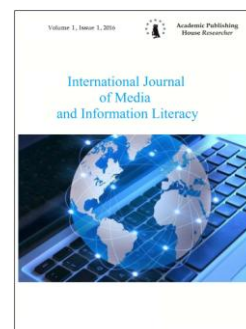


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Negative Effects of Digital Media on Thai Youngsters: Case Studies from Thailand and Abroad

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Abstract

This study analyzes the forms of digital communication that could negatively affect children and youngsters and proposes guidelines for creative usage of digital media and for the fostering of digital media literacy for children and youngsters for anyone involved. The study found that the negative effects of digital media on youngsters could be divided into 8 categories and the total of 30 sub-categories as the following: 1. Deceptions; 2. Inappropriate Content; 3. Online Mischief; 4. Dissatisfaction caused by digital media usage; 5. Misunderstanding or being misled caused by digital media usage; 6. Unconstructive use of time; 7. Violation of laws; 8. Inappropriate behavior caused by digital media. In the short term, there should be laws to regulate and reduce the risks of digital media usage. 2. In the long term, all relevant parties must hurry to build “media literacy” and “digital literacy” for youngsters. 3. Parents must learn and understand potential online dangers so they can give their children sound advice, and also lessening their own risks of becoming online victims themselves.

In the long term, all relevant parties, including government offices, non-profit and for-profit organizations, mass media, and academic institutes at all level must hurry to build media literacy for youngsters.

Keywords: digital media, Thailand, youngsters, media literacy, inappropriate content, online risks.

1. Introduction

Information technology has affected Thai society in many aspects, especially the way young people use media. A survey in 2014 revealed that as many as 46 % of Thai consumers aged 12-24 years old use two digital devices simultaneously (Kanokkarn, Prajongsangri and Nattapol Lertsrimongkol, 2014). Therefore, digital media wield undoubtedly great influence on young consumers in Thailand, both in positive and negative ways. Reports of cases about negative effects of digital media have increased in recent years from all around the world. These cases range from psychological impact to physical violence and even deaths. Therefore, more parties need to be aware of the many types of potential risks of digital media usage and seek the way to protect youngsters from the negative effects.

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2. Materials and methods

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To study and analyze the forms of digital communication that could negatively affect children and youngsters.
- 2) To propose guidelines for creative usage of digital media and for the fostering of digital media literacy for children and youngsters for anyone involved, including parents, government offices, private organizations, and non-profit organization. This study is a document research which analyzes the information acquired from both online and offline sources.

3. Discussion

Media Literacy

The Center for Media Literacy (CML) created the “five core concepts of media literacy” as the following (Wikiversity, 2014):

1. *All media messages are constructed*: media messages are not naturally created, but rather made up of various elements that were created by their creators.
2. *Media messages are constructed using creative language with its own rules*: each media message has its own language to convey meaning through sounds and visuals.
3. *Different people experience the same media message differently*: people interpret media messages differently according to their backgrounds and life experiences.
4. *Media have embedded values and points of view*: all media messages contain values that tell audience who or what is important and not important by inclusion and exclusion.
5. *Most media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power*: most media messages are made to serve the interests of their financial sponsors such as advertisers.

Digital Literacy

Not only media literacy, but youngsters today also need to possess adequate level of “digital literacy” as their world now revolves around digital media so they can use technology with care and be aware of potential negative effects that can occur. Common Sense Media, an American organization specialized in digital literacy training, divides the digital literacy for youngsters into 8 foundational skills as the following (Common Sense Media, 2015):

1. *Internet Safety*: ability to distinguish between inappropriate contact and positive connections so one can collaborate with others worldwide online while stay in safe.
2. *Privacy & Security*: managing and securing online information to avoid online risks such as identity thieves, phishing, scams and schemes.
3. *Relationships & Communication*: using intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to build positive online communication, communities, digital citizenship and digital ethics.
4. *Cyberbullying*: dealing with cyberbullying situations; and how individual actions, both negative and positive, can impact friends and broader communities.
5. *Digital Footprint & Reputation*: protecting one's own privacy and respect others' privacy in the digital world; learning to “self-reflect” before one “self-reveals.”
6. *Self-Image & Identity*: benefits and risks of presenting oneself through different personas and the effects on one's sense of self, reputation, and relationships.
7. *Information Literacy*: ability to identify, find, and evaluate the quality, credibility, and validity of online sources, and give credit, so one can use the information properly.
8. *Creative Credit & Copyright*: responsibilities and rights as creators in the online spaces, including issues of copyright and fair use, to avoid plagiarism and piracy.

4. Results

The study found that the negative effects of digital media on youngsters could be divided into 8 categories and the total of 30 sub-categories as the following:

1. Deceptions

1.1. Deception for sexual abuses

Case study: “Man arrested for using Facebook to prey on girl for sex” (Kom Chud Luek, 2011b).

1.2. Online financial scams

Case study: “Beware of online game ID scams” (Daily News, 2014b).

1.3. Deceptive online advertising

Case study: “FDA warns teen girls to beware of fatale ffects of ordering weight loss diet from Internet” (Thairath, 2014b).

2. Inappropriate Content

2.1. Sexually provoking content

Case study: “Beware! Your children might be watching online porn, causing teen moms and other sexual risks” (ASTV Manager Online, 2014b).

2.2. Content with explicit, disparaging, or grammatically incorrect language

Case study: “Full of vulgarity in SimSimi application. Government asked for more screening” (Thairath, 2012).

2.3. Graphic images or violent content

Case study: “Is this human? Jealous boyfriend slashes girl all over her body” (Sanook.com, 2012a).

2.4. Immoral content

Case study: “So cruel! Chinese girl posts clip of rabbit killing on Internet” (ASTV Manger Online, 2010).

2.5. Content that is in conflict with Thai culture

Case study: “Ministry of Culture says topless teens destroy national image” (Kom Chud Luek, 2011).

2.6. Content that promotes gambling

Case study: “Thai youngsters are addicted to online gambling because of its convenient access” (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2013).

2.7. Content that promotes superstition

Case study: “11 best places for twelve graders to pray toget accepted to university” (Dek-D.com, 2012)

2.8. Content that violates personal rights

Case study: “British ambassador asks Thai media toup hold ethical standards in news reporting” (Thairath, 2014d).

2.9. Hate speech

Case study: “To stop online ‘hate speech,’ we simply must start with our selves!” (Thairath, 2014c).

2.10. Content that violates lese majeste law

Case study: “Vice police commissioner orders arrest of Aum Neko for lese majeste charges” (Kapook.com, 2014a).

3. Online Mischief

3.1. Cyber-bullying

Case study: “Immunity for children needs to be built toavoid the danger of cyber-bullying” (Prachachart Turakij, 2014).

3.2. Cyber-stalking

Case study: “12-year-old sentenced for cybers talking classmate” (ABCNEWS.go.com, 2011).

3.3. Cyber-baiting

Case study: “Teachers fall victim to cyber-baiting” (Yahoo News, 2011).

4. Dissatisfaction caused by digital media usage

4.1. Depression or envy from digital mediausage

Case study: “Full of harm: Facebook can kill you, make you depressed and jealous. Who will be the next victim?” (ASTV Manager Online, 2013)

4.2. Online media usage that leads to violence behavior

Case study: “Two teens arrested for murder over Facebook bickering” (Daily News, 2012).

5. Misunderstanding or being misled caused by digitalmedia usage

5.1. Deception or misunderstanding caused bydigital images

Case study: “Internet users beware! Girl’s image gets stolen and used for political purpose” (IT24Hrs.com, 2014a).

5.2. Deception or misunderstanding caused bydigital information

Case study: “News of a couple claimed to have car accident after performing oral sex is fake” (Kapook.com, 2014b).

6. Unconstructive use of time

6.1. *Decrease of time for reading and other offline activities*

Case study: “Thai children are not in love with reading” ([Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2011](#)).

6.2. *Digital media and online game addiction which leads to ill health*

Case study: “Thai people are so addicted to social network that they cannot live without” ([IT24Hrs.com, 2014b](#)).

7. Violation of laws

7.1 *Violation of computer-related crime act*

Case study: “Online users posted news with fake headlines. Charges to be pressed, citing violation of computer-related crime act.” ([Thairath, 2014e](#)).

7.2. *Violation of libel law*

Case study: “Warning! Retweeting and posting can risk violating libel law” ([Daily News, 2014a](#)).

8. Inappropriate behavior caused by digital media

8.1. *Inappropriate selfie-taking*

Case study: “Concerns over Thai teens’ addiction of ‘selfie’ which can cause confidence loss” ([Thairath, 2014a](#)).

8.2 *Inappropriate online posting of images of oneself*

Case study: “Stunned! Junior high school girl posts stripping clip of herself on YouTube” ([Post Today, 2011](#)).

8.3. *Instigation of verbal and physical fight online*

Case study: “Metro police chief chases ‘Nay Watdao’ and ‘El Oros,’ the gangsters who post clips of fight challenges online.” ([Sanook.com, 2012b](#)).

8.4. *Disclosure of personal information without consent*

Case study: “Messy! Fai Veruree, Miss Thailand Universe online posts with explicit language get disclosed” ([ASTV Manager Online, 2014a](#)).

8.5. *Revenge porn*

Case study: “Japan looks to criminalize ‘revenge porn’ as teen victims increase” ([Asahi Shimbun, 2014](#))

8.6. *Sexting*

Case study: “Sex show: Sexual pleasure with a single click” ([ASTV Manager Online, 2012](#)).

5. Conclusion

From the study, there are as many as thirty subcategories of negative effects from digital media. And the situation only seems to worsen and more complicated as mobile devices have become more prevalent and accessible due to the growth and interest of social media and online businesses. Therefore, policymakers must take this matter seriously and urgently.

In the short term, there should be laws to regulate and reduce the risks of digital media usage. And the laws should be flexible enough to be adjusted as the technology continues to change rapidly, and still allow constructive online activities to flourish. The existing law that Thailand has right now, the Computer-Related Crime Act, is either often misunderstood or not widely known enough, especially for youngsters.

In the long term, all relevant parties, including government offices, non-profit and for-profit organizations, mass media, and academic institutes at all level must hurry to build media literacy for youngsters. Finally and perhaps most importantly for young children, the people who must take immediate actions are the parents or their guardians, who must learn and understand potential online dangers so they can give their children sound advice, and also lessening their own risks of becoming online victims themselves. Moreover, parents need to set the rules of digital media usage in the household and keep their eyes on how their children use digital media. It is encouraged that the parents find offline activities for their children to participate in, and be their children’s advisor when problem arises. This is the only way to bring up good, responsible, and happy “digital citizens” for future society.

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