	7.8	8.9	
Other e.g. teacher	5.1	13.3	7.5	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Regarding income, Table 5.13 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light users earned more than 30,000 baht a month (54.4% and 47.8% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=1.128$, 3, $p > .05$)

Table 5.13 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Income

Income (50baht=1pound)	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
<5,000 baht	3.7	4.4	3.9	1.128 ^a , 3, .770
5,001–15,000 baht	12.6	14.4	13.1	
15,001–30,000 baht	29.3	33.3	30.5	
>30,000 baht	54.4	47.8	52.5	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

With regard to length of time respondents had been using the Internet, Table 5.14 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users had used the Internet for more than four years (91.2% and 94.4% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that

there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=1.160$, 2, $p > .05$).

Table 5.14 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Length of Time of Internet Use

Length of time of Internet use	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
<6 months	0.5	0.0	0.3	1.160 ^a , 2, .560
6 months to <4 years	8.4	5.6	7.5	
>4 years	91.2	94.4	92.1	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

In terms of frequency of Internet use, Table 5.15 shows that most heavy and light blog users used the Internet 5–7 days a week (99.1% and 92.2% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=10.388$, 1, $p < .05$). This result indicated that heavy blog users were more likely also to be heavy internet users

Table 5.15 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Frequency of Internet Use

Frequency of Internet use	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
2–4 days a week	0.9	7.8	3.0	10.388 ^a , 1, .001
5–7 days a week	99.1	92.2	97.0	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

5.4 Attention to General News Media

The emergence of the Internet has enhanced the world of news media. Innumerable news channels are available on the web at all times, enabling Internet users to catch up with current events. Due to the increasing number of these users and with the aim of reaching them, mainstream news media, especially newspapers, television channels and radio stations, use this online platform to republish their content. Internet users might consume offline and online mainstream news media including other news media. They might also create and pass along news and information to others by using certain applications on the web, such as a blog. Lenhart and Fox (2006) showed that most bloggers produced blogs because of something they had been informed of by mainstream news media. To understand further, this study explored the pattern of news-media consumption among news blog users in Thailand. Hence, this section will demonstrate the way the respondents replied to a number of questions in relation to their use of offline and online mainstream news media, including the frequency of news updates by talking to people they knew and correlation of news-media frequency of use.

On the questions concerning the use of offline mainstream news media, the respondents were asked how often they were exposed to television, radio and newspaper news; which suppliers of news within each medium they used; and how frequently they found out about news developments by talking to people they knew.

A study by Lenhart and Fox (2006) showed evidence that bloggers were news consumers of TV, radio and newspapers. They revealed that nine out of 10 bloggers watched TV news, three quarters listened to radio news and 85% read newspapers. This discovery was consistent with the finding in this study, which revealed that news blog users were news junkies. The results showed that 96% of blog users (around half of this percentage not only

read news blogs but also posted them) watched TV news, 60% listened to radio news and 87% read newspapers. Focusing on frequency, the current findings demonstrated that the largest group of respondents (61%) watched TV news 5–7 days a week, one in four (25%) watched it 2–4 days a week, while a few (11%) watched it once a week and very few (4%) never watched it. Overall, they watched TV news at a high level. Table 5.16 shows TV channels on which the respondents watched news.

Table 5.16 TV Channels on which Blog Users Watched News

TV channel (the respondents could identify more than one TV channel)	% N=305
Channel 9 (Modern Nine TV)	67.9
Thai PBS	57.0
Channel 3	56.7
Nation Channel	42.0
Channel 11	28.5
Channel 7	26.9
ASTV Manager	18.4
Channel 5	17.4
True 24	16.1
Others (BBC, CNN, etc.)	13.4

Regarding frequency of radio news consumption, four in ten respondents (40%) never listened to it, more than one in five (23%) listened to it 2–4 days a week, one in five (20%) listened 5–7 days a week and a few (17%) listened once a week. Overall, they listened to radio news at a lower level. Table 5.17 shows radio stations on which the respondents listened to news.

Table 5.17 Radio Stations on which Blog Users Listened to News

Radio station (the respondents could identify more than one radio station)	% N=305
FM 96.5 (Cluenkwamkid)	16.1
FM 100.5 (News Station by MCOT)	15.1
FM 100.0 (Jorsor 100)	13.8
FM 90.5 (Nation Radio)	13.4
FM 87.5 (Radio Parliament)	10.2
FM 101.0	8.5
FM 97.75 (Yaamphaopandin)	7.5
FM 106.5 (Green Wave)	6.2
FM 103.5 (FM One)	5.2
FM 105.5 (Easy FM)	4.9
FM 92.25	3.3
FM 95.5 (Virgin Hits)	3.0
FM 97.5 (Seed)	3.0
FM 99.5 (Traffic Radio Society)	2.0
FM 89.0 (Chill FM)	1.3

With regard to frequency of newspaper consumption, more than three in ten respondents (32%) read news in newspapers 5–7 days a week, followed by 2–4 days a week (29%) and once a week (25%). Just a few (13%) never read newspapers. Overall, they read newspapers at an average level. Table 5.18 shows publications in which the respondents read news.

Table 5.18 Newspapers in which Blog Users Read News

Newspaper name (the respondent could identify more than one newspaper)	% N=305
Thairath	41.3
Daily News	35.1
Komchadluek	34.1
Matichon	22.0
Bangkokbiznews	21.3
Thai Post	19.3
ASTV Manager	15.7
The Nation (English)	12.8
Post Today	12.5
Khaosod	8.2
Bangkok Post (English)	6.6
Siamrath	4.3
Naewna	5.6
Prachachart Turakit	5.6
Other newspapers	1.6
Banmuang	1.0

In terms of whether and how often blog users found out information on the latest news developments by talking to people they knew, the results showed that 96% of the respondents talked to people they knew about the latest news developments. Focusing on the frequency, nearly half of the respondents (46%) said they performed this behaviour 2–4 days a week, more than one in three (37%) said they did it 5–7 days a week, a few (13%) did it once a week or less, and very few (4%) never did this. Overall, the respondents talked to people they knew about news developments at an average level (2.15).

With regard to their use of online mainstream news media, the respondents were asked a number of questions about their use of online television, online radio and online newspapers for news. They were also asked how often they used these online media, which suppliers of news within each online medium they used, how often they performed the activity in relation to online newspapers which allow commenting on the news, how often

they commented and created stories on a webboard, how often they voted on issues and commented on journalist blogs, and how interested they were in several news topics.

The findings demonstrated that most respondents (68%) watched web TV news but never listened to web radio news (67%), while nearly all (93%) read online newspapers. This finding was consistent with Lenhart and Fox (2006), who found that most bloggers (95%) got their news online.

The findings also indicated that more than one in three respondents (35%) watched online TV news 5–7 days a week, nearly one in three (32%) never watched it, more than one in five (22%) watched it 2–4 days a week, and a few (12%) watched it once a week or less. Overall, they watched online TV news at an average level. The three most-watched online TV channels were Nation Channel (36% saying they watched it), Channel 9 (30%), and Thai PBS (25%). Other channels that were watched less often included ASTV (19%), Channel 3 (18%), Channel 11 (11%), Channel 7 (10%), Channel 5 (7%), True Vision (7%), and others, e.g. BBC, CNN (5%).

Regarding frequency of online radio news consumption, by far the largest group of respondents (67%) never listened to online radio news. Just a few listened to it once a week, 2–4 days a week, and 5–7 days a week (13%, 13%, and 7% respectively). Overall, they scarcely listened to online radio news. The three most-listened-to online radio stations were FM 90.5 (10%), FM 92.25 (10%), and FM 100.5 (9%).

In terms of frequency of online newspaper consumption, most respondents (57%) read online newspapers 5–7 days a week, one in four (25%) read them 2–4 days a week, a few (11%) read them once a week or less, and very few (7%) never read them. Overall, they read online newspapers often. The five most-read online newspapers were ASTV Manager (50% saying they read it), Thairath (33%), Komchadluek (33%), The Nation (33%) and Thai

Post (32%). Other online newspapers that were read less often included Bangkokbiznews (26%), Matichon (22%), Post Today (22%), Daily News (20%), Naewna (12%), Bangkok Post (7.9%), Prachachart Turakit (8%), Khaosod (7%), Siamrath (4%), and Banmuang (1%).

The above findings confirm that the respondents consumed news from different media (96% watched TV news, 96% talked to people they knew about the latest news developments, 93% read online newspapers, 87% read print newspapers, 68% watched online TV news, 60% listened to radio news, and 33% listened to web radio news).

The respondents were also asked how often they engaged in certain activities in online newspapers to measure their level of participation in these news sources. Table 5.19 shows that they rarely commented on news, scarcely commented and created stories on webboards, rarely voted on issues, and rarely commented on journalist blogs.

Table 5.19 News Blog Users' Participation on Online Newspapers

Participations in online newspapers N=305	5–7 days a week %	2–4 days a week %	Once a week or less %	Never %	Total N=305 %	Scale 0–0.74 never/scarcely 0.75–1.49 rarely 1.50–2.24 average 2.25–3.00 often
Comment on news	15.7	15.7	28.9	51.8	100.0	1.08 (rarely)
Comment on webboard	2.6	18.0	27.2	52.1	100.0	0.71 (scarcely/never)
Create story on messageboard/webboard	2.3	6.9	18.4	72.5	100.0	0.39 (scarcely/never)
Vote on poll	3.0	21.0	39.7	36.4	100.0	0.90 (rarely)
Comment on jblogs	8.9	19.7	26.9	44.6	100.0	0.93 (rarely)

5.5 Similarities and Differences in General News-Media Consumption Patterns between Heavy and Light Blog Users

The heavy and light blog users were also compared in order to distinguish whether they differed from each other in terms of their general news consumption patterns.

The results demonstrated that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users watched television news 5–7 days a week (64.2% and 53.3% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=4.203$, 3, $p>.05$), as shown in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by TV News Exposure

TV news exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	4.2	3.3	3.9	4.203 ^a , 3, .240
Once a week	8.8	14.4	10.5	
2–4 days a week	22.8	28.9	24.6	
5–7 days a week	64.2	53.3	61.0	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Concerning radio news exposure, Table 5.21 shows that most heavy and light blog users were never exposed to radio news (41.9% and 36.7% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=.870$, 3, $p>.05$).

Table 5.21 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Radio News Exposure

Radio news exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	41.9	36.7	40.3	.870 ^a , 3, .833
Once a week	15.8	18.9	16.7	
2–4 days a week	22.8	23.3	23.0	
5–7 days a week	19.5	21.1	20.0	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

In relation to newspaper exposure, Table 5.22 shows that most heavy blog users were exposed to newspapers 5–7 days a week (34.5%) while light blog users were exposed to newspapers 2–4 days a week (38.9%). A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=.5856$, 3, $p>.05$). Hence, those who used newspapers' blogs more often were also generally heavier consumers of newspapers.

Table 5.22 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by Newspaper Exposure

Newspaper exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	14.4	11.1	13.4	.5856 ^a , 3, .119
Once a week	26.5	22.2	25.2	
2–4 days a week	25.1	38.9	29.2	
5–7 days a week	34.5	27.8	32.1	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Regarding talking about news with other people, Table 5.23 shows that most heavy and light blog users discussed news with people they knew 2–4 days a week (44.7% and

47.8% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=13.162$, 1, $p<.05$).

Table 5.23 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by News Discussion

News discussion	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	2.8	7.8	4.3	13.162 ^a , 3, .004
Once a week	10.7	20.0	13.4	
2–4 days a week	44.7	47.8	45.6	
5–7 days a week	41.9	24.4	36.7	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Concerning web TV news exposure, Table 5.24 shows that most heavy blog users were exposed to web TV news 5–7 days a week (39.1%) while most light blog users were never exposed to web TV news (31.1%). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=8.899$, 3, $p<.05$).

Table 5.24 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Web TV News Exposure

Web TV news exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	32.6	31.1	32.1	8.899 ^a , 3, .031
Once a week	9.8	15.6	11.5	
2–4 days a week	18.6	28.9	21.6	
5–7 days a week	39.1	24.4	34.8	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

In terms of web radio news exposure, Table 5.25 shows that most heavy and light blog users were never exposed to web radio news (67.0% and 66.7% respectively). A chi-

square analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users ($\chi^2=4.456$, 3, $p>.05$).

Table 5.25 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Web Radio News Exposure

Web radio news exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	67.0	66.7	66.9	4.456 ^a , 3, .216
Once a week	11.6	17.8	13.4	
2–4 days a week	12.6	12.2	12.5	
5–7 days a week	8.8	3.3	7.2	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Concerning online newspaper exposure, Table 5.26 shows that most blog users were exposed to online newspapers 5–7 days a week (64.2% of heavy blog users and 38.9% of light blog users) and 2–4 days a week (38.9% of light blog users). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=8.899$, 3, $p<.001$).

Table 5.26 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Online Newspaper Exposure

Online newspaper exposure	Heavy blog users (215) %	Light blog users (90) %	Total (N=305) %	χ^2 Value, df, Asymp. sig 2 sided
Never	8.4	4.4	7.2	23.641 ^a , 3, .000
Once a week	7.9	17.8	10.8	
2–4 days a week	19.5	38.9	25.2	
5–7 days a week	64.2	38.9	56.7	
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	

5.6 Summary and Discussion

5.6.1 *The Use of News Blogs*

Most of the respondents often used OKnation for news, while they used The Nation Weblog much less and scarcely used Mblog at all. Most respondents could not remember any blog authors' names. They often read posts in the comment box, rarely posted opinions, and scarcely asked bloggers a question. They confirmed that the use of news blogs produced no reported effects on their online newspaper reading, perhaps because blogs and other news content served different functions. About half of the respondents had posted news blog stories. The story type they most often posted on was politics followed by environmental issues. They mostly posted one story a week or less, by using direct experience or eyewitnesses from the scene as their sources followed by online news media and social media.

Concerning the question of whether or not heavy and light blog users across the three blog communities differed from each other in terms of their blogging behaviours, blog-post topics, and sources for writing blogs, the findings demonstrated that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users read comments more than the biggest proportion of light blog users. A chi-square analysis demonstrated that there were no significant differences between heavy and light blog users concerning the way they posted opinions and asked bloggers questions. However, news blog users in this thesis rarely posted opinions and scarcely asked bloggers questions. The study also found that the use of news blogs produced no effects on online newspaper reading, perhaps because they served different functions. The biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users posted on politics and used direct experience or eyewitnesses from the scene as news sources.

5.6.2 The Demographic Characteristics of News Blog Users

Most of the respondents in this study were male, aged 41–61 years old, were studying for or had finished their Bachelor degree, were business owners/self-employed/freelancers, earned more than 30,000 baht per month (highest range of income in the questionnaire), had used the Internet for more than four years, and used the Internet 5–7 days a week, and for 33.35 hours per week.

There is no study concerned with the characteristics of news blog users in Thailand. The current study found that most news blog users in this study read online newspapers 5–7 days a week; hence, it is better to know whether or not the characteristics of news blog users are similar to online newspaper readers in this country. The study found that the gender, age, and occupation of news blog users were different from online newspaper readers. Wongthangsawat (2007) found that most online newspaper readers were female, from a younger generation (less than 30 years old), and private company employees, whereas most news blog users in the current study were male, 41–60 years old, and business owners/self-employed/freelancers. So, the majority of news blog users from this current study and online newspaper readers might be from different demographic groups.

A chi-square analysis found that there were significant differences between heavy and light blog users in gender, age, and frequency of Internet use. The biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users were male, 41–60 years old and used the Internet 5–7 days per week.

5.6.3 Attention to General News Media

News blog users in this thesis were news junkies. Most of them watched TV news 5–7 days a week, watched Channel 9 the most, read news from newspapers 5–7 days a week, read

Thairath newspaper, and talked to people they knew about news developments 2–4 days a week. They rarely listened to news on radio however. In relation to online mainstream news-media consumption, most respondents watched TV news online 5–7 days a week, watched the Nation Channel, never listened to online radio news, read news from online newspapers 5–7 days a week, and read ASTV Manager. When accessing online newspapers, the respondents commented on news at a low level and scarcely commented on web boards, scarcely created stories on message boards or web boards, rarely voted in polls, and rarely commented on jblogs.

There were quite a few similarities in the news-media consumption patterns of heavy and light blog users. Chi-square analyses found that these two groups of blog users significantly differed from each other in news discussion, online television news exposure, and online newspaper exposure. The biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users discussed news with people they knew 2–4 days per week. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users were exposed to online television news 5–7 days per week, whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users were never exposed to online television news. And the biggest proportions of both groups were exposed to online newspapers 5–7 days per week.

This chapter has presented the first half of the findings from the online questionnaire, which included news blogging behaviour, news blog users' demographic characteristics, and their attention to general media. It has also illustrated whether or not heavy blog users and light blog users had similarities in demographic characteristics and general news consumption. The next chapter will demonstrate the second half of the findings from the online questionnaire. It will disclose news-topic interests among news blog users; news blog users' motivations; the credibility of news and news blogs; whether or not heavy and light blog users had similar news blog use motivations and credibility,

including a correlation between news-media frequency of use and credibility of news and news blogs; and significant predictors of news blogging. These findings help to answer the question, 'To what extent do news consumers pay attention to news blogs on online newspapers, and do news blogs enhance the quality of news?'

Chapter Six: News Blog Use Motivations and Credibility

This chapter continues to discuss the findings from the online questionnaire completed by 305 valid respondents to help in answering research questions 2. ‘How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?’ and 4. ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’ To answer these research questions, users of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog were asked several questions relating to their news-topic interests, their opinions concerning the reasons why people use news blogs and their perception of the credibility of news and news blogs. This chapter will discuss the findings in eight sections: 1) news-topic interests; 2) news blog use motivations; 3) similarities and differences between heavy and light blog users concerning news blog use motivations; 4) news and news blogs’ credibility perception; 5) similarities and differences between heavy and light blog users concerning news blog credibility; 6) influence of news-media frequency of use on the credibility of news and news blogs; 7) significant predictors of news blogging; and 8) summary and discussion.

6.1 News-Topic Interests

In order to measure which news topics drew blog users’ attention, the respondents were asked to what extent they were interested in various news topics. An overall score of between 0 and 0.74 meant they were not at all interested, 0.75–1.49 meant not very interested, 1.50–2.24 meant quite interested and 2.25–3.00 meant very interested. The respondents were grouped into heavy and light blog users in order to distinguish whether or not they differed from each other in terms of their news-topic interests.

Table 6.1 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users was very interested in political news (59.6%) whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users was quite interested in this news topic (36.0%). Overall, news blog users were very interested in political news. A chi-square analysis showed that only the responses concerning political news interest of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=18.413$, 3, $p<.001$).

Table 6.1 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by News-Topic Interests

News topics	Heavy Blog Users (H) %	Light Blog Users (L) %	Total %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Politics (H208, L86) - Quite interested - Very interested	59.6	36.0	52.0	2.31 (Very interested)	18.413***
Technology (H206, L85) - Quite interested	45.1	51.8	47.1	1.91 (Quite interested)	1.178
Economics (H205, L84) - Not very interested - Quite interested	36.1	35.7	35.6	1.75 (Quite interested)	.798
Environment (H204, L83) - Not very interested - Quite interested	40.7	41.0	38.7	1.74 (Quite interested)	3.265
Education (H205, L81) - Not very interested	37.6	43.2	39.2	1.74 (Quite interested)	.974
Foreign Affairs (H205, L83) - Not very interested - Quite interested	41.0	44.6	40.6 40.6	1.71 (Quite interested)	2.446
Health (H204, L82) - Not very interested	50.5	45.1	49.0	1.55 (Quite interested)	1.204
Religion (H199, L82) - Not very interested	53.8	52.4	53.4	1.37 (Not very interested)	.835
Sport (H200, L84) - Not very interested	44.0	44.0	44.0	1.16 (Not very interested)	5.654
Supernatural (H203, L81) - Not very interested	50.7	42.0	48.2	1.08 (Not very interested)	2.349
Crime (H200, L81) - Not very interested	56.0	50.6	54.4	1.05 (Not very interested)	4.060
Entertainment (H202, L83) Not very interested	50.0	47.0	49.1	0.86 (Not very interested)	3.306

NS = not significant = $p>.05$, * = $p<.05$, ** = $p<.01$, *** = $p<.001$

6.2 News Blog Users' Motivations

In order to help to answer the research question, 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', this study adapted Kaye's (2007) blog-use motivation items to measure the respondents' opinions concerning the reasons why people in Thailand use news blogs. The reason for adapting Kaye's (2007) blog-use motivation items for this study is that these items taken from the first time of employing an open-ended survey to ask 2,397 blog users why they blogged. So, this set of blog-use motivation items was the best fit for blog uses and gratifications research. A five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree) was employed. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with news blog use motivational statements under ten blocks: blog presentation/characteristics; personal fulfilment; expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users; information seeking; intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment; anti-traditional-media sentiment; guidance/opinion seeking; convenience; political surveillance; and fact checking.

Cronbach's alpha was first employed to analyse several statements in each block of news blog users' motivations to prove whether or not the statement items in each cluster belonged together. The results showed that all ten clusters of items had alpha scores over 0.70, so it could be concluded that the items in each group belonged together. It meant that 62 news blog use motivation statements could be grouped into ten blocks. The blocks of blog-use motivation comprise: 1) blog presentation/characteristics (alpha score = .708); 2) personal fulfilment (.817); 3) expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users (.909); 4) information seeking (.849); 5) intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment (.836); 6) anti-traditional-media sentiment (.754); 7) guidance/opinion seeking (.805); 8) convenience (.882); 9) political surveillance (.832); and 10) fact checking (.819). These ten blocks were created as

new variables with their mean scores. An overall opinion score between 1.00 and 1.80 meant strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60 meant disagree, 2.61–3.40 meant neither agree nor disagree, 3.41–4.20 meant agree, and 4.21–5.00 meant strongly agree. The findings demonstrated that in all cases, except for their admitted bias on specific issues and for unbiased viewpoints/fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue, a majority endorsed blog presentation/characteristics items as reasons for using news blogs. They strongly agreed that news blogs were used for links to more information/sources and for up-to-date information/immediate/timely/scoop/others. Overall, they agreed that news blogs were used because of their presentation/characteristics, as shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 News Blog Users' Motivations: Blog Presentation/Characteristics

1. Blog presentation/ characteristics	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- For links to more information/ sources	46.9	47.9	4.9	0.3	0.0	100.0	4.41 (strongly agree)
- For up-to-date information/ immediate/timely/scoop/others	44.6	45.6	8.5	1.3	0.0	100.0	4.33 (strongly agree)
- For non-traditional/different/ unedited/unfiltered independence/ no gatekeeping/censorship	34.4	46.2	13.1	5.2	1.0	100.0	4.08 (agree)
- For their depth of information/ issues/viewpoints/coverage	17.7	58.7	19.7	3.6	0.3	100.0	3.90 (agree)
- Because they provide distinctive news	17.0	58.7	21.3	2.6	0.3	100.0	3.90 (agree)
- For their commentary/insight/ analysis about news	20.7	51.8	23.6	3.0	1.0	100.0	3.88 (agree)
- Because bloggers keep a story going	16.7	55.4	23.9	3.6	0.3	100.0	3.85 (agree)
- For their admitted bias on specific issues	13.1	34.1	42.6	7.5	2.6	100.0	3.48 (neither agree nor disagree)
- For unbiased viewpoints/ fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue	6.2	29.8	42.6	16.7	4.6	100.0	3.16 (neither agree nor disagree)
Total							3.89 (agree)

The findings also demonstrated that in all cases, except because blogs helped them relax and for diversion/escape, a majority endorsed personal fulfilment items as reasons for using news blogs. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs because of personal fulfilment, as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 News Blog Users' Motivations: Personal Fulfilment

2.Personal fulfilment	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- Because blogs are interesting	24.3	64.6	10.5	0.7	0.0	100.0	4.12 (agree)
- Blogs are entertaining/fun/enjoyable/exciting	18.7	54.1	25.6	1.6	0.0	100.0	3.90 (agree)
- For their humour and amusement value	16.1	52.5	29.8	1.6	0.0	100.0	3.83 (agree)
- Because they're different	13.8	55.1	24.9	4.6	1.6	100.0	3.75 (agree)
- Because they tell stories the way they are	13.8	46.2	26.6	12.5	1.0	100.0	3.59 (agree)
- Because they are a news junkie	13.4	37.4	37.4	9.2	2.6	100.0	3.50 (agree)
- Because it helps them relax	11.8	49.2	31.8	6.2	1.0	100.0	3.15 (neither agree nor disagree)
- For diversion/escape	6.2	19.0	38.7	25.6	10.5	100.0	2.85 (neither agree nor disagree)
Total							3.59 (agree)

Table 6.4 shows that a majority of respondents endorsed all items under expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users as reasons for using news blogs. But the reason 'to express the opinion of the blogger' was the most strongly endorsed. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs because of the expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users.

Table 6.4 News Blog Users' Motivations: Expression/Affiliation with Bloggers and Users

3.Expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- To express their opinion	38.0	56.7	5.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.33 (strongly agree)
- For a sense of community/ networking/social connection/ sex/friendship	33.8	57.0	8.2	1.0	0.0	100.0	4.24 (agree)
- To engage in dialogues between bloggers and readers	30.5	59.0	10.2	0.3	0.0	100.0	4.20 (agree)
- For personal information about others/group/human interest	24.3	67.5	8.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.16 (agree)
- For contact with like-minded people	29.2	58.0	10.8	2.0	0.0	100.0	4.14 (agree)
- To interact with people/access news from around the world	25.6	60.7	12.8	0.7	0.3	100.0	4.10 (agree)
- To communicate with friends who have blogs	29.2	51.8	17.4	1.3	0.3	100.0	4.08 (agree)
- To promote a cause they believe in	24.6	55.1	18.4	1.3	0.7	100.0	4.02 (agree)
- To obtain a personal account of information/human touch/ blogger personality	18.7	62.3	17.7	1.3	0.0	100.0	3.98 (agree)
- To find out about issues affecting people like themselves	19.7	62.3	14.8	2.6	0.7	100.0	3.98 (agree)
- To access a specific blog/ blogger	23.0	50.2	23.9	3.0	0.0	100.0	3.93 (agree)
Total							4.11 (agree)

The findings demonstrated that in all cases a majority of respondents endorsed all items under information seeking as a reason to use news blogs. But they particularly strongly agreed that news blogs had a wide variety of information/topics, whereas they neither agreed nor disagreed that news blogs were used for accurate accounts of news and events. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs to seek information, as shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 News Blog Users' Motivations: Information Seeking

4. Information seeking	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- For the wide variety of information/topics they provide	40.3	52.5	6.6	0.3	0.3	100.0	4.32 (strongly agree)
- For specific information of interest	33.1	60.3	5.9	0.7	0.0	100.0	4.26 (agree)
- To keep up with the issues of the day/current events/general information	37.4	51.8	10.2	0.3	0.3	100.0	4.26 (agree)
- To keep up with social issues/trends	28.2	63.9	6.6	1.0	0.3	100.0	4.19 (agree)
- For scientific/technical information	15.7	57.7	24.6	1.6	0.3	100.0	3.87 (agree)
- For information for my own blog	14.4	46.6	33.4	4.3	1.3	100.0	3.69 (agree)
- For research/work/school	13.8	45.2	33.4	6.2	1.3	100.0	3.64 (agree)
- For accurate accounts of news and events	7.5	43.9	33.8	11.5	3.3	100.0	3.41 (neither agree nor disagree)
Total							3.96 (agree)

The findings demonstrated that in all cases a majority of respondents endorsed all news blog use motivation items under intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment as shown in Table 6.6. They strongly agreed that news blogs were used to learn something new and to engage in intellectual discourse/debate/arguments/critical thinking skills. So, the results imply that the respondents perceived that people used news blogs to learn something new through more involved arguments about news issues.

Table 6.6 News Blog Users' Motivations: Intellectual/Aesthetic Fulfilment

5. Intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- To learn something new	28.5	64.9	5.6	1.0	0.0	100.0	4.21 (strongly agree)
- To engage in intellectual discourse/debate/arguments/critical thinking skills	32.5	57.7	8.5	1.0	0.3	100.0	4.21 (strongly agree)
- For access to expert opinion and knowledge	25.6	57.7	16.4	2.0	0.3	100.0	4.04 (agree)
- Because of the good writing/writers	20.0	55.1	23.0	2.0	0.0	100.0	3.93 (agree)
Total							4.10 (agree)

The findings also demonstrated that the respondents endorsed all news blog use motivation items under anti-traditional-media sentiment, except news blog users do not trust/like traditional media as shown in Table 6.7. They were not sure whether people read news blogs because traditional media had a credibility problem. These findings imply that the respondents believed that news blog users were motivated to find an alternative perspective on major news issues that they read about in the mainstream news media. Linked to this objective was a need to seek out discussion of news issues that was perceived to not be biased in the way the major media are regarded as biased.

Table 6.7 News Blog Users' Motivations: Anti-Traditional-Media Sentiment

6. Anti-traditional-media sentiment	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- As an alternative to traditional media	43.6	51.5	3.3	1.3	0.3	100.0	4.37 (strongly agree)
- For information they can't get from traditional media	33.8	47.5	15.4	3.0	0.3	100.0	4.11 (agree)
- To avoid liberal media bias	21.6	43.6	23.6	8.5	2.6	100.0	3.73 (agree)
- Because of the lack of objectivity (non-specified bias) of traditional media	18.7	40.7	31.8	7.9	1.0	100.0	3.68 (agree)
- Because they don't trust/like traditional media	12.5	28.2	34.4	17.4	7.5	100.0	3.21 (neither agree nor disagree)
Total							3.82 (agree)

The findings demonstrated that the respondents endorsed all news blog use motivations under guidance/opinion seeking as shown in Table 6.8. They strongly agreed that people used news blogs to get a wide variety of opinions and to see what the other side thought.

Table 6.8 News Blog Users' Motivations: Guidance/Opinion Seeking

7. Guidance/opinion seeking	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- To get a wide variety of opinions	44.9	50.8	3.6	0.3	0.3	100.0	4.40 (strongly agree)
- To see what the other side thinks	39.7	55.4	4.6	0.3	0.0	100.0	4.34 (strongly agree)
- For support for their opinions/validation/compare their opinions to others	28.2	60.3	9.2	2.0	0.3	100.0	4.14 (agree)
- To make up their mind about important issues	17.4	46.6	30.5	4.3	1.3	100.0	3.74 (agree)
Total							4.16 (agree)

The respondents strongly agreed that news blogs were used because they were free and could be accessed at any time. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs because of convenience, as shown in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9 News Blog Users' Motivations: Convenience

8. Convenience	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- Because they are free to use	39.0	50.8	7.5	2.6	0.0	100.0	4.26 (strongly agree)
- To access information at any time	34.4	57.7	5.2	1.6	1.0	100.0	4.23 (strongly agree)
- To access information from work	31.8	57.0	8.9	2.0	0.3	100.0	4.18 (agree)
- To get information quickly/fast	28.5	56.7	11.1	3.0	0.7	100.0	4.10 (agree)
- For information that is easy/convenient to access	24.9	62.3	10.2	2.3	0.3	100.0	4.09 (agree)
- Because information can be copied and archived	24.6	52.1	22.3	0.7	0.3	100.0	4.00 (agree)
- Because blogger posts tell them what's important, save them time in looking	19.3	54.8	21.0	4.3	0.7	100.0	3.88 (agree)
Total							4.11 (agree)

Table 6.10 shows that the respondents strongly agreed that people used news blogs to keep up with politics/political issues. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs because of political surveillance.

Table 6.10 News Blog Users' Motivations: Political Surveillance

9. Political surveillance	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- To keep up with politics/political issues	44.3	49.8	5.2	0.0	0.7	100.0	4.37 (strongly agree)
- For specific political perspective	37.4	50.8	7.9	2.3	1.6	100.0	4.20 (agree)
- To keep up with election news	31.8	50.2	16.4	1.31	0.3	100.0	4.12 (agree)
- To see how politicians stand on various issues	28.5	43.9	22.3	4.6	0.7	100.0	3.95 (agree)
Total							4.16 (agree)

Lastly, Table 6.11 shows that the respondents agreed that news blogs were used to check on accuracy/verify/compare accounts of traditional media and bloggers, and to explore others for wrong information/bias. Overall, they agreed that people used news blogs for fact checking.

Table 6.11 News Blog Users' Motivations: Fact Checking

10. Fact checking	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- To check on accuracy/verify/compare accounts of traditional media and bloggers	29.2	49.2	17.0	3.9	0.7	100.0	4.02 (agree)
- To explore others for wrong info/bias	23.6	51.8	19.0	4.3	1.3	100.0	3.92 (agree)
Total							3.97 (agree)

The results concerning news blog users' motivations mostly confirm Kaye's (2007) blog use motivation items. The respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that news blogs were used for their acknowledged bias on specific issues; for unbiased viewpoints/fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue; for diversion/escape; because news blogs

help users relax; for accurate accounts of news and events; and because news blog users do not trust/like traditional media.

The findings in the news blog use motivation section have confirmed that the respondents believed that news blogs were used for political surveillance purposes (4.16) and guidance/opinion seeking (4.16) the most, followed by expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users (4.11), convenience (4.11), intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment (4.10), fact checking (3.97), information seeking (3.96), blog presentation/characteristics (3.89), anti-traditional-media sentiment (3.82), and personal fulfilment (3.59). These results were compatible with the findings of other researchers. Nardi et al. (2004) indicated that apart from reporting their personal issues, bloggers used blogs to express their opinions and emotions. Additionally, forming and maintaining community forums were also other main factors which drew them to blogs. Lenhart and Fox (2006) found that sharing experiences were major reasons for blogging

6.3 News Blog Motives of Heavy and Light Blog Users

The respondents were also grouped into heavy and light blog users in order to distinguish whether or not they differed from each other in terms of their opinions concerning news blog use motivations. In order to check whether the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly, chi-square analyses were conducted across ten news blog use motivation groups: blog presentation/characteristics; personal fulfilment; expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users; information seeking; intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment; anti-traditional-media sentiment; guidance/opinion seeking; convenience; political surveillance; and fact checking. The results showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly for five news blog use motivation groups: presentation/characteristics; personal fulfilment; information seeking; anti-traditional-media sentiment; and political surveillance.

Table 6.12 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of their presentation/characteristics (49.8%), but the biggest proportion of light blog users neither agreed nor disagreed on this reason (66.7%). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=9.434$, 3, $p<.05$).

Table 6.12 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Opinion Concerning Blog Presentation

Blog presentation/ characteristics	Heavy blog user (215) %	Light blog user (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.89 (agree)	9.434*
Disagree	0.9	0.0	0.7		
Neither agree nor disagree	47.9	66.7	53.4		
Agree	49.8	32.2	44.6		
Strongly agree	1.4	1.1	1.3		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Aggregate nine statements into one block (blog presentation/characteristics): for links to more information/sources, for up-to-date information/immediate/timely/scoop/others, for non-traditional/different/unedited/unfiltered independence/no gatekeeping/censorship, for their depth of information issues/viewpoints/coverage, because they provide distinctive news, for their commentary/insight/analysis about news, because bloggers keep a story going, for their admitted bias on specific issues, and for unbiased viewpoints/fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue.

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 6.13 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of personal fulfilment (62.8% and 47.8% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=14.345$, 3, $p < .01$). It can be inferred that more heavy blog users than light blog users perceived that news blogs were used to fulfil personal interest.

Table 6.13 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Opinion Concerning Personal Fulfilment

Personal fulfilment	Heavy blog user (215) %	Light blog user (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.59 (agree)	14.345**
Disagree	0.9	5.6	2.3		
Neither agree nor disagree	27.3	42.2	31.8		
Agree	62.8	47.8	58.4		
Strongly agree	8.8	4.4	7.5		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Aggregate eight statements into one block (personal fulfilment): because blogs are interesting, blogs are entertaining/fun/enjoyable/exciting, for their humour and amusement value, because they're different, because they tell stories the way they are, because they are a news junkie, because it helps them relax and for diversion/escape).

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 6.15 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of information seeking (72.1% and 67.8% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=12.398$, 3, $p < .01$). It can be inferred that more heavy blog users than light blog users believed that people used news blogs for information seeking.

Table 6.14 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Opinion Concerning Information Seeking

Information seeking	Heavy blog user (215) %	Light blog user (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.96 (agree)	12.398**
Disagree	0.5	0.0	0.3		
Neither agree nor disagree	8.8	22.2	12.8		
Agree	72.1	67.8	70.8		
Strongly agree	18.6	10.0	16.1		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Aggregate eight statements into one block (information seeking): for the wide variety of information/topics they provide, for specific information of interest, to keep up with the issues of the day/current events/general information, to keep up with social issues/trends, for scientific/technical information, for information for my own blog, for research/work/school, and for accurate accounts of news and events.

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 6.15 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of anti-traditional-media sentiment (59.1% and 52.2% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=8.479$, 3, $p < .05$). It can be inferred that more heavy blog users than light blog users believed that news blogs were used because of anti-traditional-media sentiment.

Table 6.15 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Opinion Concerning Anti-Traditional-Media Sentiment

Anti-traditional-media sentiment	Heavy blog user (215) %	Light blog user (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.82 (agree)	8.479*
Disagree	0.9	3.3	1.6		
Neither agree nor disagree	23.7	35.6	27.2		
Agree	59.1	52.2	57.0		
Strongly agree	16.3	8.9	14.1		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Aggregate five statements into one block (anti-traditional-media sentiment): as an alternative to traditional media, for information they can't get from traditional media, to avoid liberal media bias, because of the lack of objectivity (non-specified bias) of traditional media, and because they don't trust/like traditional media.

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 6.16 shows that the biggest proportion of heavy and light blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of political surveillance (54.4% and 60.0% respectively). A chi-square analysis showed that the responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=20.186$, 3, $p<.001$). Among these respondents heavier users of blogs used these sites for political information because they felt they could not trust the mainstream news media to provide comprehensive or balanced news coverage.

Table 6.16 Comparison of Heavy and Light Blog Users by
Opinion Concerning Political Surveillance

Political surveillance	Heavy blog user (215) %	Light blog user (90) %	Total (N=305) %	Scale Mean	χ^2 Value (df3)
Strongly disagree	0.0	1.1	0.3	4.16 (agree)	20.186***
Disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Neither agree nor disagree	4.7	16.7	8.2		
Agree	54.4	60.0	56.1		
Strongly agree	40.9	22.2	35.4		
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0		

Aggregate four statements into one block (political surveillance): to keep up with politics/political issues, for specific political perspective, to keep up with election news, and to see how politicians stand on various issues.

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

6.4 News and News Blogs' Credibility Perception

There has been a major argument concerning the perceived credibility of news blogs. Many critics have argued that the lack of gatekeeping authority and formal journalistic knowledge can lead to inaccurate content on blogs (Kaid and Postelnicu, 2007; Tremayne, 2007). But bloggers have argued that this view was due to a fear of losing readers and was an attempt to save the reputation of the traditional media (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). Hence, this study aimed not only to reveal the attention paid to news blogs by Thai blog users but also to examine whether news blogs produced by individuals were credible compared with news blogs produced by journalists and independent journalists and news reports produced by mainstream news media. This would help to answer the research question 'Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?'

In countries such as the United States, the basic responsibility of the press is to pursue the truth, which comprises accuracy, objectivity, and fairness (Pavlik, 2001), while a renowned news organisation such as the BBC in the United Kingdom follows two ethical

standards: accuracy and impartiality (Thompson, 2005). Each news organisation will have their ethical practices. Ethical practice is a core part of guaranteeing their professional ideals and the credibility of their news reports. However, a blog is a personal medium (even though its space might be provided by a news organisation) which has the capacity to deliver news from one sender to the masses. There have been some findings in relation to the perceived credibility of blogs. Blogads (2004) found that mainstream news media were perceived less credible than blogs, and Johnson et al. (2008) found that mainstream media were perceived less credible than blogs. To judge the perceived credibility of news blogs, Gunter et al. (2009) suggested that apart from the brand of news producers, the standard of accuracy and fairness that is used to judge the perceived credibility of news reports can be applied to judge the perceived credibility of news blogs.

To answer the question, ‘Are news blogs produced by individuals credible?’ in the perception of Thai news consumers, the surveyed respondents were asked to rate their opinions on several statements, identifying the credibility, accuracy, and fairness of news produced by four news providers: news reports produced by mainstream news media, news blogs written by journalists associated with mainstream news media, news blogs written by independent journalists, and news blogs written by individuals. In order to measure respondents’ credibility perceptions of mainstream news and news blogs, a five-point Likert scale – strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree – was employed. The respondents were asked to rate their opinions on a number of statements regarding accuracy and fairness of news produced by four news providers. An overall opinion score of between 1.00 and 1.80 meant strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60 meant disagree, 2.61–3.40 meant neither agree nor disagree, 3.41–4.20 meant agree, and 4.21–5.00 meant strongly agree. There were four statements concerning the measurement of

credibility perception with regard to accuracy and another four statements measuring credibility with regard to the fairness of news reporting.

In relation to accuracy of news, Table 6.17 shows that overall the respondents agreed that news contents produced by four news providers were usually factually accurate. However, the highest opinion score belonged to news blogs written by journalists who work independently (3.64), and the lowest opinion scores belonged to news blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio, and news blogs written by individuals (3.55 and 3.55 respectively).

Table 6.17 Credibility Perceptions: Accuracy of News

1. Accuracy: stories from the following sources are usually factually accurate	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	8.2	51.1	36.4	3.9	0.3	100.0	3.63 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	5.2	50.5	39.0	4.9	0.3	100.0	3.55 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	9.2	50.8	36.1	3.0	1.0	100.0	3.64 (agree)
- News blogs written by individuals	7.5	47.5	39.0	4.6	1.3	100.0	3.55 (agree)

In terms of rumour, Table 6.18 shows that overall the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that four news providers produced news with an absence of rumour. However, the highest opinion score belonged to news reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio (2.92), and the lowest opinion score belonged to news blogs written by individuals (2.80).

Table 6.18 Credibility Perceptions: Absence of Rumour

2. Accuracy: stories from the following sources produced news with an absence of rumour	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Strongly agree %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	3.3	20.7	46.2	24.9	4.9	100.0	2.92 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	2.3	18.0	49.2	26.9	3.6	100.0	2.89 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	3.3	19.7	44.6	29.2	3.3	100.0	2.90 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by individuals	2.0	18.0	44.3	29.8	5.9	100.0	2.80 (neither agree nor disagree)

In terms of the verification of accuracy, Table 6.19 shows that overall the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that news reports on the websites of mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream media and independent journalists could be easily verified for accuracy. Meanwhile they disagreed that news blogs produced by individuals could be easily verified for accuracy. However, the highest opinion score belonged to news reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio (2.96), and the lowest opinion score belonged to news blogs written by individuals (2.60).

Table 6.19 Credibility Perceptions: Easy to Verify Accuracy

3. Accuracy: stories from the following sources can be easily verified for accuracy	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	3.3	28.9	33.4	29.8	4.6	100.0	2.96 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	2.3	27.5	35.9	29.2	5.2	100.0	2.92 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	3.0	19.0	36.4	34.4	7.2	100.0	2.76 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by individuals	2.3	15.7	34.8	34.1	13.1	100.0	2.60 (disagree)

With regard to authenticity of information, Table 6.20 shows that overall the respondents agreed that news reports of online mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream news media generally provided evidence to prove the authenticity of information. But they neither agreed nor disagreed that news blogs produced by independent journalists and individuals provided the same evidence.

Table 6.20 Credibility Perceptions: Authenticity of Information

4. Accuracy: stories from the following sources generally provide evidence to prove the authenticity of information	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	5.2	52.8	35.7	5.2	1.0	100.0	3.56 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	4.9	49.2	40.0	5.2	0.7	100.0	3.52 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	4.6	41.0	44.6	8.2	1.6	100.0	3.39 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by individuals	4.9	35.7	43.9	11.8	3.6	100.0	3.27 (neither agree nor disagree)

From Table 6.17 to 6.20, it is obvious that individual bloggers perceived news blogs produced by individual bloggers the least credible in terms of accuracy of news. However, scores among the four news providers were not so much different. These scores mostly fell into the range of ‘neither agree nor disagree’ meaning that, although news produced by individual bloggers were perceived the least accurate, the respondents were not sure that other news providers produced accurate information as well. That could be one of the reasons why news blog users consumed news from different media. Perhaps they might use them to recheck the truthfulness of information.

In relation to fairness, Table 6.21 shows that overall the respondents agreed that news produced by four news providers was usually politically impartial. The highest opinion score related to news blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio (2.55), and the lowest opinion score belonged to news blogs written by journalists who work independently (2.48). There is another interesting figure that should be highlighted here. From this table, 13.8 % of respondents strongly agreed that individuals blogs are political impartial (the highest score among the four news providers in the range of ‘strongly agree’ option). This finding may be linked to Sunstein (2007), Reong-arom (2008) and Sangkham (2012). Sunstein (2007) identified that people have the capacity to filter what they want to read, listen and watch. They usually choose the media that harmonized their taste and their personal point of view. In the same vein, the study of Reong-arom (2008) and Sangkham (2012) found that people who have certain political point of view were usually exposed to some specific media. Satellite TV, free TV and radio broadcasting were the top three favourite media among the PAD or the ‘yellow-shirt’ supporters (Reong-arom, 2008). Rak Chiang Mai 51 Community Radio (92.5 Mhz.) was a radio station that the UDD or the ‘red-shirt’ supporters in Chiang Mai were usually exposed

to political information and this radio station could convince them to join the ‘red-shirts’ activities (Sangkham, 2012). So, it can be argued that news blog users who strongly agreed that news blogs are political impartial perhaps because they have some specific political point of view. Therefore they were exposed to news blogs in parallel with other news media. However, it is beyond this current study to identify what are their political thoughts or what colour of ‘shirt’ they support.

Table 6.21 Credibility Perceptions: Politically Impartial

5. Fairness: stories from the following sources are usually politically impartial	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	10.8	43.0	36.4	8.5	1.3	100.0	3.53 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	11.1	42.0	38.7	6.9	1.3	100.0	3.55 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	9.8	39.7	39.7	9.8	1.0	100.0	3.48 (agree)
- News blogs written by individuals	13.8	37.4	37.4	10.2	1.3	100.0	3.52 (agree)

In terms of being unbiased, Table 6.22 shows that there were no differences between different types of news, in other words between news produced by mainstream news media and news blogs written by journalists working for major news organisations, by independent journalists and by individuals. The respondents perceived that all these news sources tend to be biased.

Table 6.22 Credibility Perceptions: Unbiased

6. Fairness: stories from the following sources tend to be unbiased	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	1.0	5.2	31.8	49.2	12.8	100.0	2.32 (disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	1.0	5.2	35.1	46.6	12.1	100.0	2.36 (disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	0.7	10.8	34.4	45.2	8.9	100.0	2.49 (disagree)
- News blogs written by individuals	0.3	9.8	33.8	41.6	14.4	100.0	2.40 (disagree)

In terms of conflict issues, Table 6.23 shows that overall the respondents agreed that news produced by mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream news media were perceived take particular care when dealing with conflict issues, but they neither agreed nor disagreed that news blogs written by independent journalists and individuals take particular care in this respect.

Table 6.23 Credibility Perceptions:

Taking Particular Care When Dealing with Conflict Issues

7. Fairness: stories from the following sources take particular care when dealing with conflict issues	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	13.1	39.7	33.4	11.8	2.0	100.0	3.50 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	10.8	36.7	37.7	12.1	2.6	100.0	3.41 (agree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	5.9	22.3	42.0	26.2	3.6	100.0	3.01 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by individuals	3.9	21.0	38.7	29.5	6.9	100.0	2.86 (neither agree nor disagree)

Lastly, Table 6.24 shows the respondents' level of agreement with the statement that news produced by four news providers gave all relevant perspectives of a story. Overall, the respondents agreed that only news blogs written by journalists who work independently usually gave all relevant perspectives of a story.

Table 6.24 Credibility Perceptions: Giving all Relevant Perspectives of a Story

8. Fairness: stories from the following sources usually give all relevant perspectives of a story	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total N=305 %	Scale Mean
- News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio	6.6	41.0	37.7	14.1	0.7	100.0	3.39 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio	6.2	40.7	40.3	12.1	0.7	100.0	3.40 (neither agree nor disagree)
- News blogs written by journalists who work independently	6.2	45.6	40.0	7.9	0.3	100.0	3.50 (agree)
- News blogs written by individuals	5.2	37.7	43.6	12.1	1.3	100.0	3.33 (neither agree nor disagree)

Overall, the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that news and news blogs were credible. However, news reports on the websites of mainstream news media got the highest credibility perception score (3.23), while news blogs written by individuals got the lowest credibility perception score (3.04), as shown in Table 6.25.

Table 6.25 Summary of Credibility Perceptions of News and News Blogs

1. News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio				
Accuracy				Scale 1.00–1.80/1.81–2.60 2.61–3.40/3.41–4.20/ 4.21–5.00
Factually accurate	Non-rumour	Can check accuracy	Provide evidence	
3.63 (Agree)	2.92 (Neither agree nor disagree)	2.96 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.56 (Agree)	3.27 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Fairness				Scale
Politically impartial	Unbiased	Take particular care when dealing with conflict issues	Give all relevant perspectives of a story	
3.53 (Agree)	2.32 (Disagree)	3.50 (Agree)	3.39 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.19 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Credibility (Accuracy and Fairness)				3.23 (Neither agree nor disagree)
2. News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio				
Accuracy				Scale
Factually accurate	Non-rumour	Can check accuracy	Provide evidence	
3.55 (Agree)	2.89 (Neither agree nor disagree)	2.92 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.52 (Agree)	3.22 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Fairness				Scale
Politically impartial	Unbiased	Take particular care when dealing with conflict issues	Give all relevant perspectives of a story	
3.55 (Agree)	2.36 (Disagree)	3.41 (Agree)	3.40 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.18 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Credibility (Accuracy and Fairness)				3.20 (Neither agree nor disagree)

Table 6.25 Summary of Credibility Perceptions of News and News Blogs (cont.)

3. News blogs written by journalists who work independently				
Accuracy				Scale
Factually accurate	Non-rumour	Can check accuracy	Provide evidence	
3.64 (Agree)	2.90 (Neither agree nor disagree)	2.76 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.39 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.17 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Fairness				Scale
Politically impartial	Unbiased	Take particular care when dealing with conflict issues	Give all relevant perspectives of a story	
3.48 (Agree)	2.49 (Disagree)	3.01 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.50 (Agree)	3.12 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Credibility (Accuracy and Fairness)				3.15 (Neither agree nor disagree)
4. News blogs written by individuals				
Accuracy				Scale
Factually accurate	Non-rumour	Can check accuracy	Provide evidence	
3.55 (Agree)	2.80 (Neither agree nor disagree)	2.60 (Disagree)	3.27 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.06 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Fairness				Scale
Politically impartial	Unbiased	Take particular care when dealing with conflict issues	Give all relevant perspectives of a story	
3.52 (Agree)	2.40 (Disagree)	2.86 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.33 (Neither agree nor disagree)	3.03 (Neither agree nor disagree)
Credibility (Accuracy and Fairness)				3.04 (Neither agree nor disagree)

6.5 Blog Credibility Perceptions of Heavy and Light Blog Users

All the statements that were employed to measure the factuality of news reports produced by mainstream news media, news blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream news media, news blogs produced by independent journalists and news blogs produced by individuals – factually accurate, non-rumour, can check accuracy, and provide evidence – were aggregated and named as ‘accuracy’. Meanwhile all the statements that

were employed to measure the fairness of the four news media – politically impartial, unbiased, take particular care when dealing with conflict issues, and give all relevant perspectives of a story – were aggregated and named as ‘fairness’. The respondents were grouped into heavy and light blog users in order to distinguish whether or not they differed from each other in terms of their opinions concerning the credibility of news reports and news blogs. Chi-square analyses were conducted in order to examine the distribution of responses of heavy and light blog users. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the responses of heavy and light blog users across accuracy and fairness items. This finding was inconsistent with the study of Johnson et al. (2008) which found that heavy blog users who were also interested in politics tended to perceived blogs more credible than light blog users (for believability, accuracy, fairness, in-depth information and a combination of all).

6.6 Correlations between News Blog Exposure and the Credibility of News and News Blogs

According to Johnson and Kaye (1998; 2000), the more that people rely on the content of news media, the more they will trust that information. A more recent study by Johnson and Kaye (2004) found that when users relied on blogs their assessments of blog credibility would also be higher and they would view blogs as being significantly more credible than traditional media. Hence, in this current study the Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between news blog use and the credibility of news reports produced by mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists, independent journalists and individuals, in relation to both accuracy and fairness, in order to find out if news blog users in Thailand followed a similar trend.

Table 6.26 shows the correlations between claimed news blog exposure and perceived credibility of news reports produced by mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists, independent journalists and individuals. It indicates that the perceived accuracy of news reports produced by mainstream news media was related negatively to news blog exposure with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = -.123$ with a significant value of less than .05. This result means that the more users were exposed to news blogs, the less they believed in the accuracy of news reports produced by mainstream news media.

Meanwhile, the accuracy of news blogs produced by individuals was positively related to news blog exposure with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .144$ and a significant value of less than .05. It means that the more users were exposed to news blogs, the more they believed in the accuracy of news blogs produced by individuals. The results also demonstrated that there was no significant relationship between news blog exposure and the fairness of news blogs. The results from this study were consistent with the study of Johnson and Kaye (2004), which found that the greater the exposures to news blogs, the less people believed in the accuracy of news reports produced by mainstream news media, and the more they believed in the accuracy of news blogs produced by individuals.

Table 6.26 Correlations between News Blog Exposure and Credibility of
News Produced by Four News Providers

Credibility Perception	News Blog Exposure
1.Accuracy	
News reports produced by mainstream news media	-.123*
News blogs produced by journalists	-.049
News blogs produced by independent journalists	.082
News blogs produced by individuals	.144*
2.Fairness	
News reports produced by mainstream news media	-.009
News blogs produced by journalists	.021
News blogs produced by independent journalists	.057
News blogs produced by individuals	.081

NS = not significant = $p > .05$, * = $p < .05$

6.7 Significant Predictors of News Blogging

Among the three reader blog sites, the respondents were often exposed to OKnation for news whereas they were rarely exposed to The Nation Weblog and were scarcely exposed to Mblog. The findings also indicated that about half of the respondents posted news blogs. This section will employ ‘binary logistic regression’ to examine which variables were the best predictors of news blogging.

Binary logistic regression is a useful tool for predicting membership of only two category outcomes with continuous or categorical predictor variables (Field, 2011). Therefore, this statistical analysis was employed to predict news blogging. On the dependent variable of whether respondents had ever posted a news blog, a number of predictor variables were regressed. These included: TV news exposure, radio news exposure, newspaper exposure, news discussion (talking with people about the latest news developments), web TV news exposure, web radio news exposure, online newspaper exposure, gender, age,

education, occupation, income, length of time of Internet use, frequency of Internet use, time spent on the Internet, and ten news blog use motivation blocks (presentation/characteristics; personal fulfilment; expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users; information seeking; intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment; anti-traditional-media sentiment; guidance/opinion seeking; convenience; political surveillance; and fact checking).

It should be noted that before running binary logistic regression, occupation and gender were coded as categorical variables, as shown in Table 6.27.

Table 6.27 Categorical Variable Codings

		Frequency	Parameter coding						
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
occupation	Journalist/reporter/photo-journalist	4	1.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Editor-in-chief/editor/sub-editor	8	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Private company employee	81	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Official/state officer	65	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000
	Business owner/freelance	89	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000
	Student	8	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000
	Unemployed/retired person	27	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000
	Others	23	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Gender	Female	109	1.000						
	Male	196	.000						

The results of the binary logistic regression showed that six out of the 25 independent variables contributed to the model (predictors of news blogging behaviour). The significant predictors ($p < .05$) consisted of radio news exposure, news discussion, web radio news exposure, gender (female), hours per week of Internet use and news blog use motivation: expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users, as shown in Table 6.28. Among the six predictors, beta coefficients indicated that gender (female) was the strongest predictor of news blogging, as in the following significant equation:

Significant equation:

$$\hat{W} = -.308\text{radio exposure} + .398\text{news discussion} + .659\text{web radio} \\ -1.602\text{gender(female)} + .013\text{web week} + 1.027\text{expression}$$

It can be interpreted from the equation that a decrease of 100% in radio exposure was highly significant ($p < .05$) in increasing news blogging by about 30.8%. A rise of 100% in news discussion was highly significant ($p < .05$) in increasing news blogging by about 39.8%. A rise of 100% in the frequency of web radio news exposure was also highly significant in increasing news blogging by about 65.9%. A decrease of 100% in the number of females was highly significant in increasing news blogging by about 160.2% (meaning that an increase of males was highly significant in increasing news blogging). An increase of 100% in Internet use (the amount of hours per week) was highly significant in increasing news blogging by about 1.3%. Lastly, an increase of 100% in level of agreement on blog-use motivation in the factor of expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users was highly significant in increasing news blogging by about 102.7%.

Table 6.28 Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a						
tv exposure	.015	.187	.007	1	.934	1.016
radio exposure	-.308	.148	4.306	1	.038*	.735
newspaper exposure	.064	.144	.195	1	.658	1.066
news discussion	.398	.201	3.912	1	.048*	1.489
online tv exposure	.146	.126	1.334	1	.248	1.157
online radio exposure	.659	.192	11.755	1	.001*	1.932
online newspaper exposure	-.102	.159	.412	1	.521	.903
gender(1)	-1.602	.325	24.317	1	.000**	.202
age	.349	.264	1.751	1	.186	1.418
education	.260	.217	1.432	1	.231	1.297
occupation			5.900	7	.551	
occupation(1)	22.546	17543.858	.000	1	.999	6.192E9
occupation(2)	1.324	1.322	1.003	1	.317	3.757
occupation(3)	-.075	.607	.015	1	.902	.928
occupation(4)	-.619	.615	1.013	1	.314	.538
occupation(5)	.149	.595	.063	1	.802	1.161
occupation(6)	.722	1.127	.411	1	.522	2.059
occupation(7)	-.390	.743	.276	1	.600	.677
income	-.156	.189	.685	1	.408	.855
web long	.232	.492	.223	1	.637	1.261
web frequency	-.088	.880	.010	1	.920	.916
web week	.013	.006	3.947	1	.047*	1.013
presentation	.471	.307	2.358	1	.125	1.601
personal fulfilment	.336	.290	1.340	1	.247	1.399
expression	1.027	.339	9.193	1	.002*	2.792
information seeking	.282	.382	.545	1	.460	1.326
intellectual	.105	.329	.101	1	.751	1.110
anti-traditional-media sentiment	.270	.269	1.009	1	.315	1.310
guidance	.063	.375	.028	1	.867	1.065
convenience	-.722	.372	3.764	1	.052	.486
political surveillance	-.330	.313	1.114	1	.291	.719
fact checking	-.219	.254	.744	1	.388	.804
Constant	-7.140	3.507	4.145	1	.042	.001

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: tv exposure, radio exposure, newspaper exposure, news discussion, online tv exposure, online radio exposure, online newspaper exposure, gender, age, education, occupation, income, web long, web frequency, web week, presentation, personal fulfilment, expression, information seeking, intellectual, anti-traditional-media sentiment, guidance, convenience, political surveillance, and fact checking
 NS = not significant ($p > .05$), * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The two significant predictors of news blogging in this study – gender and expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users (motivation) – were partially consistent with the study results of Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2011). They examined data from 233 bloggers gathered through phone interviews and found that in their regression analyses (after control variables), bloggers being male, better educated, and expressing themselves were predictors of journalistic engagement.

6.8 Summary and Discussion

This chapter examined the findings from users of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog relating to their news-topic interests, their opinions concerning the reasons why people use news blogs and their perception of the credibility of news and news blogs. Following are the conclusion and discussion of this chapter.

6.8.1 *News-Topic Interests*

News blog users in this study were very interested in political news. They were quite interested in technology news, economic/business/finance news, environment/catastrophe news, education news, foreign affairs news, and health news. They were not very interested in religious news, sports news, weird news, crime news, or entertainment news. Chi-square tests comparing heavy and light blog users revealed that only the responses concerning political news interest of heavy and light blog users differed significantly ($\chi^2=18.413$, 3, $p<.001$). The biggest proportion of heavy blog users was very interested in political news whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users was quite interested in this news topic. These findings supported the notion that news blog users were very interested in political

issues, as many scholars have previously found, e.g. the case of the Clinton–Lewinsky scandal (Lasica, 2003); Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (Johnson and Kaye, 2004) and the 2002–2004 US election (Tremayne, 2007); environment and catastrophe issues, e.g. the Asian tsunami 2004, the London bombing (Tremayne, 2007), the Wenchuan earthquake (Nip, 2009), 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina (Allan, 2006); foreign affairs news, e.g. President Bush and the subsequent war on terror (Tremayne, 2007); and health issues (Sundar et al., 2007). For Thailand, it was remarked that political conflicts, e.g. the case of the ‘red-shirt’ rally in Bangkok, and the major flood in the central area during the period of data collection tended to be the two major topics that drew the attention of news blog users.

6.8.2 News Blog Use Motivations

By employing Kaye’s (2007) blog-use motivation items to measure Thai news blog users, this research confirmed that they agreed with all ten blog-use motivation blocks. They believed that news blogs were used for political surveillance purposes (4.16) and guidance/opinion seeking (4.16) the most, followed by expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users (4.11), convenience (4.11), intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment (4.10), fact checking (3.97), information seeking (3.96), blog presentation/characteristics (3.89), anti-traditional-media sentiment (3.82), and personal fulfilment (3.59).

In relation to all statements inside ten blog use motivation blocks, news blog users neither agreed nor disagreed on some items: news blogs were used for their acknowledged bias on specific issues; for unbiased viewpoints/fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue; for diversion/escape; because news blogs help users relax; for accurate accounts of news and events; and because news blog users do not trust/like traditional media.

A chi-square analysis found that the distribution of responses of heavy and light blog users differed significantly for five blog-use motivation groups. Heavy and light blog users perceived differently in relation to the use of blogs because of blog presentation, personal fulfilment, information seeking, anti-traditional-media sentiment and political surveillance. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users agreed that people used news blogs because of their presentation/characteristics, but the biggest proportion of light blog users neither agreed nor disagreed on this reason.

According to the uses and gratifications approach, media receivers are perceived as active receivers. They search out media messages to satisfy their needs (Levy and Windahl, 1984; Kaye and Johnson, 2002). It is clear that the current study contributed to this approach. It revealed motivations of news blog use among active news consumers in Thailand and supported the findings of Kaye (2007) framed by the same approach. However, the study of Kaye (2007) found that the primary motivation for blog use lay in the characteristics of blogs, whereas the current study found that the primary motivation of blog use among Thais was political surveillance and opinion seeking. So, the researcher argues that the difference in the primary motivation for blog use between the two studies was perhaps due to the area where the blog users were situated. As mentioned before, the ongoing series of political conflicts in Thailand between the 'red-shirts' and the opposing side have stimulated a group of people to use different media, including news blogs, in order to seek out opinions and to learn more about political issues. Additionally, this current study focused on news blog users whereas Kaye (2007) studied blog use motives among general blog users. The study also found that the biggest proportion of heavy blog users significantly used news blogs because of blog characteristics. This finding was

compatible with the study of Kaye (2007), which indicated that general blog users used blogs because of blog characteristics much more than other motives.

6.8.3 News and News Blogs' Credibility Perception

The current study found that newspaper website reports and blogs written by journalists associated with mainstream news media, independent journalists and individual bloggers were judged as factually accurate and politically impartial. But the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that these four news outputs contained non-rumour and disagreed that they were unbiased.

The respondents perceived that mainstream news reports and blogs written by journalists associated with mainstream news media provided evidence to prove the authenticity of the story and took particular care when dealing with conflict issues. But they neither agreed nor disagreed that blogs produced by independent journalists and individual bloggers performed these practices.

The respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that mainstream news reports and blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream news media and independent journalists checked the accuracy and disagreed that news blogs produced by individual bloggers checked the accuracy. Lastly, they agreed that blogs produced by independent journalists gave all relevant perspectives of a story but were not sure whether this was the case for the other three news outputs.

Overall, the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that news produced by four news providers was credible. News reports produced by mainstream news media received the highest credibility scores whereas news blogs written by individuals received the lowest credibility scores. This finding was inconsistent with the study of Johnson and Kaye (2004)

and Johnson et al. (2008). Johnson and Kaye (2004) found that blog users perceived mainstream news media as moderately credible and blogs as highly credible and Johnson et al. (2008) found that Internet users interested in politics judged broadcast television, online broadcast television, newspapers, and online newspapers as less credible than blogs. Blogs also got the highest credibility score in relation to accuracy and fairness of information. There was one remarkable discovery from this current study. Even if the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that all four news outputs were credible, most of the respondents had been exposed to mainstream news reports and news blogs.

Chi-square analyses were conducted in order to examine the distribution of responses of heavy and light blog users. They found that there were no significant differences between the responses of heavy and light blog users across accuracy and fairness items. This finding was inconsistent with the study of Johnson et al. (2008), which found that politically interested Internet users who were also heavy blog users tended to evaluate blogs as significantly more credible than those who were light blog users (for believability, accuracy, fairness, in-depth information and a combination of all).

6.8.4 Correlations between News Blog Exposure and the Perceived Credibility of News and News Blogs

The current study was consistent with Johnson and Kaye (2004) in finding that the more users were exposed to news blogs, the less they believed in the accuracy of news reports produced by mainstream news media, and the more they believed in the accuracy of news blogs produced by individuals. However, there was no significant relationship between news blog exposure and the fairness of news blogs.

6.8.5 Significant Predictors of News Blogging

The respondents were more likely to post a story relating to news or news blogging on OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog if they were not exposed to radio news, if they discussed news with people they knew, if they were not exposed to web radio news, if they were male, if they spent a large number of hours on the Internet, or if they agreed with the news blog use motivation ‘expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users’.

Among the six predictors, beta coefficients indicated that gender was the strongest predictor of news blogging. This result was partially consistent with the study of Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2011), who found that with regard to the control variables in their regression analyses, ‘bloggers who are male’ and ‘bloggers who express themselves’ were predictors of engaging in journalistic behaviours. However, level of education of bloggers was not found to be a significant predictor of news blogging in the current study.

This chapter has discussed the second half of the findings from the online questionnaire. In the next chapter, the findings from interviews with news professionals will be presented. They help to answer all five research questions: ‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’, ‘How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?’, ‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’, ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’, and ‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’

Chapter Seven: The Reported Uses and the Credibility Perceptions of News Blogs on the Part of News Professionals

The findings on the uses and credibility perceptions of news blogs which are associated with the online newspapers, in the view of news professionals, will be discussed in this chapter. In-depth interviews were carried out to answer five major research questions: 1. 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?', 2. 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', 3. 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?', 4. 'Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?', and 5. 'What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?'

OKnation and The Nation Weblog are two reader blogs owned by the Nation Multimedia group³. Their links can be found on three online newspapers: Bangkokbiznews, The Nation and Komchadluek. Mblog is another reader blog owned by ASTV Manager and its link is on the website of ASTV Manager⁴. The Chief Executives who monitor these three blog sites and journalist bloggers who use at least one of these three blog sites were requested to participate in this research. The findings will be discussed in six sections: 1) the importance of blogging as a component of mainstream news provision; 2) media

³ The Nation Multimedia group was founded in 1971. The group is currently one of the largest multimedia companies in Thailand. It produces Bangkokbiznews (the country's largest-circulation Thai business daily newspaper), Bangkokbizweek, Komchadluek (the third-highest mass-circulation general daily newspaper), Nation weekender (a weekly news magazine), The Nation (English daily newspaper), Nation Junior (English fortnightly magazine), Daily Express (free English daily newspaper), Nation Channel TV news station and TV news providers operated by Nation Broadcasting Corporation, radio news operated by Nation Radio Network Co., Ltd., and new media, i.e. Oknation.net (reader blog), The Nation weblog, etc. (<http://www.nationgroup.com/product.php>, 5 July 2012).

⁴ Most popular online newspaper for the ninth consecutive year, rated by truehits.net, 2011.

professionals' perceptions of news blog users; 3) perceptions of the diversity of news in news blogs; 4) perceptions of the quality of news in news blogs; 5) perceptions of the impact of newspaper-linked blogs upon news consumers; and 6) summary and discussion. Each section of the findings will answer each research question.

7.1 Importance of Blogging to Mainstream News Provision

In the past few years the sourcing practices among journalists in traditional newsrooms have been facilitated by various digital technologies and active citizens (De Keyser et al., 2011). Gunter et al. (2009) found that bloggers occasionally influence the setting of the news agenda, and they can become news sources. The role of blogs as news sources has increasingly appeared in eyewitness crisis reporting such as major disasters, political events and wars (Allan and Thorsen, 2009). In Thailand no studies have been carried out concerning the way news blogs are used among news professionals and news consumers. Hence, this study aims to find out the answer to the question, 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?' In order to answer this research question, news professionals who monitored or used news blogs were asked a number of further questions: 'What user-generated content (UGC) formats encourage contributions from readers on your news website?', 'How important is a reader blog, which is a format of UGC, as a component of your online newspaper?', 'What are the ways news blogs are used in journalistic tasks?' and 'Do you think news blogs will diminish the gatekeeper role of newspapers in Thai society?'

7.1.1 Formats of User-Generated Content on the Four Thai Newspaper Websites

Interview participants who monitored the three reader blog sites were asked to identify the formats of UGC(s) that they provided in their online newspapers. The chief executives of two news organisations – Adisak Limparungpattanakij, the President of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, and Varit Limthongkul, the Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager – identified the way several types of UGC fitted into their news websites:

Bangkokbiznews, The Nation and Komchadluek websites occasionally ask readers to vote on ‘polls’ to measure public opinion. But we did not fit webboards in them because we thought that they are old-fashioned now. Bangkokbiznews and The Nation also allow readers to comment on news. But we did not provide this type of UGC in Komchadluek because a number of rude languages had been found on it. We assumed that it might be because Komchadluek is a popular newspaper which basically reports soft news, whereas the other two are business newspapers which regularly sell hard news. Furthermore, we could not trace who the readers were; hence, we decided to remove commenting on news from Komchadluek in order to avoid the libel law violation. Another UGC we provide is reader blogs. We have OKnation and The Nation Weblog (Limparungpattanakij, 2011).

The news organisation needs to know who blog users are and to avoid risky issues posted by unidentified people or someone who just needs to use it for negative purposes such as blaming or scolding other people

without responsibility; hence, a registration system has been introduced. For example, for access to OKnation, personal information such as full name and surname, identity card copy, photo, and email address are required. The approval time is approximately one day. After being granted access, the system allows all blog posts to appear immediately. However, blog users should bear in mind avoiding impolite and risky content, which might be against the law, or risk a warning or be totally blocked from use. Surprisingly, many OKnation bloggers also act as ‘housewatchers’ by helping staff to keep an eye on unsuitable content, so the staff will know very quickly about the irregular posts (Waradee, 2011).

According to the ASTV Manager, four types of UGC can be found on the website: poll; webboard; comment on news; and reader blog, known as Mblog. All of them have pre-moderating systems (contents that do not show immediately) and Mblog has a registration system. Moreover, the webmaster can trace all computer IP addresses that have accessed the website, so the webmaster can block them for 5–10 days if they send inappropriate content to the website. The 2007 Computer Law also allows the company to store users’ information for at least 30 days in order to use it as evidence in case the company is prosecuted by law.

We have two types of poll on the website: first, questions that ask people to answer ‘like or dislike’ to the news content; and, second, questions that ask people to answer ‘agree or disagree’ to the idea of the news. For

‘webboard’, we have it, but it is not popular, except in the China town section. We also have ‘comment on news’, where you can find some good analyses from readers. Lastly, we have Mblog where people can post any blog story after registration. We opened Mblog approximately 8–9 years ago. It can be said that Mblog was the first reader blog to appear in an online newspaper in Thailand, but in my view other social media are more popular (Limthongkul, 2011).

7.1.2 The Importance of Reader Blogs as a Component of Online Newspapers

According to Tremayne (2007), some forward-looking news executives are now beginning to change their traditional editorial methods by incorporating news consumers in the news-gathering process. From the in-depth interviews of this study, it emerged that the two news organisations employed this idea. The news executive of the Nation Group revealed that he runs two reader blogs – OKnation (Thai language) and The Nation Weblog (English language) – while the news executive of ASTV Manager runs Mblog with the aim of incorporating interesting stories posted by the general public into their journalistic tasks. OKnation’s slogan is ‘Everyone can be a citizen reporter’. The two news organisations found blogs very useful and occasionally used blogs as news hints and sources for their news reports and content.

The characteristics of OKnation bloggers are industrious, energetic, have a volunteer mind and have a very high capacity to search for information. With their helping hands journalists can get good information and evidence, especially when they do investigative reports. So journalists can

work faster and better if they know how to utilise blogs in their work. We found that a TV news programme on Thai PBS (another news organisation) even used OKnation blog as news clues. For the post-production, we can get not only new information and additional evidence from bloggers, but also good arguments (Limparungpattanakij, 2011).

Blogs help us improve the quality of our news reports. For example, after Chuwit Kamolvisit (Love Thailand or Rak Prathetthai Party Leader) disclosed to the public about the Ratchada illegal casino, more clues about other illegal casinos, such as Chokchai four casino, Austo casino, and Taopoon casino, could be found on blogs. This online community continued to discuss this issue. So, our journalists followed the blogs and used them as one source of information to verify our previous news report and for our next news report. In the case of Mblog, a blogger who lived in the UK wrote an analysis of the marriage of Prince William by linking to some local issues. Another example: three years ago we used Thaibaan (an OKnation blogger) as a news source. He posted a story with a number of photographs about Sutha Chansaeng (the ex-Thai minister of social development and human security, who faked his educational background in order to be qualified for the position of minister by claiming that he had got a Bachelor degree in commerce from the Republican College in Quezon City). According to Section 174 of the Thai Constitution, a Thai minister must be a graduate with not lower than a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent) [see this blog post at

<http://www.oknation.net/blog/thaibaan/2008/03/26/entry-1>]. We asked this blogger if we could use his blog as a news source. These examples demonstrate that blogs are very useful for journalists who have limited time to research (Limthongkul, 2011).

The examples cited above by the two news executives illustrate that reader blogs are an important component of mainstream news media. They are used as news hints or clues, a corpus of further information, evidence, arguments, and sources for checking the accuracy of news reports that have already been published or broadcast.

7.1.3 The Ways News Blogs were Used in Journalistic Tasks

Blogs are not only useful news sources, as has already been discussed in the previous section, they are also places where journalists can report stories that they could not publish on the limited space of mainstream news media.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) disclosed that after launching OKnation, he invited his news crews to join the system. He realised that journalists had a corpus of content and could professionally report any stories that were good examples for ordinary people to follow. He found that in the beginning he could attract around 50 news crews, but currently approximately ten news crews are active bloggers. However, he unexpectedly found that other news professionals from other companies also joined the system, such as ASTV Manager, Matichon, Naewna, Thai PBS, and some local news agencies. Including general users, at present the system has in total 80,000 registered users, and produces approximately 700 stories that are read 200,000 times per day, 95% of which are public issues covering politics, sports, entertainment, travel features, and so on.

Limthongkul (2011) confirmed that he supports his news crews in writing blogs on any website with the condition that they must use their own personal name which has no link to the company. The company blog, Mblog, has around 200 active bloggers, 200,000 readers per month and 30–100 stories per day.

Seeho (2011) has used blogs as news hints and borrowed them for discussions in editorial meetings. He mentioned that his news organisation has invited some OKnation bloggers to become movie critics, music critics, sports critics, and so on in newspaper columns. Kongtuk (2011) wrote news critiques on blogs more than reading other blogs. Permpool (2011) wrote news blogs by using his journalistic experience and thereby has connected with some important people in society, such as politicians and bureaucratic officers. And Narkthong (2011) has written blogs because he was interested in social issues and wanted to share his opinions publicly, in order to get reader feedback to develop his work.

7.1.4 The Influence of Blogs on the Gatekeeper Role of Mainstream News Media

All interview participants believed that their role as gatekeepers in mainstream news media is gradually decreasing. According to Limparungpattanakij (2011), anyone can be a citizen reporter. They can have a voice in society by reporting their own interesting stories or local problems via blogs. For instance, a representative of a group of farmers in Phichit province wrote a blog story about flood damage in the province and asked for help. They had no need to wait for journalists to research the area or for an editor to decide to report this story. Moreover, this story is believable because the writer is just a farmer. He could not earn a personal profit from his report. Limthongkul (2011) also agreed that the gatekeeper role of traditional news media has been affected by the progress of new communication

technology and social networking. However, he believed that news organisations in Thailand can survive as newspaper organisations, just as in the USA or the UK where blogs are more popular.

With regard to jbloggers, Seeho (2011) believed that the gatekeeper role will diminish, but the issue is not only about blogging. Blogs are individualistic and present a personal point of view. They are also subjective, so their credibility cannot be compared with mainstream news media. For instance, when blog users who support the Democrat party read a blog supporting the opposite party, they might feel that this blogger has slandered their favourite political party, even though the content may be very useful. Kongtuk (2011) stated that the current sales volumes of print newspapers are stable but shrinking, so they have moved online. Additionally, news receivers today have more news channels, such as blogs and microblogs like Twitter and Facebook. In his view, a blog is a cold media, which is suitable for in-depth and long issues with photos and video clips attached as evidence, whereas Twitter and Facebook are hot media sites suitable for immediate issues.

Another j blogger, Permpool (2011), stated that although anyone can present any story on the web and the role of gatekeeper in news media has decreased, he did not agree that people trusted blogs more than mainstream news media. Similarly, Narkthong (2011) said a blog is just an alternative medium that is used in emotional ways. Some people might only use it to participate with other people or to find information in order to make a decision.

This analysis has presented news professionals' opinions concerning the role of news blogging as a component of mainstream news provision. They all confirmed that bloggers were new players on the news landscape and increasingly influenced the

gatekeeping role of mainstream news media. These interviews also revealed that some blogs, especially in OKnation, were seen as very useful for news professionals. The participants gave some examples to show the way they utilised news blogs. Bloggers who provided in-depth, new or interesting information concerning public affairs could be selected by news professionals as news sources. Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2011) found that bloggers in the US who perceived their material on blog as a journalistic work tended to act as professional journalists by writing on public affairs, identifying sources of information, checking the accuracy, and posting corrections. This kind of blogger is now catching the attention of some news professionals in Thai society.

7.2 Media Professionals' Perceptions of News Blog Users

In order to answer the research question 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', all interviewees were asked to give their perceptions of news blog users and evaluate the attention users paid to news blogs. The interviews revealed that media professionals held stereotyped impressions of their online readers.

The President of NBC characterised OKnation users as middle-class people older than 35, who write blogs from one story per week to every day, and like to read both news and critical issues. He believed that the number of user IP accesses of OKnation proved that its users like to blog, and remarked that this number is more than all the readers of other company news websites combined (Limparungpattanakij, 2011). The Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager perceived Mblog users as people who live abroad, and he also pointed out that the number of user IP accesses increased dramatically when political conflict took place in Thai society (Limthongkul, 2011). So, both organisations' leaders

confirmed that the increasing number of blog users relates to the occurrence of critical events in society.

According to Seeho (2011), OKnation users are people who are well educated and have a sense of social responsibility. He referred to the 'OK Nature club' as an example of how OKnation bloggers act out of social concern in the real world. This club was founded by a group of OKnation bloggers with the aim of protecting nature. They were able to protect Tarutao Island National Park from illegal resort investments. Initially, they went to the area, carried out research, consolidated evidence and reported the situation to the Minister of Tourism and Sports to investigate and stop the project.

The Executive Editor of the Crimewatch 24 TV programme, who uses 'Naihuasai' as his OKnation blogger name and whose slogan is 'drink strong coffee with in-depth political issues, friendly talk without fear of influence', believed that his blog readers were not only the general public but also politicians, because he found that sometimes these politicians used his reports for debating in political venues (Kongtuk, 2011).

Permpool (2011) perceived that a number of his blog readers followed him from print newspaper news and articles and read his blog for more in-depth information that they could not find in newspapers. In his view the world of blogging is a place of freedom where people can have a voice and can participate with other bloggers. For Narkthong (2011), blog users are people who would like to use free online space for interactive communication.

7.3 Perceptions of the Diversity of News in News Blogs

In order to answer the research question 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?', all interviewees were

asked if they believed this was the case. Most participants thought that blogs could not increase the diversity of news in the mainstream news media, but blogs intrinsically can be very diverse in their content, offering a variety of news and commentary.

Limparungpattanakij (2011), Limthongkul (2011) and Permpool (2011) specified that blogs are places where a variety of issues and discussions can be found together. Limthongkul (2011) added that blogs might be places where some people just need to show themselves on renowned media. Seeho (2011) also added that blogs are very suitable for long, detailed stories, because all related information can be put together. For example, a blog that is devoted to travel features can provide every aspect of transportation and not only say simply how to get there by car. So, blogs can be more in-depth than the stories presented in print newspapers. For Kongtuk (2011), citizen reporters produce a variety of news blog stories, so they can increase the diversity of content in a newspaper.

7.4 Perceptions of the Quality of News in News Blogs

According to Gunter et al. (2009), journalists in mainstream media have for a long time used objectivity as their principle and guideline for quality news: in other words, news that is free of bias (neutral and balanced) and factual (truthful and relevant). However, the “more sophisticated approaches to assess perceived credibility of news media utilising a range of different ratings (e.g., accuracy, balance, believability, bias, fairness, factuality, honesty, objectivity, reliability, sensationalism, timely, trustworthiness, etc.)” (Gunter et al., 2009, p.195–196).

In order to answer the main research question, ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’, all interviewees were requested to specify the ways in which they used blogs to enhance the quality of news reports, to specify the ways they verified the credibility of

news blogs, to give some examples of non-credible blogs and the way they dealt with them, and to comment on whether they thought readers trusted blogs which appear in online newspapers.

7.4.1 The Ways News Organisations Use Blogs to Enhance the Quality of News Reports

The majority of participants agreed that the use of blogs can help journalists enhance the quality of their news reports. According to Limparungpattanakij (2011), the Nation Group's print media and TV broadcasting often use OKnation as news hints and sources. He gave four examples to support this notion.

The first example related to a piece that appeared on 19 August 2011 on the front page of Komchadluek newspaper. It was a story on Miss Thailand Universe 2011 that was republished from a different viewpoint. This time the newspaper compared a photo of a Lady Gaga outfit with a photo of the Thai national dress, which Miss Thailand Universe 2011 would show on the stage of the Miss Universe Contest in Brazil. This story originated from an OKnation blogger who posted the two photos and asked whether or not this Thai dress copied the design of Lady Gaga's outfit, because they looked similar. The photos provided good evidence. This case shows that blogs can help journalists increase the quality of news, because this blogger pointed out a mistake that traditional news reports had overlooked. The blogger did not just ask for accuracy but investigated and showed the evidence.

The second example concerned 'Crimewatch 24', a TV programme on the Nation Channel which broadcast a story that originated from a blog. An OKnation blogger reported a story about the carelessness of highway workers. He said that in the last few days while he was driving a car under a highway construction site, many stones had fallen

down from the work overhead. His car was nearly damaged and he might have incurred a serious injury. He then took some photos from the scene and posted them on a blog. After Crimewatch 24 found this story on the blog, they asked him if they could use it as a news hint, and then broadcast this story. The project owner of this highway construction then came forward to take responsibility.

The third example occurred during the London riots in 2011. A blogger stayed close to the area and posted a number of photos, criticising this crisis by linking it to UK society. On the following Monday, the ‘Judpraky’ (sparked the idea) column of Bangkokbiznews newspaper published this story by referring to the above source.

The fourth example was Komchadluek’s travel features page, which often took travel issues from various blogs in OKnation.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) and Waradee (2011) affirmed that bloggers who act as citizen reporters give useful opinions and can stimulate journalists to work more carefully. They can also help each other with fact checking.

Another j blogger, Kongtuk (2011), also believed that bloggers support journalists’ work:

News media of the Nation Group used OKnation blogs as a news source such as on the travel features page. It is very useful because the company journalists cannot be everywhere. Moreover, these bloggers can report many good stories from all over. They also give good opinions and provide good links to important events.

Narkthong (2011) believed that blogs can enhance the quality of news reporting because bloggers have direct experience of the issues they write about. Some bloggers are experts in the field or have in-depth information. For example, IT people will have more IT knowledge and experience than journalists who work in the IT section. However, Limthongkul (2011) thought that blogs had no direct impact on the quality of news reports, as did Permpool (2011). He believed that the content inside blogs and the quality of news reports did not relate to each other, although, from the aspect of immediacy, not just bloggers but every online news media could support the journalists' tasks.

7.4.2 The Way to Verify the Credibility of News Blogs

Some studies such as Reich (2011) found that nearly four in ten journalists perceived private persons to be highly credible as sources, and as more credible than the political sector (31%). In this current study, all interviewees agreed that blogs were mixed between credible and non-credible issues so they will have ways to examine blogs' credibility before use. This section examines how Thai news professionals verify news blogs before using them as news hints or sources.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) explained that news reports produced by journalists are different from stories produced by citizen reporters. News reports produced by news organisations have facts and opinions from news sources, but news reports from citizens or bloggers have facts and opinions from blogger authors themselves, so when journalists decide to utilise blogs they must carefully verify the accuracy of the content.

We usually ask bloggers where their information came from and will check them with other sources. We also check bloggers' personal profile ... For

OKnation, staff and some bloggers know each other in the real world because they sometimes join activities outside cyberspace. So, we know what they are doing (Limparungpattanakij, 2011).

When Limthongkul (2011) decides to use a blog as a source he will verify the credibility of the story by looking at the length of time the blogger has contributed blogs on that platform. He will then check their personal profiles and make sure that the story is an original, not just a copy from other media.

Seeho (2011) believed that people trust mainstream news more than alternative media, especially with regard to objectivity. Although bloggers have direct experience of the stories they write, they write them from their personal point of view.

If a blogger is writing about the problem of pollution in Rayong province, he will write it with his own background and its effect only on his life. He might skip the benefit of industry investments, such as the fact that they will bring higher income and economic development. Journalists reporting the same story will try to cover all aspects. They might interview local people and related bureaucratic officers such as the pollution control office, environmental office, and so on. As far as the accuracy of the blog contents is concerned, bloggers on the platform always help each other to verify them.

Permpool (2011) believed that the credibility of blogs related to many factors, such as the first impression readers have of the story, the length of time they have known that

blogger, whether the story is interesting or reasonable, whether it has depth of information, and whether it uses minimal emotional language.

Narkthong (2011) also believed that news reports of mainstream news organisations are more credible than blogs. For him, the level of credibility to a blog relates to the length of time he has known that blogger, especially his or her background.

7.4.3 Cases of Non-credible Blogs and the Way News Professionals Deal with Them

All interview participants were asked to give some examples of non-credible blog(s) they had read and the way they dealt with them. Most participants trusted the monitoring system of blogs that appear in online newspapers, especially OKnation. However, it is not perfectly guaranteed; so they have ways to verify the credibility of blogs and other social media before use.

The perceived credibility of user-generated content among journalists was mixed. The study of Singer (2011) revealed that journalists recognized the UGCs are ethically problematic especially the accuracy and truth-telling because it is difficult to know their origin and the kind of materials they produced. Conversely, Limparungpattanakij (2011) believed that there is no motive for bloggers to distort information or to report inaccurate issues unless the stories relate to conflicts or the blogger works for some interest group. In other words, Limparungpattanakij believed that news blog users are usually straightforward on what they reported but it does not mean that they follow standards of journalistic practices. Whether it is true or not, this thesis argues that the stories in blogs are usually full of personal point of views implying that information coming from this medium must be rechecked with other sources.

Limthongkul (2011) emphasised that any content on the Internet, including blogs, may have a credibility problem, which must be verified. For example, on one occasion his editorial team was informed that there had been a car accident on Rama 6 road and many people had been found dead. A few days later, another person posted a video clip on YouTube and claimed it was the same event. However, later it was proven not to be footage of the same event. On the basis of this lesson, he insisted that his editorial staff must take care when using evidence from the Internet. They must all be approved by the executive editor, executive director or webmaster (online media).

Seeho (2011) confirmed that staff always verify OKnation's blogs. Meanwhile, Kongtuk (Executive Editor of Crimewatch 24, 2011) trusted his webmaster to take care of the blog site like a 'gatewatcher'. Narkthong (2011), when acting in the role of blogger, often found rumours, biased issues and one-dimensional points of view in blogs. So, he had to verify the story with other sources.

7.4.4 Whether Readers Trust Blogs Produced by Individuals

The two news organisations' leaders were asked: 'Do you think your news consumers trust blogs produced by the general public on your news websites?' The findings showed that they believed that users trusted their blog sites. The many rewards that OKnation has received prove that it is a credible site; meanwhile, most Mblog stories are miscellaneous issues and to that extent do not involve the issue of credibility.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) was confident that the number of awards OKnation has received is proof that users trust it:

We received the ‘Best in Digital Content Award 2010’ in Singapore in the category of ‘user-generated content’: the successful cases are a story of the smog crisis in Chiang Mai; an investigation of a company who lied to people, saying the company would restore a forest, when in fact they operate a mine; and an investigation into a Thai minister’s fake education degree. We were also awarded ‘ICT Excellence 2010’ from the Thailand Management Association in the category of innovation. We know that OKnation bloggers have different careers, such as doctors, politicians, executive officers, ministers and motorcycle taxi riders. They are proud to be a part of this blog, so they try to write their stories more carefully and avoid using emotional words in order to keep up the quality of this blog site.

According to Limthongkul (2011), Mblog issues are generally concerned with miscellaneous and daily lifestyle topics, so they do not really involve the issue of credibility.

7.5 Perceived Impact of Newspaper-Linked Blogs on News Consumers

In order to answer the research question ‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’, a number of further questions were asked of news professionals, including ‘What is the effect of news blogs on online newspaper consumption?’, ‘Does the use of news blogs among news consumers increase their credibility perception of news reports?’, ‘What is the perceived impact of the use of news blogs on news consumers’ attitudes and behaviour?’,

‘What are the advantages and disadvantages of news blogs?’, and ‘In what ways do journalist bloggers use news blogs?’

7.5.1 Effect of News Blogs on Online Newspaper Consumption

All interviewees were asked, ‘What is the effect of news blogs on online newspaper consumption?’ Three interview participants indicated that they were not sure about the relationship between blog consumption and other media consumption. Another three participants believed no result was in, and one participant believed it would affect only offline mainstream news media, such as print newspapers.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) and Waradee (2011) presumed that half of OKnation users consume both mainstream news media and OKnation, whereas the other half only consume OKnation. However, they had never surveyed this aspect before. Limthongkul (2011) thought that the aim of news blog consumption is different from online newspaper consumption, so one has no effect on the other.

In Seeho’s opinion (2011), the use of blogs has no effect on newspaper consumption except for the fact that the numbers of both online news users and news blog users are obviously increasing. If this situation continues, the number of readers of print newspapers, especially popular daily newspaper readers, will likely decrease, because the newspapers report something that happened yesterday, but online news reports very up-to-date news. However, this problem will not have so much effect on the economic newspapers because they basically sell economic and business news and articles such as stock-market analysis. However, popular daily newspapers can survive because they always have a group of readers who follow certain columns, such as those on soap operas and other TV series.

Kongtuk (2011) considered that the more news channels exist, the better the decision-making information consumers can get. News media will enhance the quality of their work to compete with other media. Meanwhile, Permpool (2011) was not sure whether or not blog users and newspaper consumers are in the same group. The characteristics of bloggers are that they are people who live in online communities and contact each other as friends, whereas offline and online newspaper readers are more individual. Narkthong (2011) thought that news blogs did not reduce the amount of time news consumers devote to online newspapers because they have different functions, although at the same time they also support each other.

7.5.2 Use of News Blogs and the Perceived Credibility of News Reports

The two leaders of news organisations were asked ‘Does the use of news blogs among news consumers increase news consumers’ credibility perception of news reports produced by both news organisations?’ The interviewees believed that news consumers might feel more favourable towards an organisation that provided free space to discuss news, but would not necessarily view the organisation’s news reports as credible as a result of it.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) and Waradee (2011) perceived OKnation as a public sphere. They believed that opening a free blog space for readers reflected the fact that the company had an open-minded vision. This could increase the credibility perception of a news organisation. Additionally, both negative and positive feedback on it could be used to improve their work. Meanwhile, Limthongkul (2011) disagreed that the use of blogs relates to the credibility of the company’s news reports.

7.5.3 Perceived Impact of News Blogs on News Consumers' Attitudes and Behaviour

All interview participants were asked, 'What other impact(s) i.e. attitudes, behaviour, etc. have news blogs had on news consumers?' The interviews revealed that there were different opinions concerning this question. Some participants believed that blogs alone cannot affect a reader's opinion and behaviour.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) and Waradee (2011) perceived that most Komchadluek print newspaper readers live in rural areas and scarcely use the Internet; however, the readers who live in Bangkok usually log on to the Internet. It is difficult, therefore, to specify which attitudes and behaviours come from which media. Meanwhile, Limthongkul (2011) believed that Internet users will go to online newspapers to consume news, but they might go to blogs to find out opinions about the news or public issues. Consequently, he thought that blogs do not have an excessive influence on the attitudes and behaviour of readers. They just use blogs to support their ideas.

Seeho (2011) was of the opinion that blogs can help readers to have a better understanding of news because bloggers continue to discuss the issue. Kongtuk (2011) thought that people who read newspapers online need to know what is going on in society right now. Meanwhile readers who go to news blogs will need to discuss and present their points of view with other people in more emotional ways. Permpool (2011) pointed out that the increasing number of online news readers would affect the number of readers of offline mainstream news media. He assumed that the ratio of online news readers to offline news readers in the next three years would be 70:30, because advertisements are continuing to move online and because of the cost of paper. In addition, producing online news is cheaper than the print edition, more flexible and is able to attract new consumers, especially young people who have already become accustomed to the use of online media. However,

Narkthong (ASTV Manager Reporter, 2011) thought that blogs might affect people's emotions, especially if the story concerns political issues. Furthermore, blog readers will follow bloggers who think and feel the same as they do.

7.5.4 The Advantages and Disadvantages of News Blogs

All interview participants were asked to specify the advantages and disadvantages of news blogs in general and for their career.

Limparungpattanakij (2011) and Waradee (2011) saw blogs as a personal medium for sharing knowledge, opinions or experience, whereas mass media is public, and reporters have limited opportunities to write personal views or to criticise. For example, reporters will not criticise a movie too much that they were invited to see by the movie company. However, bloggers are biased and they normally do not provide every aspect of information. In relation to politics or topics of conflict, they might tell only the good side of issues they support and the bad side of those they don't. But journalists must follow standards of ethics. They must provide all sides of the information in their reports. To Limthongkul (2011), a blog is a community of various stories. It is like a country supporting a variety of cultures, religions, knowledge and expert experience, although it may include anti-social elements as well.

Permpool (2011) said that journalists can use blogs to store information, to discuss with readers and to present photos and other evidence that they could not publish in traditional mass media. For Narkthong (2011), a blog is a place where people can make their own decisions to publish any information, but the problem of law violation should be borne in mind. Bloggers who are individuals also have limitations, such as access to some news sources. It means that some stories are not so deep.

News professionals identified the advantages and disadvantages of blogs as follows:

Advantages

- Some stories are written by experts, so they have in-depth information
- Some stories are good news sources/news hints
- People can have more voice in society by using blogs as a medium
- Blogs have ample free space
- A single story may contain a number of personal points of view
- Blogs have a variety of stories
- Blogs may result in two-way communication very quickly

Disadvantages:

- Blogs contain bias and bloggers take sides
- Blogs contain rude/emotional words
- Legal violations should be borne in mind
- Readers should decide by themselves whether to trust or not trust a blog story, because there is no editorial stage to filter the content
- The limitations of access to some news sources make some blogs less useful

7.6 Summary and Discussion

New technology and the increasing number of online users have brought about a transformation of the news environment. News organisations now have to compete not only with their traditional media counterparts but also with the online versions of their competitors. In the USA, for instance, the number of daily newspaper readers and the amount of time people spend reading newspapers has been dropping. Hence, the publishers and editors have been trying to make their products more valuable, such as by embracing user-generated content (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011).

Siapera (2012) explained how the new news environment has been influenced by technology, with news organisations nowadays having to publish the same material on different media platforms. The materials are in the form of ‘hypertextuality’, ‘multimediality’, ‘interactivity’ and ‘collective authoring’. Some news organisations in Thailand have been transforming in a similar way. The in-depth interviews revealed that news organisations have produced new forms of materials and have also begun embracing reader blogs and other UGCs on their news websites. This section will summarise and discuss the way some news-media professionals in Thailand perceived and worked with news blogs that appear in online newspapers. The in-depth interviews revealed that news professionals have articulated a range of opinions concerning the use and credibility of news blogs created by the general public, as follows.

7.6.1 Importance of Blogging as a Component of Mainstream News Provision

The President of NBC, who monitors OKnation and The Nation Weblog, and the Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager, who monitors Mblog, both specified that the three reader blogs were set up with the aim of providing ample free space for the general public to share interesting stories, news and opinions on news and public issues. The implementation of the three reader blogs and other ‘user-generated content’ on their news websites, such as comments on news and polls was consistent with Pavlik and McIntosh (2011), who suggested that today blogs and other public forums in which people can discuss news and public issues are prevalent on the web. If traditional news websites do not provide space for public discussion or for pointing out errors in news reports, the readers will go elsewhere to do so. The two news-organisation leaders perceived this notion as important, so they have embraced reader blogs and other UGCs on their news websites. But

some inappropriate content could be posted by readers, which might risk violating the law (see Appendix E). Therefore, they employed a registration system, and users have to read and accept ‘terms and conditions’ before using and posting any content (see Appendix F).

After being granted access, any contents on the three blog sites can be shown immediately. The study found that OKnation, in particular, is a strong community in which users help the web editor to keep an eye on inappropriate issues. So, unsuitable content can be found quickly and easily. However, in the case of news companies being sued by libel law caused by inappropriate content, the computer IP addresses and personal profiles of bloggers will be used as evidence in court. They are not anonymous, so they have to be cautious on what they post.

Both news-organisation leaders perceived reader blogs as a public sphere in the sense of being public opinions which can be shared, information sources, and ways to get feedback from news consumers. OKnation, in particular, has promoted the slogan ‘everyone can be a citizen reporter’, and the number of users has dramatically increased since it was launched (but this is not the case for The Nation Weblog and Mblog, where the number of users is quite small). Comparing the phenomenon of the growth of newspaper blogs in Thailand with other countries such as the USA, Nielsen/NetRating reported on 17 January 2007 that US newspaper blogs drew 3.8 million unique visitors from December 2005 to December 2006. This figure was an increase of 210 per cent within one year (Pavlik, 2008). This evidence proves that some newspaper blogs are more popular than traditional news websites. The question of why some newspaper blogs are very popular has been raised. The findings of the current study suggest that, from the perspective of news consumers, political surveillance and opinion seeking were the top two among the ten news

blog use motivations. On the part of news professionals, the policy of or encouragement from news-organisation leaders is another main factor.

At the beginning the President of NBC also persuaded his news crews to write blogs in OKnation in order to let his news crews use this space to publish the rest of their work and to show it as good written work for the general public to follow. In the early stages, at least 50 news crews had written blogs; however, at present around ten news crews are active blog authors. This finding was consistent with Sweetser et al. (2008), who found that few news professionals write blogs, but many read or interact on blogs. Meanwhile the Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager encouraged their news crews to write blogs anywhere under the condition that they must use their personal names. So, the current study showed that some media organisations have convinced their news professionals to use blogs (especially for the NBC). Sweetser et al. (2008) found that there were two major reasons why news professionals used blogs: first, for information gathering, surveillance or research; and, second, for expressing ideas, communicating or interacting with the public. However, news professionals have their own routine tasks, and so many news professionals just use blogs as news sources and don't become blog authors or write news blogs regularly.

Pavlik and McIntosh (2011) indicated that news organisations in some countries improve the quality of news created by citizen journalists by teaching them how to interview and report news (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). However, the two news organisations in this current study did not provide any citizen journalist training sessions. The OKnation editor disclosed that he only sometimes made suggestions to his users on how to develop their work.

According to Pavlik and McIntosh (2011), some newspapers have adopted an integrated approach to news and stories posted by amateurs both on stand-alone websites and on those partially co-branded with newspapers. Moreover, some of the best blog stories have been published in the traditional newspaper editions. Tremayne (2007) and Bruns (2007) specified that now some forward-looking news professionals are beginning to change the old traditions by incorporating issues produced by citizens in their journalistic practices. Robinson (2009) confirmed that citizen journalists, especially those who produce materials online, and mainstream journalism are now in the same news-production process. Citizen journalists have created novel information flow and are transforming the power of news establishment. Seeho (2011) disclosed that his news organisation used OKnation bloggers who act as both citizen journalists and eyewitnesses from the scene as news clues, and some bloggers, such as movie critics, music critics and sports critics, were invited to write stories for specific columns.

Pavlik (2008) insisted that professional news media are increasingly and openly seeking evidence such as photos, audios and video clips captured by citizens. For instance, since 5 December 2006 Reuters and Yahoo have used photos and videos submitted by citizens, and in 2007 Reuters began distributing evidence submitted by citizens on their traditional news outlets. These instances confirmed that blogs both on and outside mainstream news websites, including other forms of citizen journalism, can be competitors or allies of traditional news media. It is obvious that the two news-organisations' leaders and news professionals that were interviewed in this current study have the vision of employing news-media competitors like citizen journalists or bloggers by providing them with space where they can post any story. They were also searching for material produced elsewhere to use in their journalistic tasks.

The question of how much influence citizen journalists or bloggers have on the gatekeeping role of mainstream news media has also been raised. According to Pavlik and McIntosh (2011), it is clear that traditional news media are losing their gatekeeping power. This was supported by the findings of the current study. All interview participants believed that mainstream news-media's gatekeeping role is gradually declining. Now anyone can be a citizen reporter and news consumers can read, listen to and watch news from a variety of news media on the web. One interview participant in the current study added that this situation will affect print newspapers the most, because they are now faced with the rising cost of paper, advertisers moving online, and a number of young people who will become adults who are already online. However, he believed that print newspapers can survive as long as they still have loyal consumers.

7.6.2 Media Professionals' Perceptions of News Blog Users

The President of NBC perceived news blog users, especially on OKnation, as middle-class people older than 35, who write blogs from one story per week to every day, and like to read both news and critical issues. OKnation users also include some news professionals of the company and from other companies. Meanwhile, the Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager perceived news blog users on his blog site as people who live abroad.

The President of NBC confirmed that the number of OKnation readers is more than the number of readers of all the other websites of the company put together. This finding supports the notion that blogs are continuing to grow and are sharing audience of the news websites (Pavlik, 2008). The two news-organisation leaders in the current study confirmed that the number of news blog users can dramatically increase if some critical events,

especially political conflicts, happen in the society. It is obvious that bloggers want to discuss political and public issues in an open and critical manner.

Seeho (2011) perceived news blog users as people who were well educated and have a sense of social responsibility. 'OKnation Nature Club' is an example of this. It was founded by a group of OKnation bloggers with the aim of protecting nature. According to Pavlik and McIntosh (2011), some active audiences organise and work together on common problems, especially if they trust each other through interacting. So it can be said that blogs are also a channel for a connection among active bloggers. Meanwhile, Kongtuk (2011) and Permpool (2011) perceived news blog readers as people who follow certain experts for in-depth stories. Most bloggers in this study claimed that they knew their readers and they knew some personally. This finding partially supported a study by Lenhart and Fox (2006), who pointed out that half of bloggers knew their readers personally. In some cases blog readers might be blog authors; some blog authors might be news professionals and some news professionals might be blog readers. These findings support Madianou's (2009) notion that today the boundaries between news producers and consumers are blurring. In line with Singer et al. (2011), they highlighted that the distinction between mainstream news producers and audience has been blurred by an increasing digitalization. In some cases, blog authors might be a source, a reader and a journalist in one person (Pavlik, 2008).

7.6.3 Perceptions of the Diversity of News in News Blogs

According to Pavlik (2008), the blogosphere and other forms of interactive communities on the Internet are places where people can share a variety of issues and opinions, but those places also include huge volumes of unfiltered content. News professionals in the current

study said in the same way that blogs present a variety of news and commentary; however, it is not related to the diversity of news in traditional media. In their view and also in the opinion of Pavlik (2008), the blogosphere has more commentary than fresh information or original news reporting. However, Siapera (2012) remarked that traditional news media will become less diverse, as large news organisations are now trying to reduce the cost of running the business by cutting down on journalistic jobs. Hence, expensive news like investigative news reports, which require longer hours, will be cut. This phenomenon has already happened in the USA.

7.6.4 Perceptions of the Quality of News in News Blogs

According to Pavlik (2008), the structure of newsrooms, the practice of journalists and the news content produced by traditional news media are evolving. The current study found that most news professionals agreed that the use of blogs could enhance the quality of news reports. However, they believed that news reports in mainstream news media are more credible than stories produced by bloggers. Many news blogs are also full of the writer's personal point of view rather than news. This finding is consistent with Sweetser et al. (2008), who pointed out that news professionals perceived news blogs as less credible than news reports produced by established media. Whereas, Siapera (2012), have argued that users tend to believe that blogs are more credible than established media.

With regard to the way news professionals use blogs to enhance the quality of their news reports, the majority of news professionals in this study agreed that reader blogging is one of the more useful news sources. Berkowitz (2009) clarified that such news sources cover the general public, together with writers from official (government) sources, experts, news agencies, and commercial organisations. News blogging is a distinctive source is

blurring the line between journalists and sources as suggested by John Pavlik (Berkowitz, 2009). The two news-organisations' leaders and some jbloggers showed the ways they use blogs as news hints and sources, such as the cases of Miss Thailand Universe's national dress; the carelessness of highway workers in Bangkok; the fake education background of the ex-Thai minister of social development and human security; Prince William's marriage; the UK's riots and social problems; the Ratchada illegal casino in Bangkok, etc. These examples are evidence to support the study of Gunter et al. (2009) which found that some blogs have the capacity to influence the news agenda of mainstream media.

The current study also found that news professionals always check the credibility of blogs and always do more research before using them. Pavlik and McIntosh (2011) argued that most blogs created by the general public are by unpaid volunteers. This is a barrier in attracting high-quality blog authors. The lack of incentives might hamper news gathering, especially those which are costly and time consuming. News professionals have to fulfil the completeness of news reports, including checking their credibility, to meet journalistic standards. News professionals in the current study have ways for checking the credibility of blogs, such as contacting the blogger by email or telephone to ask about the origin of the story and to check the accuracy with other sources, checking the blogger's personal information and occupation, checking the length of time the blogger has written blogs on this platform, checking that this content is original or not copied from other media, checking whether or not it is an up-to-date story, and so on.

With regard to the credibility of blogs from the perspective of consumers, the President of NBC believed that readers trust OKnation and The Nation Weblog. He believed that there is no motive for bloggers to distort information except stories related to issues of conflict or where the writer works for some special-interest group. Meanwhile the

Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager perceived that in general blogs have a credibility problem; however, most stories in Mblog are miscellaneous issues which do not really involve the issue of credibility. According to Pavlik (2008), the quality of blogs is different from the quality of news reports produced by mainstream news media, especially the standard of objectivity and accuracy. Pavlik and McIntosh (2011, p.304) remarked that citizen reporters “increasingly view themselves as content providers who can publish without relying on a traditional journalistic publisher or gateway”. Some jbloggers in the current study stated that the believability of reader blogs is far from that of news reports, as reader blogs contain rumours, biased issues and one-dimensional points of view from the writer. However, some jbloggers believed that web editors of each blog community on mainstream news websites, with the helping hand of blog users who act as gatewatchers, can reduce inappropriate blog content produced by citizens on newspaper websites.

7.6.5 Impact of Newspaper-Linked Blogs on News Consumers

According to Pavlik (2008, p.77), “the fundamental relationships between and among journalists, their sources and their audiences are undergoing a technological transformation”. The emergence of new media could affect the way news consumers read, listen to or watch the old media (Gunter, 2010). Hence, the question of whether a blog as a new medium affects news consumers has been raised. The study found that more than half of the news professionals were not sure whether blogs have an effect on how much time is spent consuming other media. Less than half believed that the use of blogs has no effect, and one news professional believed that it has an effect only on offline mainstream news media such as print newspapers.

Another question is what is the perceived impact of the use of news blogs on news consumers' attitudes and behaviour? Some news professionals believed that blogs alone cannot influence readers' opinions and behaviour. The President of NBC mentioned that it is difficult to say whether blogs influence readers' attitudes and behaviour because there are many factors, and readers also consume various media. Some news professionals assumed that people read blogs for ideas that can help them to have a better understanding of news. A blog might affect emotions if it is related to political issues. Some blog authors might influence their readers, if the readers like and trust in them. All news professionals in this study suggested that when employing blogs as news sources, all users have to consider both the advantages and disadvantages, e.g. the story might come from an expert, but the writers usually take sides, etc. (see topic 7.5.4 in this chapter).

This chapter has discussed the findings from interviews with news professionals. In the next chapter, the findings from content analysis examining 'user-generated content' including 'reader blogs' will be disclosed. It will help to answer the following research questions: 'Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?', 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?', 'Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?', 'Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?' and 'What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?'

Chapter Eight: The Characteristics of News Blogs on Thai Newspaper Websites

The findings on the characteristics of news blogs on Thai newspaper websites will be discussed in this chapter. A content analysis was employed in this study with the aim of providing a means of cross-referencing specific responses made by survey respondents in the blog-user survey with responses made by news professionals in the interview. Hence, some of the measures used in the coding frame examined elements on which survey respondents and news professionals were questioned. Questions that the survey respondents and news professionals were asked and that were cross-checked by the content analysis will help to answer following research questions.

Quantitative content analysis was first used to assess the formats of ‘user-generated content’ (a blog being one such format) on 15 Thai daily newspaper websites. This will help to reveal the extent to which newspapers embrace reader blogs on their websites and thereby to answer research question one: ‘Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?’ The quantitative content analysis was also used to examine reader blog stories which appear in some of these online newspapers, the number of blog authors and readers, and the way readers comment on news blog stories in order to answer the research question ‘How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?’ The range of news topics on reader blogs will support research question three: ‘Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?’ The answers relating to the extent to which sources of information were identified will help to answer research question four: ‘Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?’, and the direction of audiences’ opinions (agree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree) on news blog stories/authors will help to answer research question five:

‘What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?’

The findings from the content analyses will be discussed in three sections: the formats of user-generated content on Thai newspaper websites; the characteristics of the three reader blogs; and chi-square tests to measure whether or not their characteristics differed from each other.

8.1 The Formats of User-Generated Content on Thai Newspaper Websites

The emergence of Web 2.0 technology has changed the way the Internet is used today. This technology has allowed websites to add various types of interactive features. Internet users can do more than just retrieve information; they can also interact with the page (Briggs, 2007). The feature that allows news consumers to participate or produce the content on the website of news media can be called ‘user-generated content’ or UGC for short (Thurman and Hermida, 2010). Thurman and Hermida (2010) examined 12 UK news websites, finishing in 2008, and found nine UGCs: ‘Blogs’, ‘Comments on stories’, ‘Have your say’, ‘Messageboards’, ‘Polls’, ‘Q&As’, ‘Reader blogs’, ‘Your media’, and ‘Your story’. They also found that 80% of the UGCs were pre-moderated before publication.

For Thai newspaper websites, however, there is no study concerning what kinds of UGC have existed or how they are monitored. And a reader blog is one format of UGC, so this study also examined the UGC formats of all nationwide daily newspaper websites: Thairath; Daily News; Khaosod; Komchadluek; Matichon; Thai Post; Siamrath; Banmuang; Naewna; ASTV Manager; Bangkokbiznews; Prachachart; Post Today; Bangkok Post; and The Nation. This examination was conducted in September 2011.

The findings here demonstrated that ‘Comment on news’, ‘Messageboards’, ‘Poll at homepage’, ‘Poll inside news’, and ‘Reader Blog’ were five formats of UGC which already existed on 15 online newspapers. As shown in Table 8.1, some newspapers, such as Naewna, ASTV Manager and Bangkok Post, have many UGC formats, whereas Daily News, Khaosod, Matichon, Banmuang, and Prachachart did not provide any UGCs.

Table 8.1 User-Generated Content on Thai Daily Newspaper Websites

Newspaper name	Comment on news	Messageboards		Poll on homepage	Poll inside news	Reader blog		Blog name
	Comment	Comment	Post story	Vote	Vote	Comment	Post story	
Thairath					✓			
Daily News								
Khaosod								
Komchadluek						✓	✓**	OKnation
Matichon								
Thai Post	✓							
Siamrath				✓				
Banmuang								
Naewna	✓*	✓ n/a ¹	✓ n/a ²	✓	✓			
ASTV Manager	✓*	✓*	✓*, **		✓	✓	✓**	Mblog
Bangkokbiznews	✓			✓		✓	✓**	OKnation
Prachachart								
Post Today	✓	✓	✓**	✓				
Bangkok Post (Eng)	✓*	✓	✓**	✓*				
The Nation (Eng)				✓ n/a ¹		✓	✓**	The Nation Weblog

* = Have pre-moderation system (the post does not show immediately) ** = Have to register

n/a¹ = Cannot test the pre-moderated system (error on page) n/a² = Cannot test the registration system (error on page)

Table 8.1 demonstrates that six out of 15 newspapers (40%) – Thai Post, Naewna, ASTV Manager, Bangkokbiznews, Post Today and Bangkok Post – had ‘Comment on news’ sections, but readers had to disclose some personal information before commenting. Three newspapers – Naewna, ASTV Manager and Bangkok Post – were assumed to have a pre-moderation system because reader comments did not show immediately. Therefore, half of the newspapers that provided ‘Comment on news’ functions had gatekeeping procedures in place (to filter the content).

Four newspapers (26.7%) had ‘Messageboards’: Naewna, ASTV Manager, Post Today, and Bangkok Post. Before posting a story, users had to register. After granting use, all posts were shown immediately except on ASTV Manager. Thus, 25% of newspapers which provided ‘Messageboards’ had gatekeeping procedures.

The findings also showed that six out of 15 (40%) newspapers had ‘Voting on poll’ on their homepage: Siamrath, Naewna, Bangkokbiznews, Post Today, Bangkok Post, and The Nation. Only Bangkok Post was assumed to have a pre-moderation system, because after selecting the choice and clicking the vote button the total voting score did not show immediately. This meant that 16.6% of the newspapers had a gatekeeping procedure.

Three out of 15 newspapers (20%) had ‘Poll inside news’: Thairath, Naewna and ASTV Manager. Voting scores could be shown immediately after clicking the choice and vote button. There was no gatekeeping procedure for this UGC.

The findings also revealed that ‘Reader blogs’ could be found on 4 out of 15 newspapers (26.7%): Komchadluek, ASTV Manager, Bangkokbiznews, and The Nation. The link to OKnation exists on Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews, The Nation Weblog exists on The Nation, and Mblog exists on ASTV Manager. After granting use, all posts were shown immediately. This means that there was no gatekeeping procedure. From this finding it could also be implied that four Thai daily newspapers appreciate ‘reader blogs’ because they have provided this free space for the general public. However, the majority of Thai daily newspapers did not see that it was important to provide ‘reader blogs’ on their news websites. Just some publications saw that it mattered.

8.2 Characteristics of News Blogs on Thai Newspaper Websites

All blog stories which were posted on OKNation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog during three periods – 8–14 September, 8–14 October, and 8–14 November 2011 – were the samples of this study. During the three periods, there were 4,644 blog stories in total. Figure 8.1 illustrates a news blog feature created by an individual blogger on OKNation.

Figure 8.1 News Blog Story Created by an Individual Blogger on OKNation

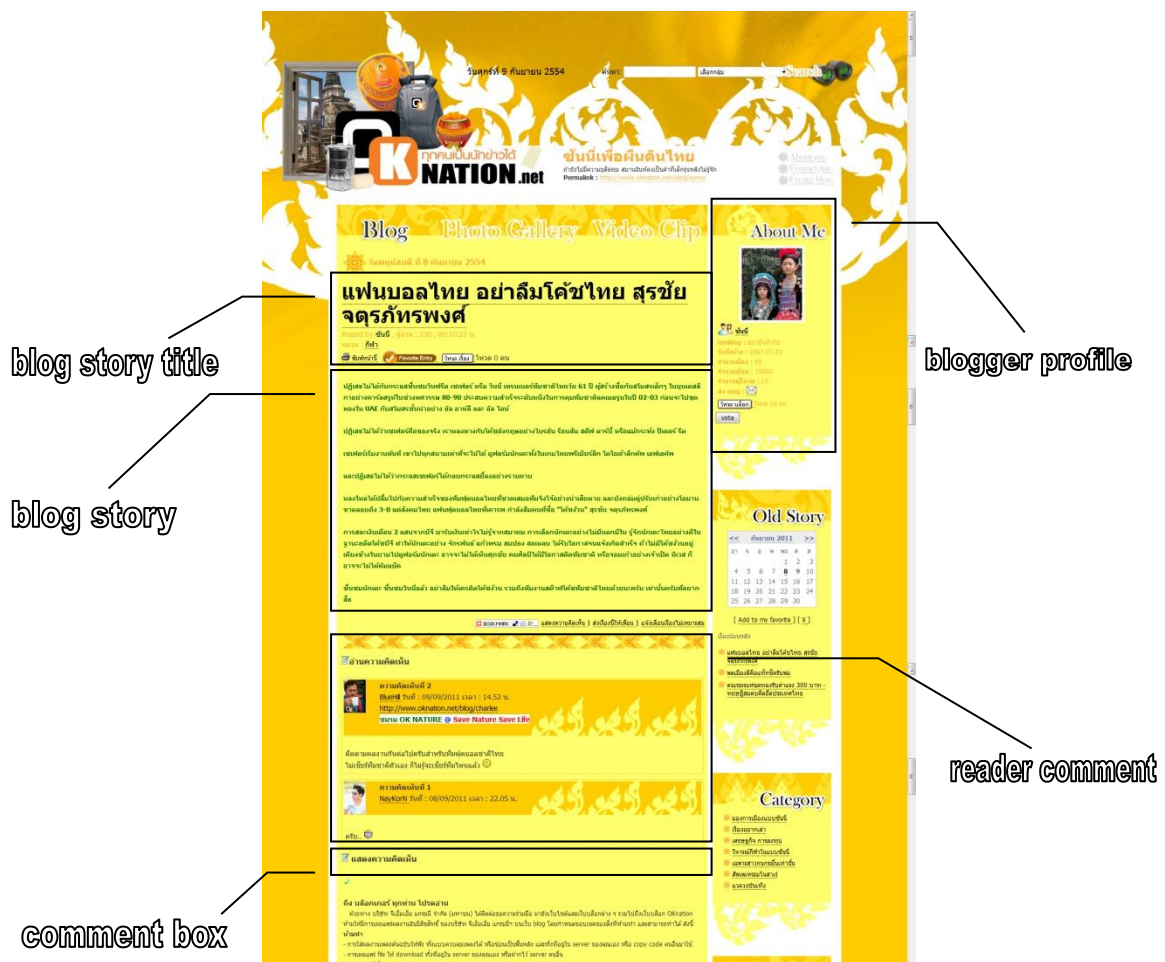


Figure 8.2 illustrates a news blog feature created by an individual blogger on The Nation Weblog.

Figure 8.2 News Blog Story Created by an Individual Blogger on The Nation Weblog

The screenshot displays the 'The Nation Weblog' interface. At the top, there's a header with the site name, navigation links, and contact information. The main content area features a blog post by 'Plaidip' titled 'Maybe', dated Friday, September 9, 2011. The post discusses the symbolism of 'The Nation' newspaper and the challenges faced by farmers. To the left of the post is a 'blogger profile' section for Plaidip, showing statistics like 'General member', 'created: 2010-07-15', and 'entry: 2'. To the right is a 'blog story' section with a photo gallery titled 'Kurosawa's storyboard gallery'. Below the main post is a 'comment box' with a 'Read comment' section showing several user comments and a 'Comment' section with a registration prompt. On the far right, there's a 'reader comment' section with a calendar and a list of previous days.

blogger profile

blog story title

blog story

comment box

reader comment

Figure 8.3 News Blog Story Created by an Individual Blogger on Mblog

[illegible]

comment box

In order to reduce the amount of time that might have been spent coding all of this material, systematic sampling was applied to construct a more manageable sample of output for analysis. Sampling began with the first blog post of each day and then continued with the selection of every fifth record until the last post. So, the units of analysis comprised the individual blog stories which were downloaded and chosen from the systematic sampling. Finally there were 955 units from 4,644 units for coding: 861 blog stories from OKnation (from 4,276 blog stories); 21 blog stories from The Nation Weblog (from 53 blog stories) and 73 blog stories from Mblog (from 315 blog stories).

The findings indicated that 955 units of analysis were posted by 389 bloggers. More than three in five bloggers (63.9%) identified their email address and more than one in four bloggers (26.3%) showed their clear profile photo. OKnation and The Nation Weblog bloggers had belonged to the system for an average of 2.8 years (ranging from 4 months to about 5 years), had created 593,314 stories (ranging from one to 4,687 stories) and had 456,091,383 visits.

From the overall sample of 955 blog stories, 588 stories (61.6%) related to news or public issues. Focusing on the number of news blogs on each of the three reader blog sites, OKnation had by far the largest number of news blogs, as shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 The Existence of News Blogs on Each Blog Provider

Blog Provider	News Blog	Non-News Blog	Total
OKnation	544 (63.2%)	317 (36.8%)	861 (100.0%)
The Nation Weblog	15 (71.4%)	6 (28.6%)	21 (100.0%)
Mblog	29 (39.7%)	44 (60.3%)	73 (100.0%)
Total	588 (61.6%)	367 (38.4%)	955 (100.0%)

Looking at types of news blog topics, stories about the environment (natural disasters) and politics were the top two issues on which bloggers posted (48.3% and 44% respectively), followed in small numbers by stories concerning foreign affairs, sport, economics, crime, entertainment, technology, health, education, and weird/supernatural issues respectively, as shown in Table 8.3. The data from the readers' survey revealed that most news blog topic posts were on politics (69.3%), followed by the environment (36.6%), education, economics/business/finance, entertainment, technology, foreign affairs, health, crime, sport, and weird/supernatural issues respectively. So, it can be concluded from the findings of the two research instruments that environmental and political issues were the top two issues on which bloggers posted. Remarkably, during the time that the content analysis was conducted, there was a major flood in the central area of Thailand, and in Bangkok in particular, that lasted for several months. So, natural-disaster topics were also major issues among news blog users.

Table 8.3 Types of News Blog Story on Each Blog Provider

Type of news (One blog story might provide more than one type of news)	OKnation %	The Nation Weblog %	Mblog %	Total N=588 %
Environment/disaster	45.6	1.0	1.7	48.3
Politics	42.7	1.0	0.7	44.4
Foreign affairs	6.6	0.9	1.0	8.5
Sport	5.4	0.0	0.7	6.1
Economics	4.6	0.2	0.5	5.3
Crime	3.6	0.2	0.3	4.1
Entertainment	3.6	0.0	0.2	3.7
Technology	1.9	0.0	1.4	3.2
Health	2.4	0.2	0.2	2.7
Education	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.2
Weird issues	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.7
Others i.e. religion, royal family issues	3.4	0.0	0.0	3.6

The findings also demonstrated that most news blogs (61.7%) did not detail the reference of the news source, as shown in Table 8.4. So, nearly four out of 10 stories certainly copied from other sources. However, it cannot be concluded that six out of 10 stories were original stories.

Table 8.4 The Reference of Sources inside News Blogs

Blog provider	News source reference	No reference	Total
OKnation	204 (37.5%)	340 (62.5%)	544 (100.0%)
The Nation Weblog	4 (26.7%)	11 (73.3%)	15 (100.0%)
Mblog	17 (58.6%)	12 (41.4%)	29 (100.0%)
Total news blogs	225 (38.3%)	363 (61.7%)	588 (100.0%)

Table 8.5 shows that out of 225 news blogs which had detailed sources, newspapers, news programmes on TV/radio and news agencies of mainstream news media (32.0%) and general websites (28.4%) were the two news sources that were cited most often, followed by social media, online mainstream news media, and government websites respectively. This means that most bloggers who detailed their sources took their lead in terms of their news agenda from mainstream media. This finding was consistent with the study of Herring et al. (2007), which found that the majority of blogs – more than 6 in 10 blogs – provided no links to any sources.

Table 8.5 Types of Sources in News Blogs

Type of source (can code more than one source)	OKnation %	The Nation Weblog %	Mblog %	Overall (N=225) %
Mainstream news media	30.6	0.5	0.9	32.0
General websites	26.6	0.9	0.9	28.4
Social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Webboard, YouTube, and other blogs	14.4	0.0	3.2	17.6
Online mainstream news media	12.6	0.5	0.9	14.0
Government websites	6.3	0.0	0.9	7.2
Others	8.1	0.0	0.9	9.01

Table 8.6 shows that out of 588 news blog stories, 17.35% contained hyperlinks, 8.33% had video/sound clips and 60.03% had pictures/photos related to the stories. It can be implied that bloggers tried to increase the quality of their stories, because they not only created the story in text form but also tried to show further back-up evidence and images that depicted the story. For some blogs readers could click on the link to see more information or the origin of information. These results supported the survey of Lenhart and Fox (2006), who found that bloggers used hyperlinks, video clips/sound clips and photos as evidence in their blogs: around 7 in 10 bloggers included links to original source material, 30% posted audio, 15% posted video and 72% displayed photos on their blogs.

Table 8.6 The Use of Hyperlinks, Video/Sound Clips and Pictures/Photos in News Blogs

	OKnation %	The Nation Weblog %	Mblog %	Overall (N=588) %
Hyperlinks	16.5	0.3	0.5	17.35
Video/sound clips	8.0	0.0	0.3	8.33
Pictures/photos	57.5	0.3	2.2	60.03

Table 8.7 shows that out of 588 news blogs, readers' comments were found in 394 cases (67%). Further, there were 305 blogs (77.4% of those with readers' comments) on which bloggers not only wrote about current events but also gave their opinions inside the story. The remaining 89 stories (22.6%) were pure news which was either copied from other sources or reported as an eyewitness.

Table 8.7 Comments from Readers

Date	News blog stories which have reader comments				Blogger's opinion inside story	
	OKnation	The Nation Weblog	Mblog	Total	Yes	No
8 Sep	16	-	-	16	12	4
9 Sep	17	1	-	18	14	4
10 Sep	10	-	-	10	8	2
11 Sep	15	1	-	16	12	4
12 Sep	6	-	1	7	4	3
13 Sep	26	-	-	26	22	4
14 Sep	19	1	-	20	20	-
8 Oct	13	-	-	13	11	2
9 Oct	14	1	-	15	14	1
10 Oct	20	1	1	22	18	4
11 Oct	25	1	2	28	23	5
12 Oct	24	1	-	25	21	4
13 Oct	23	1	-	24	15	9
14 Oct	20	1	-	21	14	7
8 Nov	27	-	-	27	22	5
9 Nov	16	1	-	17	15	2
10 Nov	20	1	-	21	16	5
11 Nov	21	-	-	21	15	6
12 Nov	11	-	-	11	8	3
13 Nov	21	-	-	21	13	8
14 Nov	14	-	1	15	8	7
Total	378 (95.94)	11 (2.79)	5 (1.27)	394 (100)	305 (77.4)	89 (22.6)

Table 8.8 shows that there were 3,710 comments (177 comments per day) across the 394 news blogs that contained any readers' comments. Most of these news blogs (67.01%) contained opinions from readers. Overall, 2,935 comments (79.11%) were reader comments and 775 comments (20.89%) comprised the interactions of bloggers with their

readers. The reader survey results indicated that 71.8% of respondents commented or gave their opinion in news blogs (39.7% sometimes, 22.3% most times and 9.8% every time they went on a news blog). So, the findings from the two research instruments supported the notion that the readers of news blogs not only read the story on news blogs but most of them shared opinions with each other, fulfilling the concept of blogs as a public sphere.

Table 8.8 Number of Reader Comments and Bloggers' Participation

Date	Blog story	Reader comment	Blogger participation	Total comments
8 Sep	16	85	18	103
9 Sep	18	140	14	154
10 Sep	10	107	41	148
11 Sep	16	106	31	137
12 Sep	7	43	21	64
13 Sep	26	181	44	225
14 Sep	20	160	72	232
8 Oct	13	72	41	113
9 Oct	15	156	32	188
10 Oct	22	259	48	307
11 Oct	28	280	79	359
12 Oct	25	199	37	236
13 Oct	24	176	85	261
14 Oct	21	243	52	295
8 Nov	27	239	46	285
9 Nov	17	48	15	63
10 Nov	21	189	37	226
11 Nov	21	63	13	76
12 Nov	11	51	14	65
13 Nov	21	82	26	108
14 Nov	15	56	9	65
Total	394 (100)	2,935 (79.11)	775 (20.89)	3,710 (100)
Mean	18.76	139.76	36.90	176.67

Table 8.9 shows that there were 2,935 reader comments (excluding the participation of the blog author): 2,587 readers (88.1%) gave their personal opinion. However, very few readers (6.6%) asked the blogger a question. Comparing the levels of posts logged here on the sites themselves with the extent to which readers in the survey said they posted

comments to each site, the two research instruments supported each other, as most of the news blog readers in the reader survey indicated that they posted their own personal opinions (71.8%). However, more than half (56.4%) of the survey respondents said that they asked the blog author a question, whereas the content analysis suggested that there were only a tiny proportion of questions to blog authors.

Table 8.9 Comments from Readers

Date	Reader's comment	OKnation		The Nation Weblog		Mblog		Total	
		1. Ask question	2. Give opinion	1. Ask question	2. Give opinion	1. Ask question	2. Give opinion	1. Ask question	2. Give opinion
8 Sep	85	10	72	-	-	-	-	10	72
9 Sep	140	7	114	0	2	-	-	7	116
10 Sep	107	9	92	-	-	-	-	9	92
11 Sep	106	10	79	0	7	-	-	10	86
12 Sep	43	7	37	-	-	0	2	7	39
13 Sep	181	14	158	-	-	-	-	14	158
14 Sep	160	13	138	1	3	-	-	14	141
8 Oct	72	3	68	-	-	-	-	3	68
9 Oct	156	7	138	1	5	-	-	8	143
10 Oct	259	4	235	2	5	0	4	6	244
11 Oct	280	14	238	1	2	2	18	17	258
12 Oct	199	8	174	1	5	-	-	9	179
13 Oct	176	7	162	0	2	-	-	7	164
14 Oct	243	9	217	1	3	-	-	10	220
8 Nov	239	24	205	-	-	-	-	24	205
9 Nov	48	6	36	1	3	-	-	7	39
10 Nov	189	13	147	0	0	-	-	13	147
11 Nov	63	6	55	-	-	-	-	6	55
12 Nov	51	4	45	-	-	-	-	4	45
13 Nov	82	5	70	-	-	-	-	5	70
14 Nov	56	4	45	-	-	0	1	4	46
Total	2,935 (100)	184 (6.27)	2,525 (86.03)	8 (0.27)	37 (1.26)	2 (0.07)	25 (0.85)	194 (6.61)	2,587 (88.14)

The content analysis instrument indicated that the general public pays a great deal of attention to ‘reader blogs’, especially OKnation, while The Nation Weblog and Mblog have a few users. During the three periods of study (21 days in total), content analysis showed that there were 4,644 blog stories produced by 389 bloggers. OKnation and The Nation Weblog bloggers had participated in these blogs for 2.8 years on average, ranging from 4 months to approximately five years (Mblog does not provide this information on the blog site); had created 593,314 stories, ranging from one to 4,687 stories; and had 456,091,383 visits (again, Mblog does not provide this information on the blog site). Focusing on news blogs, from 955 samples there were 588 stories (61.6%) related to news or public issues. Taking that figure and applying it to the original 4,644 blog samples, it could be estimated that 2,940 stories related to news or public issues were produced over 21 days, or in other words 140 news blogs per day. That means that the general public often used news blogs which appear in online newspapers. However, as noted earlier, the majority of reader blog users belonged to OKnation.

The findings also answered the question, ‘What impact have newspaper-linked blogs had on credibility?’ The results revealed that blog readers tended to believe blog stories or bloggers a lot, as the findings showed that more than 9 in 10 blog readers (91.6% of 2,935 reader comments) agreed with the author’s opinion and/or supported bloggers’ stories. However, it is noted that this coding item had 68% inter-coder agreement.

8.3 Different Characteristics of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog

The three sets of reader blogs associated with online newspapers were compared with the aim of examining whether or not there were any significant differences in their characteristics. A chi-square test was employed to examine whether there was a relationship between categorical variables. It is noted, however, that there were widely varying base sizes of story numbers for each site, with Mblog and The Nation Weblog having relatively few stories. The results from the chi-square test are presented below.

Table 8.10 shows that there were significantly different proportions of news blog posts and non-news blog posts on the three blog sites.

Table 8.10 Differences in News Blog Posts

Posts of news blogs	OKnation	The Nation Weblog	Mblog	Total	χ^2 value	df	Asymp. sig 2 sided
News blog	544	15	29	588	16.530 ^a	2	.000**
Non-news blog	317	6	44	367			
Total	861	21	73	955			

NS = not significant ($p > .05$) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 8.11 shows that there were significant differences between the three sites in terms of the extent to which there were posts on politics, foreign affairs and technology. This was consistent with the readers' survey, which found that blog readers were very interested in politics, and quite interested in foreign affairs and technology news. So, these three news topics could significantly draw the attention of blog users.

Table 8.11 Differences in News Blog Topics

News blog topic	OKnation	The Nation Weblog	Mblog	Total	χ^2 value	df	Asymp. sig 2 sided
Environment	268	6	10	284	.2834 ^a	2	.242
Non-environment	276	9	19	304			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Politics	251	6	4	261	11.790 ^a	2	.003*
Non-politics	293	9	25	327			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Foreign affairs	38	5	6	49	19.363 ^a	2	.000**
Non-foreign affairs	506	10	23	539			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Sport	32	0	4	36	4.002 ^a	2	.135
Non-sport	512	15	25	552			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Economics	27	1	3	31	1.657 ^a	2	.437
Non-economics	517	14	26	557			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Crime	21	1	2	24	.911 ^a	2	.634
Non-crime	523	14	27	564			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Entertainment	21	0	1	22	.611 ^a	2	.737
Non-entertainment	523	15	28	566			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Technology	11	0	8	19	58.057 ^a	2	.000**
Non-technology	533	15	21	569			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Health	14	1	1	16	1.075 ^a	2	.584
Non-health	530	14	28	572			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Education	13	0	0	13	.326 ^a	2	.850
Non-education	531	15	29	575			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Weird issue	4	0	0	4	1.675 ^a	2	.433
Non-weird issue	540	15	29	584			
Total	544	15	29	588			

NS = not significant ($p > .05$) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 8.12 shows that when looking at differences between the three blog sites in terms of the extent to which different sources were identified, the only significant difference occurred in respect of mentions of social media as sources. OKnation displayed

32 blogs citing social media as a source out of a total of 204 blogs that identified their news source; The Nation Weblog did not display any blogs citing social media as a source, while Mblog displayed seven from 17. Thus, Mblog displayed the greatest propensity to cite social media as a news source.

Table 8.12 Differences in the Use of News Sources in News Blogs

News source	OKnation	The Nation Weblog	Mblog	Total	χ^2 value	df	Asymp. sig 2 sided
Identify news source	204	4	17	225	6.076a	2	.048*
Do not identify	340	11	12	363			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Mainstream news	68	1	2	71	3.461 ^a	2	.177
Non-mainstream	136	3	15	154			
Total	204	4	17	225			
General website	59	2	2	63	3.269 ^a	2	.195
Non-general website	145	2	15	162			
Total	204	4	17	225			
Social media	32	0	7	39	7.970 ^a	2	.019*
Non-social media	172	4	10	186			
Total	204	4	17	225			
Online mainstream	28	1	2	31	.438 ^a	2	.786
Non-online mainstream	176	3	15	194			
Total	204	4	17	225			
Government website	14	0	2	16	.883 ^a	2	.643
Non-gov	190	4	15	209			
Total	204	4	17	225			

NS = not significant ($p > .05$) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 8.13 shows that there were significant differences between the three sites in terms of the posting of pictures or photos. Bloggers on OKnation posted pictures or photos in 338 out of 544 of their stories (more than half), bloggers on The Nation Weblog in two out of 15, and bloggers on Mblog in 13 out of 29.

Table 8.13 Differences in the Links, Clips and Photos Included in News Blogs

Link	OKnation	The Nation Weblog	Mblog	Total	χ^2 value	df	Asymp. sig 2 sided
Use hyperlink	97	2	3	102	1.249 ^a	2	.536
Do not use	447	13	26	486			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Video/sound clip	47	0	2	49	1.509 ^a	2	.470
Do not use	497	15	27	539			
Total	544	15	29	588			
Picture/photo	338	2	13	353	17.428 ^a	2	.000**
Do not use	206	13	16	235			
Total	544	15	29	588			

NS = not significant ($p > .05$) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

To conclude, from the findings in relation to differences in the characteristics of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog, the three blog sites were significantly different in the posts of news blogs, posts on political issues, posts on foreign affairs issues, posts on technology news issues, the use of news sources, the use of social media as a source, and the use of photos/pictures as evidence. These differences in blog posts may have originated from the different types of publication that the blogs appear in (each newspaper offers different leading agendas): OKnation exists on Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews, the first of which is a popular newspaper and the second a business newspaper; The Nation Weblog exists on The Nation, which is an English newspaper; and Mblog exists on ASTV Manager, which focuses on political news issues.

8.4 Summary and Discussion

Since the Internet has become a popular public communication medium, print newspapers have become less important as primary sources of news (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). Moreover, sales volumes and advertising revenues have been dropping. Due to these

changes, the majority of daily newspapers have operated online editions in parallel and some newspapers have decided to exist online only (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). In order to make their products more valuable or draw attention from readers, newspaper publishers and editors are increasingly employing multimedia features, and ‘user-generated content’ on their news websites (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). According to Thurman (2008), ‘Polls’, ‘Have your say’, ‘Chat rooms’, ‘Q&A’, ‘Blogs with comments enabled’, ‘Pre-moderated messageboards’ and ‘Post-moderated messageboards’ were seven formats of user contributions appeared on UK news websites. These adaptations were driven by local organisational and technical conditions, including traditional editorial practices.

With regard to Thailand, Wongthangsawat (2007) studied three popular Thai daily newspapers – Thairath, Daily News and Komchadluek – and found that they operated print and online editions in parallel. The news content on the three newspaper websites was slightly different from the print versions. Breaking news would frequently be added and the presentation format was changed to fit the online platform. Wongthangsawat (2007), however, argued that print newspapers would still be important in Thai society because the Internet penetration rate was still low in rural areas. Moreover, print newspapers could be read by a whole family, had more details and were safer in relation to eyesight.

These findings were partially consistent with Thongprayoon’s (2008) research. Thongprayoon (2008) interviewed six Communication Arts scholars from Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Ramkhamhaeng University and Dhurakijpundit University, independent scholars, and five webmasters of online newspapers: ASTV Manager, Matichon, Daily News, Bangkokbiznews and Post Today concerning the trend of online newspapers in Thailand. She found that online newspapers were still not as popular as print newspapers and did not have much impact on the sales volume of print newspapers

because the readers of the two platforms (online and offline) were from different groups. Online newspaper readers in Thailand were from a younger generation, on average under 30 years old. The contents and formats of different online newspapers were generally the same. Thongprayoon (2008) suggested that since the development of online newspapers is influenced by technology, media organisations should have an online news policy based on consumer benefits. Additionally, news should be updated, timely, interactive and in a database. Online crews, however, should be more ethically conscious.

The current study is the first to examine the content of daily newspapers' websites in Thailand, and looked at the format of 'user-generated content' on 15 Thai daily newspaper websites. The study found five formats of UGC: 'Comment on news' (40%); 'Messageboards' (26.7%); 'Poll at homepage' (40%); 'Poll inside news' (20%); and 'Reader blog' (26.7%). Focusing on reader blogs, there were three reader blog sites – OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog – which allowed readers to post stories and comments. This finding was consistent with Thurman (2008), who found that some formats of UGC existed on mainstream news websites, although 'Guardian.co.uk' was the only one out of ten UK news websites to feature reader blogs. Thurman (2008) indicated that the slow uptake of UGC came from editors' anxieties about legal liabilities, because mainstream news producers felt that the materials produced by amateurs had some problems, such as duplication, misspelling and grammar, not being newsworthy, not being balanced and not being decent. However, some news professionals, such as the heads of BBC News interactive and TimesOnline.co.uk, recognised that there were many good reader blogs.

During the three periods over which this study was conducted, a total of 4,644 blog stories were found on OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog. By employing systematic

sampling to reduce the size of samples, there were 955 blog stories to be coded. After coding, 588 blog stories were found to be related to news, and had commentary upon news, current events, or public issues. The topics which bloggers mostly wrote on were 'environment/disaster' and 'politics'. This finding was partially consistent with Messner and DiStaso (2008), who found that politics was the most common topic on blogs. The current study also found that nearly two out of five bloggers clearly detailed their sources. Mainstream news media and general websites were the top two sources they cited. Although less than half of the bloggers clearly clarified their sources, most sources they mentioned were taken from mainstream news media. This finding was consistent with Reese et al. (2007), who found that the blogosphere relied heavily on news reports produced by mainstream news media. The current finding is also in harmony with the study of Messner and DiStaso (2008), who found that 73% of blogs used sources: 43% were mainstream news media, 20% were other blogs and 10% were general websites.

Within news blog stories, around two out of 10 had hyperlinks, nearly one out of 10 had video clips and six out of 10 had pictures/photos related to the stories. There were 2,935 readers' comments on 394 blogs. Nearly nine in 10 readers (88.1%) gave their personal opinion in the comment box. However, very few readers (6.6%) asked the blogger a question. The findings also demonstrated that there were significant differences between the three sites in terms of the posts on news blogs, political issues, foreign affairs issues, and technology issues including the use of news sources, the use of social media as a source and the use of photos/pictures as evidence.

This chapter has discussed the findings from the content analysis. The next chapter will draw conclusions and provide an overview of the study in six sections: the design of the study, the main conceptual framework of the study, the multiple research methods used

for this study, the outcome of the study, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Nine: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this final chapter, the findings of the study of newspaper websites and blog readers, news professionals and the outputs of the sites will be integrated and discussed in seven sections. These sections will deal with: the research design; the conceptual framework of the study; the multiple research methods used in the study; the major arguments and the outcomes of the study; the conclusion; the limitations of the study; and recommendations for further study.

9.1 The Design of the Study

This thesis aimed at making a significant contribution to the field of news media study. It studies on the role of blogs that associated with major newspapers through the lens of the uses and gratifications theory and by focusing on the concept of news credibility. In this particular case, a study was constructed that took place in Thailand. This is a country in which online news has emerged over the past decade and become an important source of news for growing numbers of people.

The introduction of blogs to newspapers' websites has been a relatively recent phenomenon and represents a departure for news suppliers in that through these devices they have opened up their news services to the public and allowed news consumers to have a more active and engaged role in discussing current news agendas. This study has explored how this new element has been manifest in daily newspapers' websites, the reasons why it was introduced as far as news professionals are concerned, and its use by readers. The multi-dimensional nature of this study meant that a number of different data collection methods were used that addressed readers, news providers and the nature of news outputs.

The research examined how the reported uses online newspapers and their blogs were related to the demography of readers as well as to their reported motives for using these sites and their perceptions of the credibility of news blogs produced within online newspapers. Readers perceptions and opinions on some of these issues were also compared with views expressed by news professionals in Thailand. Thus, in surveying Thai news readers, the study examined why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision; news blog users' attention to news blogs; the diversity and the quality of news blogs; and degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs and attitudes of news blog users. This study also investigated the nature of various 'user-generated content' (UGC) formats on Thai newspaper websites. This gave an overview of the way newspaper organisations have utilised the progress of Internet technology – especially Web 2.0, which allows interactive features – in attracting news consumers to participate on the websites.

Multiple research methods, which comprised an online questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews and content analysis, were used in this study. Utilising mixed research methods helped to obtain answers for all of the research questions in this study. This approach allowed a comparison to be made between the nature of newspapers' blogs and producers' thinking behind them, and the opinions that readers that visit these sites have formed about them. This thesis was the first exploratory attempt to examine the use and perceived credibility of news blogs by using this multi-methods approach; it gave mainstream news organisations, journalists, scholars and the general public the opportunity to catch up with the evolution of user-generated content on Thai newspaper websites, and its influences on the general public and news professionals.

9.2 The Main Conceptual Framework of the Study

The technology of Web 2.0 has changed the content-based features of newspaper websites to ensure that consumers of news websites can do more than just passive reading. It has opened up the opportunity for active news consumers to create, to share, to discuss and to comment on several news topics and public issues on newspaper websites. However, the opportunities for news consumers' participation and interaction vary on different newspaper websites. Some newspapers may allow their online readers to participate through a variety of UGC, whereas other newspapers do not provide any UGCs at all (Singer et al, 2014).

Although this thesis observed the nature of various UGC formats on Thai newspaper websites, it fundamentally examined news blogs produced by readers. There were three main reasons for choosing to study these aspects in Thailand: first, the scarcity of blog research (Gunter et al., 2009), in spite of there being an increasing number of blog users, including in Thailand (Truehits.net, 2010b and 2010c); second, the question of whether news blogs produced by citizens are credible, as some scholars have asked why some news professionals and news consumers use news blogs created by the general public as news sources if those news blogs are non-credible; and, third, Thailand is a developing country that has unique political, economic and social systems. Thus, this study could help to add to the body of knowledge of blog research, focusing on Thailand in particular. This country has so far produced only a small number of blog studies, especially compared with Western countries and other parts of the world.

This thesis employed the uses and gratifications approach and the concept of news credibility within its research framework. One aim of this research was to understand how, if at all, reported patterns of news blog readership were related systematically to the stated

motives or reasons for using online news sites. Reference was made at the outset to the uses and gratifications approach as a framework that has been used previously to investigate issues of this kind (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011). This approach assumes that media exposure among active news consumers is shaped by their personal needs, motives, and expectations (Levy and Windahl, 1984). A number of scholars have used this approach to examine why mass audiences like specific news publications, broadcasts, the Internet (e.g. Ruggiero, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; and Charney and Greenberg, 2001) and blogs (e.g. Kaye, 2005, 2007; Chung et al., 2007; Sweetser et al., 2008). In order to measure audiences' motives and answer the research question 'How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?' this thesis adapted the blog-use motivation items of Kaye (2007), which originated from previous studies framed by the uses and gratifications approach. This chapter will discuss the usefulness of the uses and gratifications model and compare the findings with previous research.

In terms of the investigation of the credibility of news blogs, the study used the concept of credibility and previous research as a framework. Johnson and Kaye (2004) indicated that the credibility of blogs can be measured by truthfulness. In their study, Johnson and Kaye (2004) investigated how credibly blog users viewed blogs in comparison to traditional media and other online sources from four aspects: believability, accuracy, fairness, and depth of information. They found that blog users perceived traditional sources as being less credible than blogs. This thesis employed the concept of credibility by focusing on accuracy and fairness in order to answer the research question 'Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?' It is noted that the concept of credibility is subjective. It depends on an audience's or a blogger's interpretation, so a source that is perceived as non-credible might not necessarily be non-objective. This chapter will discuss the way this

thesis measured the credibility of news blogs and compare the findings with previous credibility research.

9.3 The Use of Multiple Research Methods

This thesis conducted a multiple-methods approach that comprised three research instruments, which helped to cross-check the study's findings. The study compared the opinions on news blogs of two distinct groups – readers and news professionals – and validated some of what they said through reference to the nature of the blog sites, which entailed a direct analysis of the content of those sites. The online questionnaire obtained information from news blog users concerning their demographic characteristics, offline and online traditional media use, news blog use, news blog use motives, and credibility perception of news reports produced by mainstream news media and news blogs produced by journalists, independent journalists and individuals. In addition, the data from the in-depth interviews with the leaders of two news organisations and five news professionals disclosed the organisational policies that governed the production of UGC, including the importance of news blogs as a component of these publications; the perception of news blog users' characteristics; the diversity and quality of news blogs; and other effects of news blogs on news consumers. The results of the content analysis helped to investigate the nature of 'user-generated content' formats on 15 Thai newspapers' websites, the characteristics of news blogs which appear in Thai newspapers' websites, and the direction of news blog comments. Conducting this three-pronged approach enabled direct comparisons to be made between the opinions of news professionals about blogs and about the people who read them with the opinions of the readers themselves. In both instances, data were obtained independently from the blog sites through formal content analysis

which allowed further comparisons to be made between the perceptions and opinions of these two groups and what the sites actually reported.

9.4 The Major Arguments and the Outcomes of the Study

“In recent years, blogs have emerged as very important and influential forums for news information” (Kaye, 2007, p.144). Blogs first came to public prominence as popular online news sources in the aftermath of 9/11 event in 2001 (Allan, 2006). Subsequent disasters, political scandals, and important political activities served to highlight the distinctive value of blogs (Allan, 2006; Johnson and Kaye, 2004; Tremayne, 2007). The widespread of news blogging called the question of whether or not they cause a threat to traditional news media (Allan, 2006; Rettberg, 2008; Meyers, 2012). Keen (2007) underlined that bloggers are noble amateurs that are threatening the long-lasting intellectual traditions and institutions. Meyers (2012) argued in the same direction that the permanence of traditional news media has been intervening by popular news bloggers.

Concerning this critical debate, the study of Kaye (2005) and Kaye (2007) dealt with blog use motivation among news consumers. Sweetser et al. (2008) observed the use of blogs in the communication industry. Meyers (2012) studies popular celebrity gossip bloggers about their influence on entertainment-news media. Blogads (2004), Johnson and Kaye (2004), Johnson et al. (2008), Messner and DiSaso (2008), Johnson and Kaye (2010) and Technorati (2011a and 2011b) investigated news consumers’ perceived credibility of blogs. Chung et al. (2007), Thurman (2008), Singer and Ashman (2009), Hermida (2011) and Singer (2014) examined how news professionals dealt with blogs and other formats of UGCs. These studies reflect the importance of blogs as a new competitor of traditional media. They were used by different kind of people and by traditional media themselves as

well. Some studies indicated that people who usually used blogs tend to perceive blogs more credible than traditional media. Although these previous studies disclosed the capability of blogs, they did not yet investigate news consumers, news professionals and news blog outputs by looking at ‘why a group of news consumers and news professionals use news blogs’ and ‘how much did they trust them’ in a single study. Moreover, the majority of blog studies employed one research instrument implying that the probability for cross-checking the validity of their findings was limited.

In Thailand, Masaphant (2008) examined patterns of online communication in blogs while Moryadee (2008) investigated citizen journalists in OKnation. In the same vein, Lunpa (2008) studied blog use behaviour and the benefit of blogs for Bangkok people whereas Maneerojchai (2010) explored the role of OKnation as a political public forum. These studies indicated that some Thai people used blogs and a part of them performed as citizen journalist. Evidence shows that some news organisations have begun to provide ‘Reader blog’ on their news websites. Some of them could draw the attention from news consumers (especially OKnation). Moreover, news professionals occasionally cited individual bloggers in their news reports. However, there was no study focusing on the uses and the perceived credibility of news blogs in Thailand.

Although this thesis is in line with previous studies on blogs, it aims at overcoming their weaknesses by examining the uses and perceived credibility of new blogs among new consumers and news professionals through three research instrument used in a single study. This thesis challenges existing works by arguing that news consumers and news professionals have certain motives which they seek to satisfy through blog use. The findings from reader survey indicated that the more readers use news blogs, the more they trust in the accuracy of news blogs. Conversely, the more they use news blogs, the less they

trust in the accuracy of mainstream news reports. This thesis also argues that news organisations which have provided ‘Reader blog’ on their news website well understood their users’ characteristics and motives. The following sections summarise and discuss in more details about the findings of this thesis.

9.4.1 Why Blogging Exists as a Component of Mainstream News Provision in Thailand?

This thesis argues that blogging represented an important component of mainstream news provision for some Thai news organisations. The Nation Broadcasting Company and ASTV Manager have provided ‘Reader blog’ combined with a variety of user-generated content formats on their news websites in order to attract visitors and use them as sources for improving their journalists’ tasks.

There are several formats of user-generated content (UGC) that modern news organisations can combine with their news websites. The thesis found that ‘Comment on news’, ‘Message boards’, ‘Poll at homepage’, ‘Poll inside news’, and ‘Reader blog’ were five formats of UGC which already existed on Thai newspaper websites. Some newspapers such as Naewna, ASTV Manager, and Bangkok Post provided a variety of UGCs whereas other newspapers, for example, Daily News, Khaosod, Matichon, Banmuang, and Prachachart did not provide any UGCs. This incident was consistent with the study of Thurman (2008) who found that at least seven UGC formats could be found on the websites of UK mainstream news media. Among the UGCs, blogs with comments enabled could be found on the website of The Guardian. In the same vein, Singer et al. (2011) found that well-known national newspapers in 10 Western countries (Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States) have

provided space for active users in various formats. The evidence showed that ‘Comment on news’ was the most popular UGC whereas blog was less popular (Singer et al., 2011). Various news establishments, in Thailand and other countries (including in US and UK) understood the benefits of the Web 2.0 technology encouraging blog users’ contributions. It can be said that the a number of news establishments have been using ‘turn the enemies into allies’ strategy by integrating that technology rather than letting citizen journalists, news bloggers, producers or any kind of user contribution to create a decline of readers.

Focusing on ‘Reader blogs’ which were the main target of this thesis, the findings indicated that four out of 15 Thai leading national newspapers (26%) have provided this format of UGC. Komchadluek and Bangkokbiznews offered OKnation, The Nation offered The Nation Weblog, and ASTV Manager offered Mblog. In line with what Singer et al. (2011) discovered, it appears that the ‘Reader blog’ was not so much popular in comparison with other formats of UGC. Thurman (2008) explained that mainstream news websites were slow to embrace blogs because news organisations perceived that individual bloggers lacked the journalistic knowledge needed to produce quality content; individual bloggers rarely produced original reports; and, blogs were full of the blog author’s personality. Tremayne (2007) argued, however, that forward-looking news executives are beginning to change their traditional editorial methods by incorporating news consumers in the news-gathering process.

There are different opinions concerning the influence of blogs on traditional news establishments. Meyers (2012) argued that bloggers share audience segments and has a strongly power on some specific culture. Moreover, blog has immediacy more than traditional media because this medium allows users to immediately report and update the stories at any time. Traditional media, on the contrary, has standard of journalistic practices

to follow and editors have to filter the content before publishing. However, the news professionals who participated in this current thesis perceived ‘Reader blog’ as an opportunity rather than threat for their own business. The President of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager, and other five news professionals realised that individual bloggers might not produce original works. Indeed, bloggers could sometimes provide incorrect information, take sides, use impolite words or slander other people. However, these bloggers could offer information about public interest, news hints, news tips, suggestions for news development, rare evidence, and so on. These news professionals provided several cases supporting the idea that ‘Reader blog’ is an opportunity rather than threat.

After publishing ‘Ratchada illegal casino’ report, the ASTV Manager could get more clues from blogs for producing further news report. Concerning the case of political scandal ‘Sutha Chansaeng’, the ex-minister of social development and human security who faked his education background in order to be qualified for his position, ASTV Manager saved the time for researching by using ‘Thaibann’ blogger as source because he posted a number of rare evidences on his blog. Bangkokbiznews published a story of London riot in 2011 by using a blogger who stayed close to the area as main source of information. From these mentioned evidences, it is obvious that blogs could help news professionals in their works, especially in fixing errors and in saving the time and budget of doing research for their own news production.

Looking closely at newspaper-based blogs (OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog), this research argues that their users have much liberty for posting story and opinion. Indeed, this research found that their materials were never edited or pre-moderated by the website editor/staffs before publishing. This is different from some of other UGCs

that have employed the stage of pre-moderation. Naewna, ASTV Manager and Bangkok Post pre-moderated 'Comments on news', ASTV Manager pre-moderated 'Message boards' and Bangkok Post pre-moderated 'Poll on homepage'. Thurman and Hermida (2010) explained that some UGCs were edited by news organisations because they need to avoid duplication, to keep a good standard of spelling and grammar, to check the newsworthiness of the content, to ensure balance and decency, etc.

Instead of using pre-moderating system, the three newspaper-based blog providers monitor individual bloggers by a registration system. I found that all blog users had to give their personal information into the system, e.g. their full name, date of birth, national identity card number, email address, home address, photo, etc. After registering, they had to follow the website's terms and conditions and had to respect Thailand's laws. For example, they were not allowed to attack the nation, religion, the king or public security; to post any rude words or any issues, pictures, video clips or words in relation to pornography; to violate copyrighted materials, etc. (see Appendix F), and they had to respect the defamation laws by considering that they were not allowed to slander other people (see Appendix E). Habitually, if inappropriate content was found, the blog editors would send a warning email to the writer to remove or adjust it. If the blogger continued posting the unsuitable content, that blogger would be blocked from the system permanently. So, it can be concluded that all reader blog stories on the websites of Thai leading newspapers had been monitored after they were published. This thesis argues that 'Reader blog' has transformed the flow of mass communication from the 'filter, then content' to the 'publish, then filter' model, as suggested by news-media scholar and NYU professor Clay Shirky (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011, p.255).

According to Masaphant (2008), OKnation was the biggest news blog community in Thailand. As of 18 April 2010, OKnation had 64,065 members and 464,814 stories in a total of 33 categories; The Nation Weblog did not show user access figures, but had 26 categories; and Mblog had 28,433,060 hits, 3,476 bloggers and 31,879 stories. In order to have a picture of the characteristics of newspaper-based blogs, the sample of blog stories was captured. During the three periods (8–14 September, 8–14 October and 8–14 November 2011), which equated to 21 days in total, the study found that there were 4,644 blog stories or 221 stories created per day. OKnation had 4,276 blog stories, The Nation Weblog had 53 blog stories, and Mblog had 315 blog stories. From 955 units of analysis, 389 blog authors were found. They had 2.8 years of blogging experience on average. These bloggers altogether had created 593,314 stories (ranging from 1 to 4,687 stories) and had 456,091,383 visits in total. Content analysis also found that 61.6% of stories (588 of 955) related to news or public issues: 63.2% on OKnation, 71.4% on The Nation Weblog, and 39.7% on Mblog. The proportion of news blogs to non-news blogs in this current study was consistent with the finding of Eatonweb portal, an index of weblogs, which estimated that perhaps half of all blogs deal with public affairs (Matheson, 2004). So, it can be concluded that news blogs, especially in OKnation, have been attracting interest from news consumers and could eventually become part of the mainstream in news provision. Moreover, the President of NBC confirmed that the number of OKnation users was more than all the users of the Nation Group's news websites put together, and this could strengthen the company's websites. Like Thurman (2008) and Singer (2014) suggested, UGC not only provided useful information for news stories but also increased the level of website traffic to mainstream news websites.

The research also examined the way journalists deal with newspaper-based blogs. The study discovered that OKnation could attract news professionals from both inside and outside the company. Limparungpattanakij (2011) disclosed that at the beginning OKnation had 50 journalist bloggers, but the figure decreased to approximately 10 active journalist bloggers in 2011. News crews from other news organisations occasionally visited and used the content from OKnation as news hints and sources. The study also found that two out of 15 Thai leading newspapers produced 'Journalist blogs': Postblog has appeared on the Bangkok Post's site, and CEO Blog and Blogs&Columnists has appeared on Bangkokbiznews's site. These three blog sites have allowed the general public to read and comment on the story but not to post a blog story. Comparing the percentage of journalist blogs on established news media's websites with other countries, such as the USA, the implementation of journalist blogs on news media websites in the USA was much more prevalent than in Thailand. PEJ (2008) reported that in order to engage with readers, 70% of US newspapers (from a total of 259 newspapers) ran journalist blogs and one out of 4 big newspapers had 30 or more journalist bloggers.

News professionals who were interviewed in this thesis realised that the emergence of blogs and other user contributions elsewhere on the Internet have already affected their gatekeeping role. The gatekeeping role or "the process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions whether or not to admit a particular news story to pass through the 'gates' of news medium into the news channels" (McQuail, 1994, p.213) is decreasing because nowadays people can send, receive and discuss news by themselves through uncountable blogs and other social media in the online world. Like Brun (2003) argued, gatewatchers or people who watch their website as a gate of news sources, publicise, comment on the content and involve their users as producers have already

emerged. Brun (2003) highlighted that the gatekeeping role, which has been the dominant paradigm, can be shifted to the gatewatching role faster if more audiences move online for their news.

9.4.2 How much attention do news blog users pay to news blogs?

This thesis argues that Thai newspaper-based blog users tended to be more mature and wealthier than general blog users and online newspaper readers. They often used OKnation, rarely used The Nation Weblog and scarcely used Mblog. Most of them (7 out of 10) were heavy blog users (visit newspaper-based blog 5-7 days a week), read comments at high level, posted opinions at a low level and scarcely asked news blog authors' a question. They did not follow any specific bloggers, but rather focused on interesting content especially political news and catastrophe issues. Political surveillance and opinion seeking were the two top motives that drew attention to news blogs. About half of news blog users posted public issues on blogs. The most popular post topic was politics. For journalists, they used blogs as a space to publish their remaining works for their followers, to get feedback from readers, and to get some news hints, tips and rare evidence. General public and journalists tended to pay more attention to news blogs during major events, especially political crises and catastrophes.

This research found that most of news blog users identified themselves as they were male, 41–60 years old, had a high education (bachelor degree), self-employed, had a high income (more than 30,000 baht per month), and used the Internet regularly. Meanwhile, news professionals who participated in the study perceived news blog users, especially on OKnation, as people who were in middle adulthood, middle class, well educated, and liked to volunteer. This finding was slightly different from previous studies which focused on

general blog users. Lenhart and Fox (2006) found that most bloggers were under 30 years of age; the study of Loonpa (2008) found that most Thai blog users were women, 26–35 years old, with a high education (bachelor degree), who were private employees and had an average income (5,001–15,000 baht per month); the study of Maneerojchai (2010) found that most OKnation bloggers she interviewed in order to know the pattern of participation among OKnation bloggers in the political blog group were well educated; and the study of Wongthangsawat (2007) found that online newspaper readers in Thailand tended to be women of a younger age who worked in a private company.

This thesis has also compared the characteristics of heavy and light blog users. The study found that heavy blog users were more likely to be men, older and use the Internet frequently compared to light blog users. A chi-square analysis found that gender, age and the Internet use per week of heavy and light blog users differed significantly. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users tended to be men (67.9%), 41-60 years old (59.1%), and use the Internet 5-7 days per week (99.1%) whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users tended to be men (55.6%), 41-60 years old (45.6%) and 26-40 years old (45.6%), and use the Internet 5-7 days per week (92.2%).

Concerning news blog use behaviours, the online survey showed that most news blog users did not follow specific bloggers because they could not remember blog authors' names. This finding was consistent with the study of Maneerojchai (2010), which found that half of bloggers that she had interviewed did not follow any bloggers specifically. They focused on interesting content. The current study also found that most news blog users read the story more than discussing it. They often viewed reader comments, rarely posted opinions and scarcely asked bloggers a question. About half of news blog users had posted news or public issues on blogs. The most popular post topic was politics. They posted news

blogs approximately one story a week or less. This frequency of news blog production supported the study of Lenhart and Fox (2006) and the study of Loonpa (2008), which found that bloggers posted blogs as a hobby. Even blog users who were interested in news did not post news blogs on a daily basis. A chi-square analysis showed that heavy blog users paid attention to reader comments more than light blog users. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users read comments every time they visited news blogs, whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users read comments most of the time.

Boonsiripunth (2005) argued that it is not easy for ordinary people who want to spread their opinions via traditional news media which have long-time played a dominant role in shaping public information. Since blogging has become a popular activity within mass communications through which ordinary people can spread information and their opinions, this research was interested to know to what extent news blog users still used traditional news media and talked about news with people they know. The study found that news blog users were news junkies. They consumed different new media with a high volume. They consumed offline/online TV news and offline/online newspapers 5–7 days a week, but never listened to offline/online radio news. A chi-square analysis showed that news discussion, online television news consumption and online newspaper reading between heavy and light blog users differed significantly. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users was exposed to online television news 5–7 days per week whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users was never exposed to it. A chi-square analysis also showed that political news interests between heavy and light blog users differed significantly. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users was very interested in politics, whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users was only quite interested in this news topic. From the findings it can be argued that news blog users were very interested in news, especially

political news, and those who were often exposed to mainstream news media, especially online newspapers, tended to pay attention to OKnation.

This thesis supported the findings of previous studies concerning blog users' motivations. News blog users in the current study perceived that news blogs were used for political surveillance purposes, guidance/opinion seeking, expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users, convenience, intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment, fact checking, information seeking, blog presentation/characteristics, anti-traditional-media sentiment, and personal fulfilment respectively. These perceptions supported Kaye's (2007) blog use motivation items; the study of Lenhart and Fox (2006), which found that politics was a major motivation factor that drew news blog users' attention; the study of Messner and DiStaso (2008), which found that politics was the most common blog topic; and the study of Johnson and Kaye (2010), which revealed that politically interested Internet users visited other news sources less than blogs.

The relationship between political interest and the use of news blogs can probably be explained by the work of Sunstein (2007), Reong-arom (2008) and Sangkham (2012). They argued that there is a special link between media use and politics. Sunstein (2007) clarified that people usually choose the media that harmonized their personal opinions. Reong-arom (2008) and Sangkham (2012) found the 'red-shirt' and the 'yellow shirt' supporters consumed different media and the media they consumed could influence their political point of view and political activity. It is worth reminding here that during the period that this thesis was conducted, many major political conflicts between 'the shirts' happened in Thailand. The beginning of this conflict has emerged since 2006 and it looks like there is no end until now (See Chapter 3, the section about The Political Polarisation of the 'Shirts' in Thailand). Hence, it is possible that some groups of people found 'Reader

blogs' as an online public sphere where they can consume alternative information, get guidance and express their view with other blog users (the top three news blog user motivations found in this study). At least, OKnation is one out of three blog communities that has already been proved by Maneerojchai (2010) that it is not only news blog communities, but also an online public sphere.

For general blog users in Thailand, the study of Loonpa (2008) found that the highest score of expectation for blog use was to relax and entertain. Thus, the main motivational differences between general blog users and news blog users were that the former tended to use blogs for relaxing, but the latter tended to use blogs because of political interest and catastrophe issues. A chi-square analysis also showed that five out of 10 news blog use motivation blocks for heavy and light blog users differed significantly. These included blog presentation, personal fulfilment, information seeking, anti-traditional-media sentiment, and political surveillance.

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis argues that news consumers and news professionals have certain motives which they seek to satisfy through blog use. It confirmed the long-established model of the uses and gratifications approach. The findings were in line with the study of Kaye (2005), the earliest study of blog use, and Kaye (2007) who did an extension of the blog use motivation study. According to McQuail (2010), before the Internet emerged, this approach was developed by a number of studies in order to examine why people use news media. Scholars such as Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) and Levy and Windahl (1984) posited that media exposure among active news consumers is formed by their personal needs, motives and expectations. The process of media selection under the uses and gratifications approach proposed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (p.510) comprises "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which

generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones”. Framed by this approach and focusing on news blog use motives, this thesis argues that political surveillance and opinion seeking were the top two major motives of news blog use among Thai news consumers. It should be noted that although this current study did not directly reveal news blog use gratifications, it found that OKnation had a huge number of visitors and high frequency of use. This evidence proved that news blog users were satisfied by this blog community. But this was not the case for The Nation Weblog and Mblog because they had a much smaller number of users.

Turning to news blog use motives among journalists, Madianou (2009) and Singer et al. (2011) highlighted that digital technology has blurred the boundaries between established new producers and audience. Individual bloggers can become the source, a journalist can be a reader and a reader can be a citizen journalist (Pavlik, 2008). Bloggers who were eyewitnesses from the scene of major events and wrote interesting stories from distant or unreachable areas could draw attention from news professionals to read. This thesis found that some journalists used blogs as a space to publish their corpus of information when the amount of time and space in mainstream news media was limited and in order to get feedback from readers.

It was noted from the in-depth interviews with news professionals and the content analysis that the number of blog users tended to vary by the period they were observed. During political crises and other catastrophes, e.g. the ‘Red shirt’ rally in Bangkok in 2010 and the huge flood in the central area and Bangkok in 2011, the number of news blog users dramatically increased. This finding supported the notion that people will pay more

attention to news blogs during major events, especially political crises and catastrophes (Allan, 2006; Tremayne, 2007; Nip, 2009; Allan and Thorsen, 2009).

9.4.3 Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?

In line with Domingo (2011) and Hermida (2011), this thesis argues that although blogs have a great diversity of stories, they could not increase the diversity of mainstream news report.

The questionnaire found that 70% of respondents who had posted news blogs identified that they had posted on politics; nearly 40% posted issues concerning the environment, followed by education, economics/business/finance, entertainment, technology, foreign affairs, health, crime, sport, odd issues/supernatural issues, and so on. This was slightly different from the content analysis, which found that the most frequently posted topics were disaster/environment, followed by politics, foreign affairs, sport, economics, crime, entertainment, technology, health, education, and supernatural issues respectively. It can be concluded that the two topics which are most frequently posted by blog authors on news blogs are politics and disaster/environmental news. Regarding news professionals who participated in this thesis, they disclosed that news blogs have diversity but they could not increase the diversity of mainstream news reports. As previous revealed by Domingo (2011), users' contribution is wildly diverse in their content. Established news media provided space for a greater diversity of voices, but these voices are not very much used in the journalistic process (Hermida, 2011). Hermida (2011) also claimed that news professionals perceived users as active recipients of the news rather than active participant in the news.

Concerning the top two most popular news blog topics, it is noted that between August and October 2011, which was the period of data collection, a major flood affected the central region of Thailand, including Bangkok, for many weeks. Perhaps this was the reason why disaster/environmental or catastrophe issues were also popular news blog topics. This finding again supported the notion that news blog users post not just on political issues but also on issues concerning major catastrophes (Allan, 2006; Tremayne, 2007; Nip, 2009; Allan and Thorsen, 2009).

9.4.4 Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?

Studies have revealed that blogs have the capacity to become news sources and are occasionally influential in setting the news agenda (Gunter et al., 2009). The study of Gunter et al. (2009, p.185) found that “although some blogs have emerged as reliable information sources in some specialist areas, they have yet generally to assume the key characteristics of mainstream news that drive public trust”. Other critics have argued that the absence of formal journalistic knowledge of individual bloggers and the lack of editorial fact checking authority inside the blogs themselves has brought about the question of whether news blogs are credible (Kaid and Postelnicu, 2007). But bloggers have argued that this argument has occurred from the fear of losing readers (Johnson and Kaye, 2004; Chung et al., 2007) and from attempts by traditional news media to keep their reputation (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). This research supported the study of Gunter et al. (2009) by arguing that newspaper-based blogs and news blogs situated elsewhere could help journalists to improve the quality of news reports. Some blog stories could even become news agenda. This thesis also argues that news blogs were perceived as less credible than mainstream news reports (but users neither agree nor disagree that news blogs and

mainstream news reports were credible). They tended to use a variety of news media in order to cross-check the credibility of news.

Gunter et al. (2009, p.187) suggested that “the authenticity of news is linked to its credibility”, which can be applied to assess the quality of news blogs. Previous evidence shows that the concept of credibility has been used for a long time for judging the quality of news. Gaziano and McGrath (1986), Meyer (1988) and Newhagen and Nass (1989) used believability, accuracy, fairness, and depth of information as a multidimensional construct in judging the credibility of news media. When the Internet became popular, Johnson and Kaye (1998), Flanagin and Metzger (2000), Kiouisis (2001), Belo Interactive (2004), ABAC Poll Research Center and the Thai Journalists Association (2009) employed this concept in judging the credibility of the Internet in the view of audiences. Later, when blogs emerged and became increasingly significant, Johnson and Kaye (2004) and Johnson et al. (2008) used believability, accuracy, fairness, and depth of information in measuring the quality of blogs.

In order to verify the quality of news blogs which appear in Thai newspaper websites from the aspect of credibility and to investigate which argument of the perceived credibility of news blog is true, news blog users were asked to rate their opinion on several statements. They had to identify the accuracy and fairness of news produced by four news providers: news reports produced by mainstream news media, news blogs written by journalists associated with mainstream news media, news blogs written by independent journalists, and news blogs written by individuals. News professionals were interviewed and readers’ comments on news blogs themselves were also coded. The study found that in the view of Thai news consumers, news blogs which have been produced by individuals got the lowest credibility score (3.04), which was less than news reports produced by

mainstream news media (3.23), news blogs produced by journalists associated with mainstream news media (3.20), and news blogs produced by independent journalists (3.15). However, it is noted here that these scores fell in the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ response category, which meant that news consumers were not sure about whether news reports and news blogs were credible. So, the finding was inconsistent with previous studies e.g., Blogads, 2004; Johnson and Kaye, 2008. The reader survey of Blogads (2004) found that most blog users (55% of 16,161 blog users) perceived that blogs were extremely useful whereas online newspapers, print newspapers and radio were much less useful (22%, 9% and 9% respectively). Johnson and Kaye (2008) argued that news consumers perceived blogs as being more credible than mainstream news media. The current study also found that there was no significant difference between the credibility perceptions of heavy and light blog users. This finding was inconsistent with the study of Johnson et al. (2008), who found that heavy blog users who were interested in politics tended to evaluate blogs as being more credible than light blog users did.

This thesis argues that the findings concerning the credibility of news and news blogs from the perspective of Thai news consumers differed from some previous studies for several reasons. This study had a different sample, period of study, area of study and criteria of credibility measurement compared to the study of Johnson et al. (2008). The study of Johnson et al. (2008) used an online survey with Internet users who are interested in politics during the 2004 presidential election. They sent the survey URL to “media-focused and politically-focused websites, electronic mailing lists and bulletin boards, and blogs” (Johnson et al., 2008, p.106). They pointed out that the period of their study was the time that blogs gained more popularity than the normal period. Meanwhile, the current study used an online survey asking Thai blog users in a period that was not related to the

national election. Moreover, the current study did not focus on politically-interested blog users but concentrated on news blog users on online newspapers. Additionally, the study of Johnson et al. (2008) used four measures – believability, accuracy, fairness and depth of information – to judge the credibility of blogs, whereas the current study focused on accuracy and fairness.

The current study also found that most news blog users consumed news from more than one source. They watched offline and online TV news and read offline and online newspapers 5–7 days per week as well as talking to people they know about news 2–4 days per week. In Boonsiripunth's (2005) documentary research, she found that mainstream news media seem to serve their investors, their sponsors, politicians or their owner rather than their audiences; furthermore, their performance depends on the opportunity which each government gives to its people, whereas the website BBC News (2012) quoted that media in Thailand "are free to criticise government policies, and cover instances of corruption and human rights abuses, but journalists tend to exercise self-censorship regarding the military, the monarchy, the judiciary and other sensitive issues". Hence, this current thesis argues that news blog users did not trust any news and commentary upon news produced by only one specific medium. They tended to use mainstream news reports, blogs and any other news sources together in order to cross-check the credibility of news. There were also other factors that linked to the perceived credibility of news blogs. Yang (2007) found that demographics (male, income, and innovativeness), Internet use behaviour (history of Internet use and knowledge), Internet use motivation (entertainment factor, social factor, and information factor) and credibility factor (personal relevance factor and stylistic factor) were the significant predictors of the perceived credibility of news blogs among Internet users in Taiwan.

News professionals in this current study perceived materials produced by individual bloggers were less credible than news reports produced by mainstream news media. But they accepted that some individuals' news blogs were very useful for their news production and could increase the quality of news reports. This finding was consistent with Singer (2011) who clarified that users' contribution could help in improving news reporting. It could help in producing a more accurate news account. However, the quality of content produced by amateurs is under threat because it is difficult to know where the information comes from.

There were several instances of 'Reader blogs' being used by news professionals as news sources. First, for example, an OKnation blogger wrote on his blog about a mistake that traditional news reports had overlooked. He posted photos in order to show that the design of Miss Thailand Universe 2011's outfit had been copied from an outfit worn by Lady Gaga, arguing that it was therefore inappropriate to show this outfit in the Miss Universe competition. On 19 August 2011, on the front page, the Komchadluek newspaper republished this news report from this different perspective. Secondly, after mainstream news media had reported news about the Ratchada illegal casino, more clues about other illegal casinos in Bangkok were then investigated and discussed on blogs. ASTV Manager's journalists followed the blogs and used them as news hints and to verify their previous news reports. Thirdly, ASTV Manager used an OKnation blogger as a source because he intensively investigated and showed a number of photos to prove that an ex-Thai minister of social development and human security, Sutha Chansaeng, had faked his educational background in order to be qualified for the position of minister.

These examples confirm that blogs do engage in fact-checking and broaden the stories which mainstream media have already published, and they also "take part in the

editorial function of selecting newsworthy and interesting topics, they add analysis, insight and commentary, and occasionally they provide a first-person report about an event, a trend, a subject” (Lasica, p.73). These findings were also in line with Regan (2003), who stated that blogs could change the way traditional news media cover a big story, and were consistent with the perception of some news professionals in the UK such as the editor of Telegraph.co.uk, the head of BBC Interactive and the editorial director of TimesOnline.co.uk (Thurman, 2008). They said that some individual blogs were good and some were superb (Thurman, 2008). However, when using blogs as a news source, news professionals in the current study suggested that news blogs’ credibility has to be carefully verified. They checked the blog author profile, tracked the origin of information, checked other works of that blogger, checked whether the story is up to date and original, and so forth before making a decision to use individuals’ blogs as news hints and sources. For ASTV Manager, all material obtained from the Internet has to be approved by the executive editor, executive director or webmaster before being published.

The content analysis found that less than half of news blogs identified a source. It showed that mainstream news media, general websites, social media, online mainstream news media and government websites are the most popular source. Meanwhile, news blog authors specified in the questionnaire that direct experience and online mainstream news media were the major two sources they used. This finding was in line with Herring et al. (2007), who found that the majority of blogs did not provide links to sources. The current study also indicated that first-hand reports and rewritten or copied issues appeared on news blogs, but information about the original piece of work to prove the accuracy of information was rarely included.

Looking at reader comments inside each news blog story, there were 2,935 reader comments from 394 stories, or seven comments per story on average (one day after being posted). There were roughly two types of comments: question to blogger (7%) and opinion (88%). So, blogs are not only a news medium but also a public space where people can have a discussion about news and public issues. This finding was in line with Maneerojchai (2010), who found that OKnation was a place where members of the general public with common interests shared, participated and communicated about political issues.

Maneerojchai (2010) also found that OKnation was a place where citizen reporters shared news from their own experience which professional journalists could use as news hints and sources, especially when they had some limitations or could not reach the scene to obtain the necessary information. The study was also consistent with Gunter et al. (2009, p.200), who found that blogs “have an important role to play in assisting news consumers to organise, interpret and make sense of the growing volumes of news that the internet has facilitated”. However, Lasica (2003), Ulicny and Baclawski (2007), Pavlik (2008), McNair (2011) and Fenton and Witschge (2011) remarked that individual bloggers who perform the role of citizen journalists mostly provided evaluation of current events or commentary upon news rather than giving first-hand reports.

9.4.5 What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?

In line with Kaye (1998, 2000), and Tsfaty and Cappella (2003), this thesis argues that the more news consumers use news blogs, the more they trust in the accuracy of news blogs and the less they trust in the accuracy of mainstream news reports.

The current study employed Pearson correlation coefficients to examine the relationship between the exposure to news media and the perceived credibility of news blogs. It found that the more users were exposed to news blogs, the less they believed in the accuracy of news reports produced by mainstream news media ($-.123^*$) and the more news blog users were exposed to news blogs, the more they believed in the accuracy of individuals' news blogs ($.144^*$). These findings supported the study of Johnson and Kaye (1998; 2000), which found that the more people relied on a certain media, the more they trusted the information produced by that media. The study was also in line with Tsfaty and Cappella (2003), who found that people tend to consume mainstream media they trust, but they will consume alternative media such as the Internet if they do not trust certain media. However, the current study found that there was no significant relationship between news blog exposure and the fairness of news blogs.

The current study also tested which variables can predict news blogging. It found that the posting of news blogs will increase if there is a decrease in radio news exposure, a rise in news discussions with people they know, a decrease in web radio exposure, a decrease in gender (female), a rise in the time spent on the Internet (in terms of hours per week), or a rise in the opinion score concerning news blog use motivation in the aspect of the expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users. Among the six predictors, beta coefficients indicated that gender was the strongest predictor of news blogging. The findings suggest that if more men joined the blog communities, the number of news blog stories would increase. The two significant predictors of news blogging in this study – gender and expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users (motivation) – were partially consistent with the findings of Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2011), who found that bloggers being

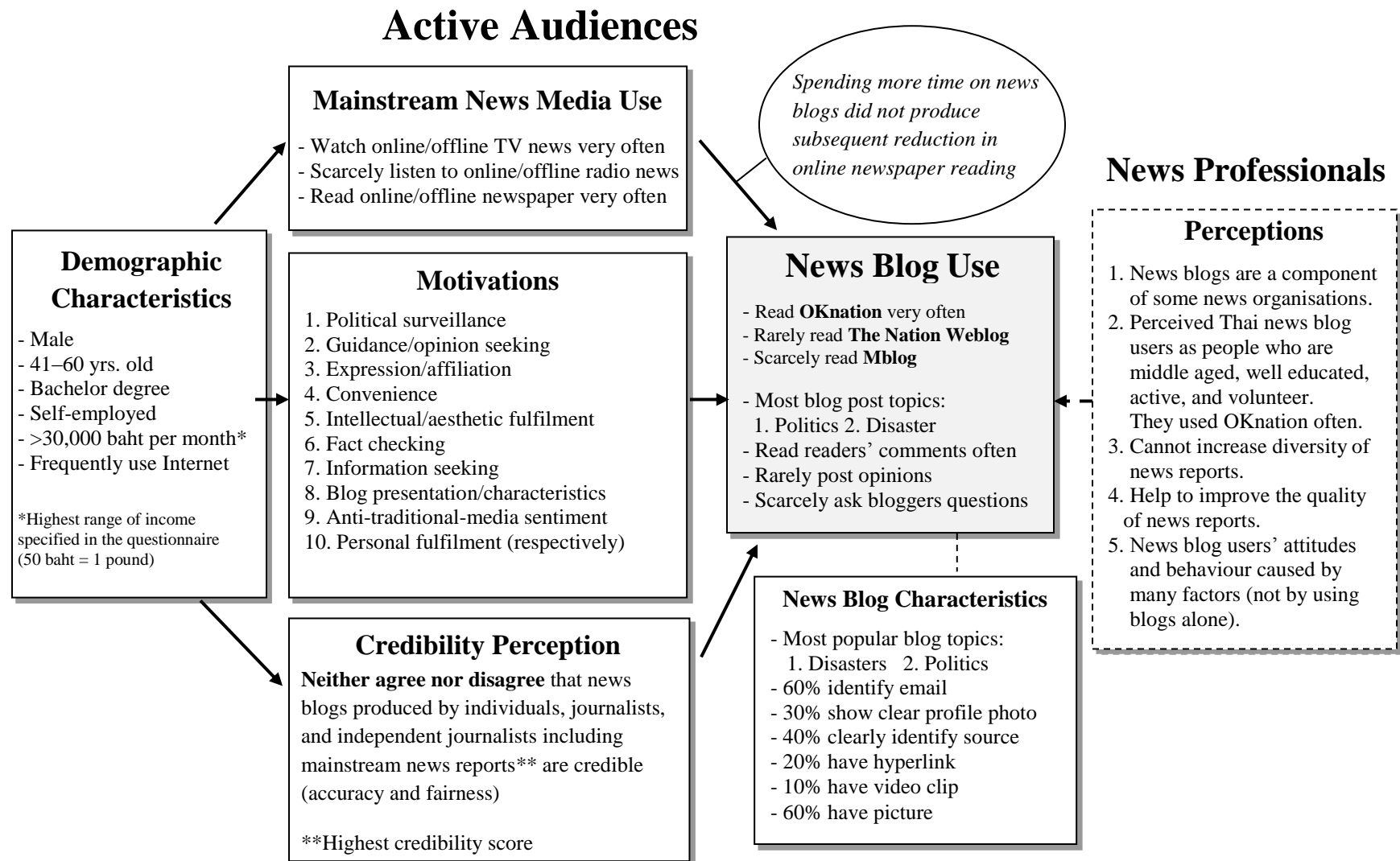
male, better educated, and expressing self were predictors of engaging in journalistic behaviours.

News professionals were also asked about other impacts that they believed news blogs might have on news consumers. The President of NBC claimed that it was difficult to say that blogs alone can influence users' attitudes and behaviour because there are many factors involved, such as the influence of other media. Some news professionals assumed that people use blogs to find new ideas and the blogs might affect people's emotion if the stories concern politics.

The reader survey found that there was little evidence that the use of news blogs reduced the time people spend reading online newspapers. Most of the respondents (70%) said the use of news blogs produced no effect on online newspaper reading. Only 23% of the respondents said the use of news blogs resulted in a reduction in the amount of time devoted to online newspapers and 8% said it resulted in an additional amount of time devoted to online newspapers. So, this finding is compatible with Tremayne (2007), who stated that blogs cannot replace the traditional functions of news media because it is not easy to provide all the services that traditional news media cover on a daily basis. Blogs tend to enrich mainstream news media rather than replacing them (Lasica, 2003). In the same vein, Hermida (2011) concluded that the old media will survive but have to adapt themselves to modern journalism especially the journalists should share the creation and dissemination of the news with users.

Figure 9.1 shows the outcomes of this thesis.

Figure 9.1 Diagram of News Blog Use and Credibility from the Perspective of Audiences and News Professionals in Thailand



9.5 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate ‘why a group of news consumers and news professionals in Thailand use blogs’ and ‘how much did they trust them’. Online questionnaires, in-depth interview and content analysis were employed as research methods in order to find out the answer of these questions. This thesis also studied ‘whether the prevalence of blogs has been threatening to mainstream news establishment’. This study is new for Thailand. It contributes the knowledge of news operations and the academic literature. The uses and gratifications approach and the concept of news credibility were revisited. Indeed, they were useful in explaining the phenomenon of news blogging.

In the light of the results of this research, it can be concluded that news blogging yields benefits rather than threats to mainstream news media. Although the quality of information produced by individual bloggers has been called into question, it was used as news sources by news professionals and by a huge number of readers in Thailand. OKnation alone had a total of 1,530,797 user IPs accesses in August 2010 (Truehits.net, 2010b). My content analysis was based on a sample of 955 blog stories posted by 389 bloggers (OKnation and The Nation Weblog) from which it appears that bloggers had belonged to the blogs for an average of 2.8 years (ranging from 4 months to about 5 years). Bloggers had also created 593,314 stories (ranging from one to 4,687 stories) and they had 456,091,383 visits. These figures show that ‘Reader blogs’ can increase news website’s traffic.

‘Reader blogs’ are scarcely found on news websites but other forms of UGCs such as ‘comment on news’, ‘polls’, ‘web boards’ are more ubiquitous. Blog stories in OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog were never pre-moderated but were monitored after the publication of stories. Editors of the blog communities acted as gatewatchers

because it is not easy to filter a so large number of blog stories before publishing. However, bloggers on the three blog communities were not allowed to violate Thailand's laws and the rules of the blog sites (See Appendix E and F).

This study indicated that news crews have been encouraged by their employer to utilize blogs into their works. Moreover, some news professionals contacted their readers via their blogs while some news crews acted as audience for other individual bloggers (in order to find out news hints and tips). Before using news blogs as sources, news professionals had different ways of verifying the authenticity of these blogs. They did not trust in blogs in themselves implying that they additionally checked the information related to the same topic on many sources.

This thesis found that news blog users are different from general blog users and online news consumers: the first tended to be more mature and wealthier than the latter. News blog users usually consumed different media both online and offline. OKnation was more often consumed than the other two blog communities. Half of news blog users wrote approximately a news story per week. The biggest proportion of heavy blog users read comments every time when they visited news blogs, whereas the biggest proportion of light blog users read comments almost every time.

This thesis also revealed the audience's motivations that generate news blog-using behaviours. The uses and gratifications approach explained that the media use of audience depends on 'the perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes or motives of the prospective audience member' (McQuail, 2005, p.423). Kaye (2007) studied the blog users' motives and found that the presentation of blogs appeared to be the most appealing characteristic for blog users. However, the current thesis argues that political surveillance purposes, guidance/opinion seeking, expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users are the three

major motives that attract a group of news blog users to spend time on 'Reader blog'. The two studies have different perspective on this aspect because Kaye (2007) studied general blog users while this current thesis rather focused on news blog users existing on traditional news websites. Regarding news blog topic, news blog users studied in this thesis were mainly interested in politics and catastrophe/disaster. This finding may be related to two major events that happened during the period of data collection in Thailand: the political conflicts among the 'shirts' since 2006 and the major floods in central area of the country. However this finding about the importance of catastrophes and politics in news blogs is directly in line with study provided by Allan (2006).

Concerning the perceived credibility of news (in terms of the accuracy and fairness), the thesis found that individual bloggers were rated as less credible than news reports produced by mainstream news media, news blogs produced by journalists and independent journalists. However, the scores of the four news providers shown in 8 tables (4 questions gauge the accuracy and 4 questions gauge fairness) were mostly fallen into the range of neither agreed nor disagreed. It can then be implied that news consumers were not sure about the credibility of news produced by the four news providers. The finding from the questionnaires identified that they used different news media at the same time. So, it is possible that they preferred to consume news coming from more than one source. As regard news professionals, they did not think that blogs could help them to increase the diversity of news report but they accepted that blogs could improve the quality of news by providing tips and by pointing out the mistakes that the mainstream news media have done.

Lastly, it should be highlighted that most of news blog users said that the time they spent on news blogs did not reduce their consumption of online newspaper. Although this statement cannot be generalized because of the limitation of sampling, this thesis argues

that the survival of traditional news media is not fundamentally related to the prevalent of news bloggers. However, news bloggers can be looked on as new competitors or alliances for news production (depending on the way news organisations consider them). The permanence of traditional news media also depends on many factors whose scope is beyond the aim of this thesis.

9.6 The Limitations of the Study

The research comprised three components: a survey of readers of online newspapers, depth interviews with news professionals and an analysis of the content of blogs on online newspapers. There were distinct challenges that had to be confronted in each of these three areas.

The findings of the online questionnaire cannot be generalised to Thai newspaper readers as a whole. In the study of online news-media users it is difficult to find out the actual size of the population for probability sampling. Although the scope of users in this study comprised readers of blogs in online Thai newspapers, not all blog sites showed their population figures. Moreover, new users emerge every day, some users might decide to stop, or they might also be users of other blog sites. Johnson et al. (2008) identified that there are no tools for checking the entire population of blog users, but accepting this limitation, non-probability sampling is an appropriate technique for posting an online questionnaire. Wright (2005) also suggested that the posting of a self-completion questionnaire hyperlink on a website with accidental or convenient sampling is acceptable for the study of online users.

The next concern of this study was that at the time that in-depth interview was conducted there was no study containing a list of names of journalist bloggers in this

country; hence it had to be created from scratch. The President of NBC and the Director of Website Operations of ASTV Manager were asked to be the first two interview participants, because their organisations have provided reader blogs. Bloggers on the three blog sites who had provided their email address, which indicated that they were affiliated to a news organisation (such as chakkrish@nationgroup.com), were also chosen. After interviewing each participant, the researcher employed a snowball technique by asking them to give other names of journalist bloggers they knew and ways of contacting them. This method was useful. However, the limited time available for data collection and a huge flood that occurred in the central area of Thailand, including Bangkok, at that time made it difficult to get a very high number of interview participants. Finally, it was possible to find seven news professionals for this study. It was a good start for blog research which relates to news professionals in Thailand. Enough information was gained from these participants to illustrate a picture on the influence that news blogs produced by readers had on their journalistic tasks and their practices concerning this new form of news media.

There were other concerns in relation to the forms of data collection used by the three research methods. One concern regarding the online questionnaire was how to display its link on the homepage of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog, because these three blog sites have different layouts and ways of managing the website. OKnation's webmaster allowed the questionnaire's banner and link to be displayed in the PR news section, the Nation Weblog's webmaster posted it in the news feed, and Mblog's webmaster displayed it in the PR news section and also on the homepage of ASTV Manager, adjacent to the Mblog logo. In order to get more participation, the questionnaire's notification and hyperlink were also posted in the news feeds of the three blog sites three times a week. A

lucky draw of 20 small gifts was also included as an incentive to complete the questionnaire.

The next concern was time management for in-depth interviews. Although the researcher identified the estimated length of time for each interview and sent a list of questions to all participants in advance, the nature of a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions meant that the participants answered in different ways. For example, some participants took more time to answer each question, whereas other participants took less times because they had to be back at work. Hence, to get answers for every question from each participant was a challenge.

Another concern was how to analyse blog stories. The researcher had to download all blog posts during the targeted period, because new blog posts emerged every day, and the chronological order style caused the posts to move out from the homepage screen very quickly. Moreover, each news blog could be deleted by the authors themselves or by the webmaster at any time. It was safer to store these blog pages in the format of html files before analysing them.

9.7 Recommendations for Further Study

Rosenstiel and Mitchell (2011) suggested that news consumers in this day and age are accustomed to Internet technology and gadgets and have a higher capability and opportunity to get the information they want; hence, the future will belong to people who understand the public's changing behaviour and can serve their interest. The current study has created a better understanding of how news blogs influence the two news-media players: news producers and news consumers in Thailand. Rosenstiel and Mitchell (2011) added that in some countries, such as the USA in 2010, newspaper business was facing

shrinkages in revenues, and newsrooms had become 30% smaller than they were a decade earlier. From this phenomenon and the findings from this thesis, the researcher suggests that it is essential that further research should focus on the influence of new news media from different aspects. It will be useful to study the use of news blogs that are associated with other mainstream media in order to see the whole picture of the effects of news blogs. It would also be useful to study the use of other social media, including emails, discussion boards or web forums, chat rooms, Wikipedia, and other social-networking sites, especially Facebook and Twitter, among news consumers and news professionals in order to enrich the body of knowledge of the role of 'user-generated content' in the world of news. Cross-sectional analyses and longitudinal research are always essential in order to monitor with the behavioural developments of news-media players, which are always changing over time.

Appendices

Appendix A: Online Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we carry out the research, I would like you to read the following statements and confirm your agreement to take part in this study.

Doctoral Thesis Topic: **THE ROLE OF BLOGS AS NEWS SOURCES: A STUDY OF AUDIENCES AND NEWS PROFESSIONALS IN THAILAND**

This study aims to understand the role of news blogs in Thai society by focusing on the use and credibility of OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog. Findings from this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the significance of news blogs in Thailand. It will answer the question of the way in which news blogs are used and perceived among news audiences and newspaper professionals in this country. (It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete this survey.)

Remarks: You have no need to participate in this questionnaire if ...

1. You only read blogs which present issues about personal travelling, personal daily, hobbies, general knowledge, or issues which are not related to social issues or not related to the issues published in mainstream news media.
2. You never read OKnation, The Nation Weblog or Mblog.

News blog means a diary-style website run by a single person (journalist, professional or individual) and its stories primarily link to news, current events or commentaries in the mainstream news media. Some blog stories might present new issues which are not published by mainstream news media, such as community problems, local problems, or issues which mainstream news media do not pay attention to, such as the problem of tribal rights, children's rights, etc.

The information which you give will only be used in this research project and will be kept private. You will not be identified and your personal results will remain confidential. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the information acquired during the study. The researcher conducting this study is Ms. Naparat Prueksuralai, PhD student in Department of Media and Communication, University of Leicester, United Kingdom. Email: np152@le.ac.uk. Her supervisor is Professor Barrie Gunter.

Please tick to confirm that you have read and understand the Participant Consent form (as detailed above). I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

- ☐ I agree to participate and give my consent to the researcher to use the data in her project.
- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study by email

Please identify your main email address

Part 1 Mainstream Media Uses

First of all we want to find out about your general news-media activities.

1. How often do you consume news or news commentary from TV nowadays?
 - ☐ Never (skip to question 3)
 - ☐ Once a week or less
 - ☐ 2–4 days a week
 - ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)
2. Please identify TV channel(s) on which you watch news or news commentary (check all that apply):
 - ☐ Channel 3
 - ☐ Channel 5
 - ☐ Channel 7
 - ☐ Channel 9
 - ☐ NBT
 - ☐ Thai PBS
 - ☐ Nation Channel
 - ☐ True News24
 - ☐ ASTV
 - ☐ Other (specify):
3. How often do you consume news or news commentary from radio nowadays?
 - ☐ Never (skip to question 5)
 - ☐ Once a week or less
 - ☐ 2–4 days a week
 - ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)
4. Please identify radio station(s) on which you listen to news or news commentary (check all that apply):
 - ☐ FM 87.5 (Radio Parliament)
 - ☐ FM 89.0 (Chill FM)
 - ☐ FM 90.5 (Nation Radio)
 - ☐ FM 95.5 (Virgin Hits)
 - ☐ FM 96.5 (Cluenkwamkid)
 - ☐ FM 97.5 (Seed)
 - ☐ FM 97.75(Yaamphaopandin)
 - ☐ FM 99.5 (Traffic Radio Society)
 - ☐ FM 100.0 (Jorsor100)
 - ☐ FM 100.5(News station by MCOT)
 - ☐ FM 101.0
 - ☐ FM 103.5 (FM One)
 - ☐ FM 105.5 (Easy FM)
 - ☐ FM 106.5 (Green Wave)
 - ☐ Other (specify):
5. How often do you consume news or news commentary from newspapers nowadays?
 - ☐ Never (skip to question 7)
 - ☐ Once a week or less
 - ☐ 2–4 days a week
 - ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

6. Please identify newspapers you read nowadays (check all that apply):

- ☐ Thairath
- ☐ Daily News
- ☐ Khaosod
- ☐ Komchadluek
- ☐ Matichon
- ☐ Thai Post
- ☐ Siamrath
- ☐ Banmuang
- ☐ Naewna
- ☐ ASTV Manager
- ☐ Krungtep Dhurakit
- ☐ Prachachart Turakit
- ☐ Post Today
- ☐ Bangkok Post
- ☐ The Nation
- ☐ Other (specify):

7. How often do you find out about the latest news developments by talking to people you know?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

Part 2 Mainstream Online News-Media Uses

Now we want you to think about your use of news from different news-service providers over the Internet.

8. How often do you consume news or news commentary from TV online nowadays?

- ☐ Never (skip to question 10)
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

9. Please identify online TV channel(s) that you use for news or news commentary nowadays (check all that apply):

- ☐ Channel 3
- ☐ Channel 5
- ☐ Channel 7
- ☐ Channel 9
- ☐ NBT
- ☐ Thai PBS
- ☐ Nation Channel
- ☐ True News24
- ☐ ASTV
- ☐ Other (specify):

10. How often do you consume news or news commentary from radio online nowadays?

- ☐ Never (skip to question 12)
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

11. Please identify radio online news or news commentary that you use for news these days (check all that apply):

- ☐ FM 87.5 (Radio Parliament)
- ☐ FM 89.0 (Chill FM)
- ☐ FM 90.5 (Nation Radio)
- ☐ FM 95.5 (Virgin Hits)
- ☐ FM 96.5 (Cluenkwamkid)
- ☐ FM 97.5 (Seed)
- ☐ FM 97.75 (Yaamphaopandin)
- ☐ FM 99.5 (Traffic Radio Society)
- ☐ FM 100.0 (Jorsor100)
- ☐ FM 100.5 (News station by MCOT)
- ☐ FM 101.0
- ☐ FM 103.5 (FM One)
- ☐ FM 105.5 (Easy FM)
- ☐ FM 106.5 (Green Wave)
- ☐ Other (specify):

12. How often do you consume news or news commentary from online newspapers nowadays?

- ☐ Never (skip to question 16)
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

13. Please identify the online newspapers that you use for news or news commentary nowadays (check all that apply):

- ☐ thairath.co.th
- ☐ dailynews.co.th
- ☐ khaosod.co.th
- ☐ komchadluek.net
- ☐ matichon.co.th
- ☐ thaipost.net
- ☐ siamrath.co.th
- ☐ banmuang.co.th
- ☐ naewna.com/home.asp
- ☐ manager.co.th
- ☐ bangkokbiznews.com
- ☐ prachachat.net
- ☐ posttoday.com
- ☐ bangkokpost.com
- ☐ nationmultimedia.com
- ☐ Other (specify):

14. For those of you who use Komchadluek, ASTV Manager or The Nation, how often do you do these following activities on online newspapers?

	Never	Once a week or less	2–4 days a week	5–7 days a week
Comment on news				
Comment on messageboard/webboard				
Create stories on messageboards/webboards				
Vote on poll				
Comment on journalist blogs				

15. How interested are you in news or news commentary on each of the following topics? (Please respond to each item in the list)

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Not Very Interested	Not At All Interested
Politics				
Entertainment				
Crime				
Economics/Business/Finance				
Sport				
Health				
Environment				
Education				
Odd/Supernatural issue				
Technology				
Foreign affairs				
Others such as racial issues				

Part 3 News Blog (OKnation, Mblog or The Nation Weblog) Usage

Now we would like to ask some questions about your use of three specific news blogs – OKnation, Mblog and The Nation Weblog

16. How often do you consume news blogs from OKnation nowadays?

- ☐ Never (skip to question 18)
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

17. Can you identify the name of the blogger in OKnation you use most often for news or commentary related to news?

☐ I do not know the blogger's name or cannot remember

☐ News blogger who I follow to read most often is:

18. How often do you consume news blogs from Mblog nowadays?

☐ Never (skip to question 20)

☐ Once a week or less

☐ 2–4 days a week

☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

19. Can you identify the name of the blogger in Mblog you use for news or commentary related to news most often?

☐ I do not know the blogger's name or cannot remember

☐ News blogger who I follow to read most often is:

20. How often do you consume news blogs from The Nation Weblog nowadays?

☐ Never (skip to question 22)

☐ Once a week or less

☐ 2–4 days a week

☐ 5–7 days a week (nearly every day to every day)

21. Can you identify the name of the blogger in The Nation Weblog you use most often for news or commentary related to news?

☐ I do not know the blogger's name or cannot remember

☐ News blogger who I follow to read most often is:

22. How often do you do any of the following things in relation to OKnation, Mblog or The Nation Weblog?

	Every time I go on a blog	Most times I go on these blogs	Some of the time I go on these blogs	Never do this
Read comment box				
Post opinions or add more information				
Ask question				

23. What is the effect of the use of news blogs on the time spent on your online newspaper reading?

☐ It resulted in a reduction in the amount of time you devote to online newspapers.

☐ It resulted in an increase in the amount of time you devote to online newspapers.

☐ It did not affect your online newspaper reading because it has a different function.

24. Have you ever created/posted a blog story related to news/news commentary?

☐ Yes

☐ No (skip to question 28)

25. Which type of news or news commentary have you posted on a blog? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Crime
- ☐ Economics/Business/Finance
- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Odd issues/Supernatural issues
- ☐ Technology
- ☐ Foreign affairs
- ☐ Others such as racial issues

26. How often do you usually create news blogs/commentary posts of your own?

- ☐ 1 story/week or less
- ☐ 2–6 stories/week
- ☐ 1 story/day
- ☐ More than 1 story/day

27. What is (are) the source(s) of information you usually use to write news blog posts?

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Mainstream news media (TV, radio, and newspaper)
- ☐ Online mainstream news media (TV online, radio online, and online newspapers)
- ☐ Social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Webboards, YouTube, other blogs)
- ☐ Direct experience/eyewitness from the scene
- ☐ Friends/family/relatives
- ☐ Government websites
- ☐ Other website (specify):

28. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following comments that others have made concerning why they use news blogs?

28.1 Blog presentation/characteristics

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
For links to more information/sources					
For their depth of information/issues/viewpoints/coverage					
For their commentary, insight, analysis about news					
For up-to-date information/immediate/timely/scoop/others					

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
For non-traditional/different/unedited/unfiltered independence/no gatekeeping/censorship					
For their admitted bias on specific issues					
For unbiased viewpoints/fair/balanced presentation/both sides of an issue					
Because they provide distinctive news					
Because bloggers keep a story going					

28.2 Personal fulfilment

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Because blogs are entertaining/fun/enjoyable/exciting					
For their humour and amusement value					
Because blogs are interesting					
For diversion/escape					
Because they're different					
Because I am a news junkie					
Because they tell stories the way they are					
Because it helps me relax					

28.3 Expression/affiliation with bloggers and blog users

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To communicate with friends who have blogs					
To interact with people/access news from around the world					
To obtain a personal account of information/human touch/blogger personality					
For a sense of community/networking/social connection/sex/friendship					

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To engage in dialogues between bloggers and readers					
To access a specific blog/blogger					
For contact with like-minded people					
For personal information about others/group/human interest					
To express my opinion					
To promote a cause I believe in					
To find out about issues affecting people like myself					

28.4 Information seeking

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
For specific information of interest					
For the wide variety of information/topics they provide					
For scientific/technical information					
To keep up with the issues of the day/current events/general information					
For research/work/school					
For information for my own blog					
To keep up with social issues/trends					
For accurate accounts of news and events					

28.5 Intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Because of the good writing/writers					
To learn something new					
To engage in intellectual discourse/debate/arguments/critical thinking skills					
For access to expert opinion knowledge					

28.6 Anti-traditional-media sentiment

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
For information I can't get from traditional media					
To avoid liberal media bias					
Because they lack the objectivity of traditional media					
As an alternative to traditional media					
Because I don't trust/like traditional media					

28.7 Guidance/opinion seeking

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To get a wide variety of opinions					
To see what the other side thinks					
To make up my mind about important issues					
For support for my opinions/validation/compare my opinions to others					

28.8 Convenience

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Because blogger posts tell me what's important, save me time in looking					
For information that is easy/convenient to obtain					
To get information quickly/fast					
Because they are free to use					
To access information at any time					
To access information from work					
Because information can be copied and archived					

28.9 Political surveillance

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To keep up with politics/political issues					
For specific political perspective					
To keep up with election news					
To see how politicians stand on various issues					

28.10 Fact checking

I use news blogs ...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To check on accuracy/verify/compare accounts of traditional media and bloggers					
To explore others for wrong info/bias					

Part 4 Credibility Perception

Now we want to ask you a number of questions concerning your attitudes towards different sources of news information.

29. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Each statement is followed by four news sources. We would like you to state your agreement or disagreement with each statement in respect to each of the four listed news sources.

Accuracy

29.1 Stories from the following sources are usually factually accurate.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.2 Stories from the following sources generally contain rumour or misinformation

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.3 Stories from the following sources cannot be easily checked for accuracy.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.4 Stories from the following sources generally provide evidence to prove the authenticity of information.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

Fairness

29.5 Stories from the following sources are usually politically impartial.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.6 Stories from the following sources tend to be biased.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.7 Stories from the following sources take particular care when dealing with conflict issues.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

29.8 Stories from the following sources usually give all relevant perspectives of a story.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
News reports on the websites of newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists associated with newspapers, TV or radio					
News blogs written by journalists who work independently					
News blogs written by individuals					

Part 5 Socio-Demographics of Respondent

Finally, we want to ask you some questions about yourself.

30. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

31. Age

- ☐ 18–25 years old
- ☐ 26–40 years old
- ☐ 41–60 years old
- ☐ More than 60 years old

32. Education level (you are studying or have already graduated)

- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school/College
- ☐ Bachelor degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree or higher

33. Please identify your major occupation:

- ☐ Journalist/reporter/photo-journalist
- ☐ Editor-in-chief/editor/sub-editor
- ☐ Private company employee
- ☐ Official/state officer
- ☐ Business owner/self-employed/freelance
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Unemployed/retired person
- ☐ Other (specify):

34. Monthly income

- ☐ Lower than 5,000 baht
- ☐ 5,000–15,000 baht
- ☐ 15,001–30,000 baht
- ☐ More than 30,000 baht

35. How long have you been using the Internet?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and 4 years
- ☐ More than 4 years

36. How often do you use the Internet?

- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ 2–4 days a week
- ☐ 5–7 days a week

37. How many hours on average do you spend on the Internet? (hour(s)/week)

Appendix B: In-Depth Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we carry out the research, I would like you to read the following statements and confirm your agreement to take part in this study.

Doctoral Thesis Topic

THE ROLE OF BLOGS AS NEWS SOURCES: A STUDY OF AUDIENCES AND NEWS PROFESSIONALS IN THAILAND

Research Objectives

This thesis investigates the role of news blogs from the aspects of use and credibility perception among news consumers and news professionals in Thailand. Findings from this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the significance of news blogs in Thailand.

The in-depth interview aims to investigate the importance of news blogs as a component of mainstream news provision, the characteristics of news blog users and their attention to news blogs, the diversity and the quality of news blogs, and other impacts of news blogs on news consumers. The information which you give will only be used in this research project. You will not be identified if you do not give permission. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the information acquired during the study. The researcher conducting this study is Ms. Naparat Prueksuralai, PhD student in the Department of Media and Communication, University of Leicester, United Kingdom. Email: np152@le.ac.uk. Her supervisor is Professor Barrie Gunter.

Procedure: If you agree to be a participant in this study you will be asked to answer the following set of questions.

List of In-depth Interview Questions

Question 1 Why blogging exists as a component of mainstream news provision in Thailand?	Interviewees
Question 1.1-1.7 see Chapter 4	- News-organisation leader and/or blog editor
Question 2 How much attention do they pay to those news blogs?	Interviewees
Question 2.1-2.5 see Chapter 4	- News- organisation leader and/or blog editor
Question 3 Do news blogs enhance the diversity of news production for online newspapers that are associated with blogs?	Interviewees
Question 3.1 see Chapter 4	- News- organisation leader and/or blog editor - Journalist bloggers
Question 4 Do news blogs enhance the quality of news?	Interviewees
Question 4.1 -4.5 see Chapter 4	- News- organisation leader and/or blog editor - Journalist bloggers
Impacts of news blogs on news consumers. This set of questions aid to answer Question 5 What are the degrees of association between claimed use of news blogs on newspaper websites and attitudes of news blog users?	Interviewees
Question 5.1 -5.3 see Chapter 4	- News- organisation leader and/or blog editor - Journalist bloggers

Confidentiality: the data obtained from you will be stored only on the researcher's computer. Before publishing, the information you give will be returned to you to check, giving you the opportunity to verify the interpretation of the interview data.

Please tick to confirm

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Consent form dated.
- ☐ I give my consent to the researcher to use the data in her project.
- ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.
- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study (no personal results) by email.

Please identify your
email.....

- ☐ I have read the above information and I agree to be a participant in the research.

Participant's signature: _____

Participant's name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Coding Sheets and Coding Instructions

Coding Sheet 1 User-Generated Content on Thai Newspaper Websites

Date

1. Name of online newspaper	1-thairath.co.th 3-khaosod.co.th 5-matichon.co.th 7-siamrath.co.th 9-naewna.com/home.asp 11-bangkokbiznews.com 13-posttoday.com 15-nationmultimedia.com (The Nation)	2-dailynews.co.th 4-komchadluek.net 6-thaipost.net 8-banmuang.co.th 10-manager.co.th 12-prachachat.net 14-bangkokpost.com
2. Comments on news stories	1-Yes	2-No (Skip to item 3)
2.1 Reader's personal information has to be filled in before commenting	1-Yes	2-No
2.2 Have pre-moderate system	1-Yes	2-No
3. Messageboards/webboard	1-Yes	2-No (Skip to item 4)
3.1 Register or fill in personal information before commenting	1-Yes	2-No
3.2 Have pre-moderate system	1-Yes	2-No
3.3 Register before posting new topic	1-Yes	2-No
3.4 Have pre-moderate system	1-Yes	2-No
4. Polls on Homepage	1-Yes	2-No (Skip to item 5)
4.1 Fill in personal information before voting	1-Yes	2-No
4.2 Have pre-moderate system	1-Yes	2-No
5. Polls on news stories	1-Yes	2-No (Skip to item 6)
5.1 Fill in personal information before voting	1-Yes	2-No
5.2 Have pre-moderate system	1-Yes	2-No
6. Reader blog	1-Yes identify reader blog name 1..... 2. 2-No	

Coding Sheet 1 Instruction

Coding item	Instruction
1. Name of online newspaper	Code 1- if viewing at www.thairath.co.th 2- www.dailynews.co.th 3- www.khaosod.co.th 4- www.komchadluek.net 5- www.matichon.co.th 6- www.thaipost.net 7- www.siamrath.co.th 8- www.banmuang.co.th 9- www.naewna.com/home.asp 10- www.manager.co.th 11- www.bangkokbiznews.com 12- www.prachachat.net 13- www.posttoday.com 14- www.bangkokpost.com 15- www.nationmultimedia.com (The Nation)
2. Comments on news stories	At newspaper's homepage 1. Click to read news report which normally shows on the top of the screen. 2. Code 1-Yes, if the news report has comment box on the bottom of the screen or Code 2-No, if there is no comment box for reader to give opinion.
2.1 Personal information needed before commenting	Code 1-Yes, if coder has to fill in personal information such as name, email address, etc. before commenting. Code 2-No, if coder has no need to fill in any information before commenting.
2.2 Have pre-moderate system	Code 1-Yes, if coder finds that after writing a message such as 'I like this news report' and clicking 'submit' or 'send', that message does not show immediately. Code 2-No, if the message that the coder fills in shows immediately.
3. Messageboards/webboard (Areas that allow readers to engage in threaded online conversations or debates on topics often initiated by readers)	At the newspaper's homepage Code-1 Yes, if coder can find Messageboards/webboard. Code-2 No, if there is no Messageboard/webboard.
3.1 Register or fill in personal information before commenting	1. Click the first story inside Messageboards/webboard screen. 2. Code-1 Yes, if coder has to fill in personal information before commenting. Code-2 No, if coder has no need to fill in personal information before commenting.
3.2 Have pre-moderate system	Code 1-Yes, if coder finds that after writing a message such as 'I like this issue' and clicking 'submit' or 'send', that message does not show immediately. Code 2-No, if the message that the coder fills in shows immediately.
3.3 Register before posting new topic	Code 1-Yes, if coder has to register the first time and wait for permission before writing story. Code 2-No, if coder can write story immediately.

3.4 Have pre-moderate system	Code 1-Yes, if coder finds that the story that was posted by coder does not show immediately after clicking 'submit' or 'send'. Code-2 No, if the story that coder posted shows immediately.
4. Polls on Homepage (Topical questions where readers are asked to make a multiple choice or binary response. They provide instant and quantifiable feedback to readers but offer very limited interaction: restricted to 'yes' or 'no' answers, or a multiple-choice response.)	At the newspaper's homepage. Code 1-Yes, if coder can find 'Poll' or similar meaning word. Code-2 No, if there is no 'Poll' on the homepage.
4.1 Personal information needed before voting	Code 1-Yes, if coder has to fill in personal information before voting. Code 2-No, if coder has no need to fill in personal information before voting.
4.2 Have pre-moderate system	Code 1-Yes, if the choice of answer coder has chosen does not show immediately. Code 2-No, if the choice of answer coder has chosen shows immediately.
5. Polls on news stories (Topical questions where readers are asked to make a multiple choice or binary response. They provide instant and quantifiable feedback to readers but offer very limited interaction: restricted to 'yes' or 'no' answers, or a multiple-choice response.)	Code 1-Yes, if coder can find the area for voting inside the news story. Code 2-No, if coder cannot find the area for voting for news.
5.1 Personal information needed before voting	Code 1-Yes, if coder has to fill in personal information such as name, email address, etc. before voting. Code 2-No, if coder has no need to fill in any personal information before voting.
5.2 Have pre-moderate system	Code 1-Yes, if the voting result shows immediately after voting. Code 2- No, if the voting result does not show immediately.
6. Reader blog (Allow readers to create a blog and have it hosted on a news organisation's website.)	At the newspaper's homepage. Code 1-Yes, if coder can find a reader blog. Identify the name of the reader blog that coder can find..... Code 2-No, if coder cannot find any reader blog.

Coding Sheet 2
Reader Blog Story

1. Case number	1-OKnation.... 2-Mblog.... 3-The Nation Weblog....
2. Blog story title	
3. Blog date	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 August 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 October
4. Blogger's email address	
5. Blogger name	
6. Number of readers	
7. Total story	
8. Story is related to news or a public issue	1-Yes 2-No (stop coding)
9. Blog Topic	1-Politics 2-Entertainment 3-Crime 4-Economics/Business/Finance 5-Sport 6-Health 7-Environment 8-Education 9-Supernatural issue 10-Technology 11-Foreign Affairs 12-Others/unclear
10. Story was copied from or referred to other news sources	1-Yes Identify..... 2-No
11. Hyperlink to related information	1-Yes Identify (URL) 2-No
12. Post photo or picture related to the story	1-Yes 2-No
13. Comment box	1-Yes 2-No (Stop coding)
14. Have reader's comment	1-Yes, identify number of comments..... (continue coding sheet 3) 2-No (Stop coding)

Coding Sheet 2 Instruction

Coding item	Instruction
1. Case number	Identify from 1 to 999. e.g. If coding blog story in OKnation, identify OK1, OK2,, to OK999 If coding blog story in The Nation Weblog, identify NA1, NA2,, to NA999 If coding blog story in Mblog, identify MB1, MB2,, to MB999
2. Blog story title	Copy blog title
3. Blog date	Copy date of blog
4. Blogger's email address	Copy blogger's email address; these are mostly presented under blogger's name. If it doesn't have one, write a hyphen (-).
5. Blogger's name	Copy personal name or pseudonym which blogger has indicated on his/her blog profile (the blogger's name mostly located at the top-left or top-right of the screen) i.e. Blackcoffee, etc.
6. Number of readers	Copy the number of readers which can mostly be seen under blog story's title.
7. Total stories	Copy total number of stories the blogger has written. The number normally is identified in the area of the blogger's profile name.
8. Story is related to news or public issues	Code 1-Yes, if the story is news or public issues <u>Definition of news blog</u> News blog means a diary-style website run by a single person (journalist, professional or individual) and its stories are primarily linked to news, current events or commentaries in mainstream news. Some blog stories might present new issues which are not published by mainstream news media, such as community problems, local problems, or issues which mainstream news media do not pay attention to, such as the problem of tribal rights, children's rights, etc. In general, news reports mostly have one or more of these following values: 1. Immediacy or timeliness (the event just happened or was just discovered). 2. Proximity (the event is close to people's mind or space). 3. Prominence (famous people, celebrity or well-known place). 4. Consequence or impact (cause damage to people's rights, freedom, lives, fame or shake the stability of the country, society and economy). 5. Mystery (the event is ambiguous or hides the truth). 6. Oddity or unusualness (uncommon event, weird story which happened to people or to society). 7. Conflict (the opposite opinion or ideology occurs between the two sides or more groups of people, it might happen at family, country or world level). 8. Sex (good or scandalous issue which relates to gender) i.e. wedding, rape, irregular sexual behaviour, etc. 9. Human interest or emotion (the good or bad events which shake

	<p>people's feeling or make people feel sympathy towards).</p> <p>10. Progress or development (innovation or new thing which can cause social changes, better lives or new success).</p> <p>Or commentary upon news which means a current event which a blogger raises in order to discuss.</p> <p>Code 2-No if blogger tells his/her story about their interest or personal life, like writing a diary i.e. his/her travel, his/her interests, his/her cooking, his/her favourite music, his/her favourite movie, poet/poem, or other hobbies. It is a personal issue not a public issue.</p>
9. Blog Topic	<p>Code 1-Politics: news stories about national affairs, government administration, prime minister activities, political parties' movement, elections, political conflicts i.e. protests, etc. including legislation, judiciary and army affairs.</p> <p>Code 2-Entertainment: news stories about actors/actresses, singers, models, new movies, new drama, fashion magazine, concert, folklore, art and culture, etc. both behind and in front of the scenes.</p> <p>Code 3-Crime: news stories about social problems which affect human lives, safety i.e. murder, robbery, accidents, kidnappings, fraud, drugs, illegal acts, rape, abortion, etc.</p> <p>Code 4-Economics/Business/Finance: stories about economic atmospheres which affect the majority of the population, i.e. the rising/decreasing price of products, public utilities and services, inflation, deflation, the stock market, money exchange, bank interest, etc.</p> <p>Code 5-Sport: stories about any kind of sport administration, sport events, athletes, competitions, etc.</p> <p>Code 6-Health: stories about illness, epidemics, treatment, medicine, hospitals, clinics, health staff, etc.</p> <p>Code 7-Environment: stories about conditions surrounding lives and pollution i.e. natural disasters, global warming, etc.</p> <p>Code 8-Education: stories about academic (i.e. school, college, university, etc.) activities and education staff (i.e. teacher, lecturer, student).</p> <p>Code 9-Supernatural issues: stories about the supernatural, new discoveries, etc.</p> <p>Code 10-Technology: stories about innovation (notion or artificial object), new inventions, new development, i.e. new computer software, new models, new transportation, new facilities, etc.</p> <p>Code 11-Foreign affairs: all stories about other countries' events or happenings in other countries.</p> <p>Code 12-Mixed/unclear: cannot identify within one topic.</p>
10. Story has been copied from or refers to other news sources	<p>Code 1-Yes Identify.....,</p> <p>Code 2-No, if blog author did not refer to any source which might identify inside story.</p>
11. Hyperlink to related information	<p>Code 1-Yes, then click to the link to copy URL.....,</p> <p>Code 2-No, if blog author did not provide any link.</p>
12. Post photo or picture related to the story	<p>Code 1-Yes, if blog author posted picture(s) or photo(s) related to the story.</p>

	Code 2-No, if blog author did not post any picture or photo related to the story or posted a photo which is not related to the story.
13. Comment box	Code 1-Yes, if blogger has provided a comment box at the end of each blog story for readers to comment or give an opinion. Code 2-No, if blogger does not provide a comment box. (Stop coding)
14. Have reader's comment	Code 1-Yes, if the blog story shows reader comment(s). Identify number of comments (Continue coding sheet 3) Code 2-No (Stop coding)

Coding Sheet 3 Reader comments

Remarks: Skip comments which blog author wrote in the comment box (Reply to his/her readers)

1. Continue from case number	
2. Total reader comments	

(Following table will be copied in case there is more than one reader comment)

3. Reader comment case	
4. Reader name	
5. Question to blogger	1-Yes 2-No
6. Opinion	1-Yes 2-No (Stop coding)

Coding Sheet 3 Instructions

Coding item	Instruction
1. Continue from case number	Identify case number of blog which has a comment post (from coding sheet 2) i.e. OK1
2. Total reader comments	Count the number of reader comments (do not count blog author's replies in the comment blog)
3. Reader comment case	Identify reader comment number e.g. OK1_1, OK1_2, ..., to OK1_99
4. Reader name	Copy name of reader who commented
5. Question to blogger	Code 1-Yes, if blog reader questions the blogger by using who, what, when, where, why and how questions, 'yes or no' questions, or posts question marks on this blog issue. Code 2-No, if there is no question.
6. Opinion	Code 1-Yes, if blog reader posted his/her personal belief or judgment on this story, posted more details related to this blog issue or tried to say that the story contained some right and wrong information or entirely wrong information. Code 2-No, if the message given is not a personal belief or judgment about the story.

Appendix D: Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2550 (2007)

Source: Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (2007)

Chapter III

Rights and Liberties of the Thai People

Part 7

Liberties in Expression of Persons and Mass Media

Section 45 A person shall enjoy the liberty to express his or her opinion, make speeches, write, print, publicise, and make expression by other means. |

The restriction on the liberty under paragraph one shall not be imposed except by virtue of the provisions of the law specifically enacted for the purpose of maintaining the security of the State, safeguarding the rights, liberties, dignity, reputation, family or privacy rights of other persons, maintaining public order or good morals or preventing the deterioration of the mind or health of the public.

The closure of a newspaper or other mass media business in deprivation of the liberty under this section shall not be made.

The prohibition of a newspaper or other mass media business from presenting information or expressing opinions in whole or in part or imposition of interference by any means in deprivation of the liberty under this section shall not be made except by virtue of the law enacted under paragraph two.

The censorship by a competent official of news or articles before their publication in a newspaper or other mass media shall not be made except during the time when the country is in a state of war; provided that it must be made by virtue of the law enacted under paragraph two.

The owner of a newspaper or other mass media business shall be a Thai national.

No grant of money or other properties shall be made by the State as subsidies to private newspapers or other mass media.

Section 46 Officials or employees of privately-owned newspaper, radio or television broadcasting or other mass media businesses shall enjoy their liberties to present news and express their opinions under the constitutional restrictions without any mandate of any Government agency, State agency, State enterprise or the owner of such businesses provided that it is not contrary to their professional ethics, and have the right to establish

organisations protecting rights, liberties and fairness and establish self-regulatory mechanisms within professional agencies.

Government officials, officials or employees of a Government agency, a State agency or a State enterprise engaging in a radio or television broadcasting business or any other mass media business shall enjoy the same liberties as those enjoyed by officials or employees of privately-owned businesses under paragraph one.

Any act of a person holding a political position, a State official or a business owner which, whether directly or indirectly done, impedes or interferes with the presentation of news or the expression of opinions on a public issue by persons under paragraph one or paragraph two shall be deemed as an intentionally undue exercise of powers and duties and shall be of no effect, unless done in compliance with the law or professional ethics.

Section 47 Transmission frequencies for radio or television broadcasting and telecommunication are national communication resources for public interests.

There shall be an independent regulatory agency having the duty to allocate the frequencies under paragraph one and exercise supervision over the operation of radio or television broadcasting businesses and telecommunication businesses as provided by law.

In carrying out the act under paragraph two, regard shall be had to optimal benefits of the people at national and local levels in education, culture, State security, other public interests and free and fair competition, provided that public participation in the operation of public mass media shall also be encouraged.

In exercising supervision over the operation of businesses under paragraph two, there shall be measures for preventing any merger, cross right-holding or market dominance amongst mass media businesses or by any other person, which has the effect of impeding the liberty of the public in perceiving information or of obstructing public access to a diversity of information.

Section 48 A person holding a political position shall not own or hold shares in a newspaper, radio or television broadcasting or telecommunication business, whether in his or her own name or through his or her nominee or through other direct or indirect means enabling the management of such business in a way akin to owning or holding shares in such business.

Appendix E: Thailand's Criminal Code B.E. 1956

Source: Thailandlawonline.com (2012)

Chapter 3 Offences of Defamation

(Including amendments up to 7 February 2008) (Translated version)

Section 326* Whoever, imputes anything to the other person before a third person in a manner likely to impair the reputation of such other person or to expose such other person to be hated or scorned, is said to commit defamation, and shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one year or fined not exceeding twenty thousand Baht, or both.

*Amendment up to 1992, edited by Criminal code amendment act (11st edition), 14 February 1992.

Section 327 Whoever, imputing anything the deceased person before the third person, and that imputation to be likely to impair the reputation of the father, mother, spouse or child of the deceased or to expose that person to be hated or scorned is said to commit defamation, and shall be punished as prescribed by Section 326.

Section 328* If the offence of defamation be committed by means of publication of a document, drawing, painting, cinematography film, picture or letters made visible by any means, gramophone record or another recording instruments, recording picture or letters, or by broadcasting or spreading picture, or by propagation by any other means, the offender shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding two years and fined not exceeding two hundred thousand Baht.

*Amendment up to 1992, edited by Criminal code amendment act (11st edition), 14 February 1992.

Section 329 Whoever, in good faith, expresses any opinion or statement:

- (1) By way of self-justification or defence, or for the protection of a legitimate interest;
- (2) In the status of being an official in the exercise of his functions;
- (3) By way of fair comment on any person or thing subjected to public criticism; or
- (4) By way of fair report of the open proceeding of any Court or meeting, shall not be guilty of defamation.

Section 330 In case of defamation, if the person prosecuted for defamation can prove that the imputation made by him is true, he shall not be punished. But he shall not be allowed to prove if such imputation concerns personal matters, and such proof will not be of benefit to the public.

Section 331 The party in a case or party's lawyer expressing opinion or statement in the proceeding of the Court in favour of his case shall not be offence of defamation.

Section 332 In case of defamation in which judgment is given that the accused is guilty, the Court may give order:

- (1) To seize and destroy the defamatory matter or part thereof;
- (2) To publish the whole or part of the judgment in one or more newspapers once or several times at the expense of the accused.

Section 333 The offences in this Chapter are compoundable offences. If the injured person in the defamation dies before making a complaint, the father, mother, spouse or child of the deceased may make a complaint, and it shall be deemed that such person is the injured person.

Appendix F: Terms and Conditions of Use for OKnation, The Nation Weblog and Mblog Users

Source: OKnation (2007)

1. Terms and Conditions of Use for OKnation Users

Dear OKnation members,

GMM Grammy Public Co., Ltd. requests your cooperation with regard to song copyrights as follows:

- Posting any GMM Grammy's song on blogs is prohibited.
- Posting the link of the GMM Grammy's song on your server or other servers for downloading is prohibited.
- Posting GMM Grammy's song lyric is allowed but the song and the singer's name have to be credited.
- If the song was sung by you, you must credit the original singer and the name of the song.

If you violate these rules, GMM Grammy Public Co., Ltd can prosecute you by law.

Obligations for OKnation user

1. Please bear in mind that whenever you write a story or post any opinion, do not attack three institutions: the nation, the religion, the king or public security.
2. Please be polite. We do not welcome any rude words or issues which try to destroy the unity of the society. Do not post pictures, video clips or words in relation to pornography.
3. For any conflict which happens between you and other blog users, please discuss elsewhere (i.e. inbox). Do not expand the conflict by posting the disputation between each other publicly on the blog.
4. Think carefully before posting any issue. Make sure that it does not violate the law. The blog editor has the authority to cancel a comment box in case the issue defames the institutions.
5. Whenever posting pictures or video clips, please bear in mind that you identify its source and understand the copyright law.
6. Any issue you post is owned by you. You can be prosecuted if you violate the law. The company does not take responsibility.

OKnation has the authority to close any blog and delete the content which violates the obligations above without informing any bloggers in advance.

2. Terms and Conditions of Use for The Nation Weblog Users

Source: The Nation Weblog (2007)

The Nation's weblog aims to create a community on cyber world where people around the globe can get together anytime around the clock. In this imagined society, we can enjoy freedom of expression. We are free to exchange views, news, information and knowledge. However, absolute freedom never exists on earth. It is an obligation of all to minimize limitation of liberty setting common fundamental rules for the game to protect basic rights of all members in this community. We would like all members to be aware of hereby 10 guide lines anytime you enter this society.

1. We welcome all intelligent debates and dissents but please bear in mind that whenever you strongly disagree with any bloggers on any particular issues, attack their views not their personality. Character assassination is against a media ethic. We want the blogs to be a community but it is still a community within a media so that media ethic could not be avoided.
2. As long as we are a site of English language media with international audiences, please keep posting in English. Other natives in voice or audio forms are also welcomed only with English translation or excerpt.
3. Please be polite. We don't welcome any rude words. All bloggers shall refrain from using "four-letter-words" out of proper context.
4. Please respect other people's beliefs. You can employ facts, information and reasons to convince the other to agree with you but cannot force people to believe to disbelieve in what you want.
5. Please do not drag our website into the territory of "hate media". We don't tolerate any forms of hate speech, racism, sexism, fanaticism and any kind of phobia eg. Sino-phobia, Islam-phobia and Thaksino-phobia. Such speeches must be removed immediately we find them.
6. Cyber world is relatively free and could be accessed beyond boundary but please be notified that the host never escapes from legal arms of its homeland. We reserve the right to remove all posts that may put us in legal difficulty, such as libel and defamation in accordance with Thai laws.
7. Think twice before publishing any contents as your expressions would last long in our archive and such statements could become references with legal binding.
8. The blog looks like something personal but actually it is never a personal diary as long as public could see it. Any contents should be relevant and reliable otherwise it could damage our and your own credibility.
9. The blog is interactive, please do not post and leave. The bloggers are encouraged to return to check reactions from other fellows as your speech might be either misunderstood or misinterpreted.
10. The Nation is print-based media, please be well informed that we would like to have your sharp, intelligent, insightful posting to be published in our printed outlets.

3. Terms and Conditions of Use for Mblog Users

Source: Mblog (2007)

Thaiday dot com Co., Ltd. owns and monitors Mblog.manager.co.th (Mblog). All Mblog users have to register and accept the terms and conditions of Mblog before use.

- We welcome any posts and comments on Mblog. The service is free of charge but users must provide their own hardware and software, and apply to use the Internet.
- Thaiday dot com Co., Ltd. has the right to revise Mblog's terms and conditions of use at anytime.
- Thaiday dot com Co., Ltd. has the right to cancel service for each user and takes no responsibility which may result in defamation towards a third party caused by Mblog user.
- Mblog users' email addresses will be kept in privacy. Except (1) using it in the court (2) using it to protect the rights and property of the company (3) using it for the security of other Mblog users (4) using it to amend the drawback of Mblog service.
- Mblog users own the copyright of their contents but their content can be reproduced, modified, adjusted, consolidated, analysed and published by the company.
- Mblog users understand and accept that Thaiday dot com Co., Ltd. does not certify their content. The company has no need to take the responsibility for the content violation to the third party or any mistakes. The company can remove the content that users have posted and is not required to inform the blogger in advance.
- Mblog users will receive the password and space. Users must keep it secret for their own right and accept that it is their own responsibility for the content they have produced. They can change the user name, password and create a new account.
- Mblog users have to accept the risk which might be caused by them.
- Mblog users cannot sell Mblog service to a third party without the permission from the company.
- Mblog users must follow the terms and conditions of Mblog. They are not allowed to send chain mail and junk mail. They are obliged to follow the law and must not interrupt other users.
- The company has the authority to temporarily or permanently cancel the service for any users, and takes no responsibility on any effect caused by this action.
- Mblog users agree to protect the company from a third party requirement. All users agree to make compensation for attorney fees which might occur from a law violation concerning the content they have produced.
- Mblog users are not allowed to advertise on blog.
- The company does not allow Mblog users to use the company logo to advertise their goods and services.
- All content on Mblog is protected by copyright law. Mblog users cannot reproduce the content without permission except for the Open-source section (GNU General Public License (GNU/GPL)).

- All rights reserved. The company can change the reward that Mblog users receive from the service without informing them in advance.
- Mblog members should store their content elsewhere. The company take no responsibility of missing content.
- All posts in Mblog falls under Thailand's laws. (Concerning copyright, please bear in mind whenever posting songs, cartoons, and other information). If you see a copyright violation or find someone breaking the terms and conditions, please inform duangporn@manager.co.th or the website editor.

Appendix G: Journalist Bloggers

Adisak Limparungpattanakij, President of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Blogger name: อติศักดิ์ (Adisak), <http://www.oknation.net/blog/adisak>, Topic: Energy crisis has existed for a long time/why panic until blackout stage? (24 February 2013)

About us

อติศักดิ์
 ranking : สมาชิกทั่วไป
 email : adisak@natingroup.com
 วันที่สร้าง : 2006-12-12
 จำนวนเรื่อง : 306
 จำนวนผู้ชม : 474119
 ส่ง msg :
 โหวต บล็อก โหวต 544 คน

BLOG **GALLERY** **VIDEO CLIP**

คิดในวันอาทิตย์
 วิพากษ์วิจารณ์การเมือง เศรษฐกิจ
 Permalink : <http://www.oknation.net/blog/adisak>

วันอาทิตย์ ที่ 24 กุมภาพันธ์ 2556
 วิกฤติพลังงานเกิดนานแล้ว/ทำไมถึง"ตื่นตูม"ถึงขั้นไฟดับ?
 Posted by อติศักดิ์ , ผู้อ่าน : 532 , 10:47:36 น.
 หมวด : เศรษฐกิจ
 พิมพ์หน้า โหวต 4 คน

BLOG อีเมล
 << กุมภาพันธ์ 2013 >>
 อา จ อ พ พ ศ ส
 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
 17 18 19 20 21 22 23
 24 25 26 27 28
 [Add to my favorite] [X]

เรื่องย้อนหลัง

- วิกฤติพลังงานเกิดนานแล้ว/ทำไมถึง"ตื่นตูม"ถึงขั้นไฟดับ?
- ดิจิทัลทีวีของธุรกิจ(3) : โบนัส? ทุนใหญ่-รายเก่าอีคิวของ
- ฟรีทีวีดิจิทัลสาธารณะ(2)/สังคมต้องมีส่วนร่วมคัดเลือก
- โหมไล่ล่าดิจิทัลทีวี (1) : ขวบน"หลังสังคม"ร่วมจับตา
- กสทช. : สู่สังคมไร้สาย อีกมีดีสู่"ไร้ไซเบอร์"
- ปรากฏการณ์"เหนือเมฆ" แต่พลังสังคมบนหน้าคอม?
- สงครามแพลตฟอร์ม(4): ยุคจัดทัพ-จับคู่ธุรกิจ
- สงครามแพลตฟอร์ม (3) : ตีกลาง

Charlee Waradee, New Media Editor of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Blogger name: BlueHill, <http://www.oknation.net/blog/charlee>, Topic: From warm fountain through wind and cold of 'Sanju hill' to beautiful flower territory 'Angkhang hill' (part 3) (28 February 2013)

About me **Blog** **Photo galler** **Video clip**

BlueHill
 ranking : สมาชิกทั่วไป
 email : charleenation@hotmail.com
 วันที่สร้าง : 2006-12-13
 จำนวนเรื่อง : 400
 จำนวนผู้ชม : 942434
 จำนวนผู้โหวต : 2009
 ส่ง msg :
 โหวต บล็อก โหวต 2009 คน

วันอาทิตย์ ที่ 28 กุมภาพันธ์ 2556
 จากไออุ่นน้ำพุร้อนฝาง ผ่านหม่นหม่นหนาวลอยสันจู้ ถึงแดนดอกไม้งามนามอ่างช้าง (Part 3)
 Posted by BlueHill , ผู้อ่าน : 112 , 14:57:13 น.
 หมวด : ธรรมชาติและสิ่งแวดล้อม
 พิมพ์หน้า โหวต 8 คน

จากไออุ่นน้ำพุร้อนฝาง ผ่านหม่นหม่นหนาวลอยสันจู้ ถึงแดนดอกไม้งามนามอ่างช้าง (Part 1)
 จากไออุ่นน้ำพุร้อนฝาง ผ่านหม่นหม่นหนาวลอยสันจู้ ถึงแดนดอกไม้งามนามอ่างช้าง (Part 2) ...เราเองเห็นทุกสิ่งได้ แต่คงไร้ความหมาย หากไม่เห็นในรัก เข้าวุ่นขึ้นเป็นวันเสาร์ คมชัดหมายกับคุณหญิงและคุณเมือง สองเพื่อนร่วมทางผู้แสนดี (เรียกเขานี้ถูกต้องแล้ว ห้ามหักทวง เพราะยืมตลอดจนหมอบไปโดนคนคนเดียวบนดอยสูงเสียค่า) จะไป

Chaleaw Kongtuk, Executive Editor of Crimewatch 24, Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Blogger name: นายหัวไทร (Naihuasai), <http://www.oknation.net/blog/naiman>, Topic: Shocking figure: ‘Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board’ points out Thais are more in debt, crime growth (27 February 2013)

นายหัวไทร
ชดภาพเพิ่ม เอกการเนืองชน คอยเป็นก้นเอง ไม่เกรงอิทธิพล
Permalink : <http://www.oknation.net/blog/naiman>

วันที่ 27 กุมภาพันธ์ 2556
ตัวเลขที่น่าตกใจ : 'สภาพัฒนา' ชี้คนไทยล้มหนี้ฟุ้ง อาชญากรรมเพิ่ม
Posted by นายหัวไทร, ผู้อ่าน : 523, 07:09:21 น.
หมวด : การเมือง
เพิ่มพ่อนี้ ☒ Favorite Entry โหวต 5 คน

'สภาพัฒนา' ชี้คนไทยหนี้ครัวเรือนพุ่ง 2.9 ล้านล้านบาท ระบุว่าร้อยละ 21 เป็นสินเชื่อรถยนต์ ยอดเฉลี่ย 55 ปีถูกอาชญากรรมมาเป็นห่วง เหตุคดีอาชญากรรมสูงขึ้นทุกประเภท เฉพาะยาเสพติด มีการรับแจ้งกว่าแสนคดี ขณะทำการระดมตำรวจแรงเล็ก-สตรี พบยาเสพติดมูลค่า 10-15 ลูกวิ่งจะเปิดทางเทศาภิบาลที่สุด ตัวเลขที่น่าตกใจมาจากสำนักงานคณะกรรมการพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจและสังคมแห่งชาติ(สศช.) เบื้องานภาวะสังคม...

Permalink : <http://www.oknation.net/blog/naiman/2013/02/27/entry-1>

วันอังคาร ที่ 26 กุมภาพันธ์ 2556

Chai Seeho, Assistant Editor of OKNation, Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Blogger name: ลูกเสือหมายเลข 9 (Look suer mai lek kao), <http://www.oknation.net/blog/chai>, Topic: A moment to remember..She forgot me I won't forget her (24 January 2013)

ลูกเสือหมายเลข9
พบปะแลกเปลี่ยน พูดคุยเรื่องความรัก ความหวังและความฝัน ...
Permalink : <http://www.oknation.net/blog/chai>

วันพฤหัสบดี ที่ 24 มกราคม 2556
A Moment To Remember ..เธอลืมผม ผมไม่ลืมเธอ
Posted by ลูกเสือหมายเลข9, ผู้อ่าน : 603, 09:36:31 น.
หมวด : ภาพยนตร์/ละคร
เพิ่มพ่อนี้ ☒ Favorite Entry โหวต 28 คน

A Moment To Remember ..เธอลืมผม ผมไม่ลืมเธอ
ฉันรักคุณครู ...
10 promises to my dog ..รักฉัน ต้องรักจนวันตาย
JIRO DREAMS OF SUSHI ...เมื่อได้ทำในสิ่งที่รักแล้วเราจะรักในสิ่งที่ได้ทำ..
One Million Yen Girl ...สาวหัวใจล้านปอนด์
April Bride ...เธอรักฉันจริงใช่ไหม?
Always คำสัญญาที่คือคำสัญญา
The Assassins ..เรื่องสั้นของ...

Chakkrish Permpool, Editor of Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Blogger name: jk,
http://www.oknation.net/blog/chakkrish, Topic: Inside Jk (12 November 2012)



jk

ranking : สมาชิกทั่วไป
email : chakkrish@nationgroup.com
วันที่สร้าง : 2007-01-22
จำนวนเรื่อง : 3898
จำนวนผู้ชม : 3140844
ส่ง msg :

โทรสารบล็อก โหวต 16425 คน

BLOG **GALLERY** **VDO CLIP**

Jk_Nation U
Chairman of The National Press Council of Thailand
Permalink : http://www.oknation.net/blog/chakkrish

🕒 **วันจันทร์ ที่ 12 พฤศจิกายน 2555**

อินไซด์ Jk
Posted by jk , ผู้อ่าน : 348 , 18:45:59 น.
หมวด :ทั่วไป

📖 Favorite Entry โหวต เรื่อง โหวต 1 คน



Photo Gallery

Jasmine & Jk stories



การเดินทางของจินดาการ ความรู้ และความคิด บนถนนสายดิจิทัล

View All

VDO Clip

Social Media

Is Social Media a Plac?

เมื่อโลกทั้งใบพูดจาด้วยภาษาดิจิทัล สื่อจะก้าวเดินไปอย่างไร นิยมใช้สื่อกัน แต่เป็นความท้าทาย



พยากรณ์แม่นๆ จากวิถีแห่งดวงดาว ถ่ายทอดโดยคนอดูชื่อดัง จาก คมชัดลึก

วันละ 3 บาท

ผู้เขียน: โจอี้ ยะป (Joei Yap)
ปี 2013
เลขหมายมือถือ: 08-2338-3000

Kittinan Narkthong, ASTV Manager Reporter, Blogger name: Kittinun,
http://www.oknation.net/blog/kittinunn, Topic: ... (18 July 2010):

ABOUT KITTINUNN ONLINE



kittinunn

ranking : สมาชิกทั่วไป
email : bloggerkittinunn@live.com
วันที่สร้าง : 2006-12-29
จำนวนเรื่อง : 1388
จำนวนผู้ชม : 1449161
ส่ง msg :

โทรสารบล็อก โหวต 1539 คน

TOP STORIES **PHOTO GALLERY** **MULTIMEDIA**

Kittinunn Online • News is a Reality
เกาะติด-วิจารณ์ ชับดาเหตุบ้านการเมือง สังคม สภาวะแวดล้อม และมุมมองที่แตกต่าง
Permalink : http://www.oknation.net/blog/kittinunn

🕒 **วันอาทิตย์ ที่ 18 กรกฎาคม 2553**

Posted by kittinunn , ผู้อ่าน : 1592 , 16:41:37 น.
หมวด : โดอารี่

📖 Favorite Entry โหวต เรื่อง โหวต 0 คน

ขออ้อลา OKNation ขอแจ้งให้เพื่อนๆ ชาว OKNation ทราบว่า ผมมีความจำเป็นต้องหยุดการเขียนเรื่องราวลงในบล็อก OKNation เป็นการชั่วคราว เพราะมีภารกิจที่สำคัญ และเพื่อเป็นการรักษามารยาทต่อองค์กรที่ผมทำงานในปัจจุบัน ขอขอบพระคุณสำหรับการติดตามมาโดยตลอด และหวังว่าคงได้กลับมาเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชุมชน OKNation ในอนาคตด้วยความเคารพบล็อกเกอร์ kittinunn18 ก.ค. 2553 หมายเหตุ : สำหรับผู้ที่เข้าชมผ่านทาง http://www.kittinunn....

Permalink : http://www.oknation.net/blog/kittinunn/2010/07/18/entry-1 อ่านต่อ RSS แสดงความคิดเห็น | อ่านความคิดเห็น (4)

🕒 **วันจันทร์ ที่ 5 กรกฎาคม 2553**

ไม่โหวด...เหมา!
Posted by kittinunn , ผู้อ่าน : 1878 , 22:16:49 น.
หมวด : ดารา/นักร้อง/คนดัง

📖 Favorite Entry โหวต เรื่อง โหวต 0 คน

KITTINUNN ONLINE ARCHIVES

<< **กุมภาพันธ์ 2013** >>

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

[Add to my favorite] [X]

เรื่องย้อนหลัง

- ...
- ไม่โหวด...เหมา!
- จ๊อกก็อัสสิห์ได้แผนปรองดอง จะหนีสงครามกลางเมืองไปไหนหน้
- 08-8888-8888
- มดีอิน-ชาวสัว
- เหมาโรงเรียนเกิดวิทยายุทธสน์ กับมุมมองของศิษย์เก่า เคยเหมาแล้วครั้งหนึ่ง
- โหลสาล พี่มึงคล เล่าถึงสาปแช่งหรือลีดพิณาศ
- เพลงยาวพยากรณ์ กรุงเทพมหานคร 2553
- เรื่องที่น่าคิดหึ่งสำหรับ นักจักรี ฮัดดนนท์
- ชมอบคำนี้ให้กับนายเหวง โดจิราการ ดิกป่าใส่กะโหลกชะโงกดูเงา
- จากบล็อกเกอร์สะกดหนังสือ



Kipling Women's Joanne S Handbag £29.60-£74.00

Privacy

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