

A TOOL FOR
CHANGE

**WORKING WITH THE MEDIA
ON ISSUES RELATING TO
SEXUAL ORIENTATION,
GENDER IDENTITY,
EXPRESSION AND SEX
CHARACTERISTICS
IN THAILAND**

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Burapha University

169 Longhad Bangsaen Road, Saen Suk Sub-district, Muang District,
Chonburi Province 20131, Thailand.

Design: Thu Anh Do

**A Tool for Change: Working with the Media
on Issues Relating to Sexual Orientation,
Gender Identity, Expression and
Sex Characteristics in Thailand**

(Study on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and
Sex Characteristics in the Media)

Contents

Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	5
Executive Summary	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	10
Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review of media and news reports on LGBTIQ people and issues	13
Chapter 3: Findings of the study: LGBTIQ people in Thai news media – How humans portray other humans	18
Chapter 4: Conclusion and discussion: Key issues and challenges	29
Chapter 5: Suggestions for policy advocacy	33
Bibliography	37
Annex 1: Code of ethics for members of the Press Council of Thailand	39
Annex 2: List of keywords used in searching for LGBTIQ news on online news websites	42
Annex 3: Examples of unbiased news report about LGBTIQ	44
Biographies	49

List of figures

Figure 1: Volume of LGBTIQ news covered	19
Figure 2: Comparison of news coverage among different subgroups in the LGBTIQ population	20
Figure 3: News source	20
Figure 4: News location	21
Figure 5: News content	22
Figure 6: Presentation of news stories	23
Figure 7: A photo that was part of a news item about lesbians was overtly sexual in nature	24
Figure 8: Sexualized photos were used to accompany news stories and a story about gay men portrayed them as obsessed with sex	25
Figure 9: A photo of transgender women was used to draw readers' attention and an image of a male crossdresser was represented as comic relief	27
Figure 10: A photo of a news report that ridiculed a Buddhist monk focused on how his mannerisms presumably mirrored those of a transgender woman	32

Foreword

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University has the vision to serve as a center of excellence for the study of humanities and social sciences. Our mission, accordingly, is to advocate for research and intellectual knowledge generation related to the development of the country, to promote international cooperation as well as to gain international recognition for our work.

The research project entitled “Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics in the Media Study” was an example of an activity via which the University collaborated internationally towards the development of new knowledge of relevance to pertinent social issues in Thailand. Apart from creating new knowledge about the issue of how sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE) and intersex are portrayed in the Thai media, the results of this research also aimed to create better awareness, skills and ability of the Thai media in fair reporting or even advocating on behalf of SOGIE and intersex issues, according to their code of ethics and international principles of universal human rights.

On behalf of the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Thailand, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Being LGBTI in Asia programme for prioritizing the issues of SOGIE and intersex in Thailand as well as providing financial and technical support to enable our University to conduct this important study.

I hope that the results of this study will help pave the way for positive changes regarding the issue of media and SOGIE and intersex issues in the environments of academia and social-cultural movements in Thailand.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'B' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Assistant Professor Dr. Boonrod Boodgerd
The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Foreword

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Thailand continue to face stigma, discrimination and violence because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sex characteristics (SOGISC). Examples include discrimination when accessing employment, health care, housing and education as well as increased risk of sexual and physical violence.

The media has the potential to shape public perspectives and opinions and how LGBTI people are perceived in wider society is often reflected in how they are portrayed in news media. As this report demonstrates LGBTI people have long been underrepresented in news media and when they have been represented it has commonly been inaccurate, stereotypical and harmful ways or without a clear understanding of SOGISC. Through increased visibility and more accurate representations that demonstrates the true diversity of LGBTI populations, the media can combat harmful representations and raise awareness of discrimination and violations of the human rights of LGBTI people.

In 2015, UNDP commissioned this study to analyze news media coverage of SOGISC and LGBTI identities across media platforms in Thailand. The study has found that many Thai journalists lack knowledge and understanding regarding LGBTI people which often results in LGBTI people being presented in news media in a negative manner, differentiating them from how other people in Thai society are portrayed.

An integral part of UNDP's mandate is to promote social inclusion and gender equality. Additionally, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are based upon the premise that 'nobody is left behind' and all marginalized groups, including LGBTI people, are included in development efforts. In particular Goal 10 of the SDGs, 'Reduced Inequalities', with a target to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. UNDP believes that visibility and accurate portrayal of LGBTI people in media is essential to counter harmful representations and tackle stigma and discrimination against LGBTI people in Thai society.

Thai media has the potential to be a powerful advocate for positive change in social attitudes, policies and programme and an effective tool for tackling stigma and discrimination. We hope that this study will strengthen the role of media advocacy in creating an enabling environment for discussing the human rights of LGBTI people and issues of stigma and discrimination. This is essential if we are to achieve the shared goal of ensuring that 'no one is left behind'.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Hart-Hansen'.

Martin Hart-Hansen
Deputy Resident Representative
UNDP Thailand

Acknowledgements

A Tool for Change: Working with the Media on Issues Relating to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics in Thailand was developed in partnership between Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The primary investigator of the study was Dr. Kangwan Fongkaew, Department of Communication Arts, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Burapha University, Chonburi, Thailand. The research team was comprised of Anoporn Khruataeng, Sumon Unsathit, Matawii Khamphirathasana, Nisarath Jongwisan and Oranong Arlunaek from Love Pattaya, and Jensen Byrne, LGBTI and Human Rights Project Officer, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub.

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Edmund Settle, Policy Advisor, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, and Supanee (Jay) Pongruengphant, UNDP Thailand, managed the development of the report.

The report was supported by UNDP under the Being LGBTI in Asia programme, a regional programme that addresses inequality, violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status, and promotes universal access to health and social services.

Executive Summary

Historically, in the Asia-Pacific region the portrayal of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) community in media has been largely negative, reflecting the general lack of acceptance of LGBTIQ people within wider society.¹ These negative media representations of LGBTIQ people as well as issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), as well as sex characteristics, play a role in the perpetuation and legitimization of widespread stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people in the Asia-Pacific region. In response to this, the Being LGBTI in Asia programme launched a regional programmatic strategy to promote media's positive engagement on SOGIE and intersex issues in three countries: China, the Philippines and Thailand. This strategy comprised of three country-specific media studies, national media roundtables in each country, and national media fellowship programmes for strengthening the role of media in advocacy.

Hence, this media study of Thailand is one part of the wider regional media engagement strategy of UNDP's Being LGBTI in Asia programme and aims to:

1. Demonstrate the role of news media in reflecting and perpetuating stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people.
2. Identify key trends and patterns of reporting and representations of LGBTIQ people including the volume of LGBTIQ news covered, sources, location, content, presentation of news stories and representations.
3. Identify key issues and challenges in tackling negative and harmful media portrayals of LGBTIQ people.
4. Provide recommendations for policy advocacy to strengthen the role of media advocacy in creating an enabling environment for discussion of the human rights of LGBTIQ people and issues of stigma and discrimination.

Theoretical framework

This study draws from two main theoretical lenses, namely 'agenda-setting theory' and the 'theory of representation'. Agenda-setting theory describes the ability and role of news media to influence what issues or topics hold salience in society.² The theory of representation examines how a particular person or group is being presented to the audience. Representations in media make portrayals of subjects seem 'natural' so that they are perceived as reflections of reality; thus, the way a person or group is represented can have a huge social impact.³ This study explores the ways in which different Thai news media outlets have either reflected and perpetuated stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people or have worked to address or diminish it.

Research methodology

Content analysis was employed to consider six media outlets. Four Thai-language print media were selected: *Thairath*, *Manager Weekly*, *Matichon Weekly* and *GossipStars*; and one in English, the *Bangkok Post*. *Voice TV*, an online media outlet was also included in this study. Data collection was conducted over a period of one year between July 2014 and June 2015.

1 UNDP (2013). Stigma, Discrimination and Key Affected Populations: Strengthening the Role of Media Advocacy in Sri Lanka through a Critical Analysis of News Media Coverage. Bangkok.; UNDP, USAID (2014). Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report. Bangkok; UNDP, USAID (2014). Being LGBT in Asia: Philippines Country Report. Bangkok; USAID (2014). Being LGBT in Asia: Indonesia. Country Report. Bangkok.; Fongkaew, K. (2014). School Girls' Sexualities, Media and Popular Culture in Chiang Mai, Thailand: Chiang Mai. Ph.D. Dissertation, Chiang Mai University.

2 McCombs, M. (2004). Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing.

3 Hall, S. (1997). Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. London: Sage.

Key findings

The key findings from the content analysis are presented in five parts as follows:

- 1. Volume of LGBTIQ news covered:** In this period of one year, 870 news reports were collected related to LGBTIQ issues or people or in which they were mentioned. They represented 291 news items (33 percent) from Thairath, 189 (22 percent) from Bangkok Post, 155 (18 percent) from GossipStar, 137 (16 percent) from Voice TV, 51 (6 percent) from Manager Weekly, and 47 (5 percent) from Matichon Weekly.

When comparing coverage of the different subgroups within the LGBTIQ population, news reports on gay men or other men who have sex with men were most common with 351 news stories (33.5 percent). The second most commonly covered group were transgender persons at 195 times (18.6 percent), consisting of 185 (17.7 percent) reports on transgender women and only 10 (0.9 percent) reports on transgender men. News coverage on lesbians was found 143 (13.6 percent) times, 74 (7.1 percent) items were found on bisexuals or bisexuality, 41 reports (4 percent) were about queer people and only two news items reported (0.2 percent) on people who are intersex. News items that covered LGBTIQ in general were found 241 times (23 percent).⁴

- 2. Source and location:** Most of the news coverage of LGBTIQ people (88 percent) came from a secondary source, meaning that the news source did not originate from LGBTIQ people directly. In other words, in only 12 percent of the news reports were LGBTIQ persons the direct providers of the information.

In terms of the geographic source of news items, 65 percent of the reports about LGBTIQ people were from local and national sources. Most of the news presented was sensationalist in nature, especially entertainment news, and was not presented as a priority. The rest (35 percent) of the news items came from international news outlets; these were mostly of higher quality, focusing, for example, on the human rights situation of LGBTIQ people or on issues related to education, arts and culture.

- 3. Content:** It was found that 42.5 percent of news coverage on LGBTIQ people and issues was entertainment news emphasizing celebrities, fashion and popular culture. Twenty-five percent of the collected news items focused on social issues, particularly stories and opinions on mainstream issues during that particular period of time. Meanwhile, 9.5 percent were news reports on crime and violence and 8.5 percent were about sport, while lifestyle news represented 8 percent of reports and political news items comprised less than 6.5 percent.

- 4. Presentation of news stories:** Most of the news stories regarding LGBTIQ persons (69.5 percent) were categorized as 'soft news'. 'Soft news' refers to stories that were not serious and are characterized by a lack of investigative depth. The emphasis of such news is on entertainment and sensationalized content rather than on educating and providing useful information. Soft news items are not likely to have an influence on a large readership in mainstream society. The rest of the news reports (30.5 percent) were considered as hard news, highlighting significant and useful news stories related to human rights, law and education.

- 5. Representation of LGBTIQ people in the news reports:** The study found that LGBTIQ people were represented in several ways:

5.1 Words and designations that stereotyped, threatened or degraded the human dignity of **lesbians** were common. Examples include *'dontree Thai'* (playing Thai music: referring to small cup-shaped cymbals, Thai musical instruments, that are commonly compared to the vagina), *'long dat cha nee'* (crazy about fingers) or *'klin lesbian chouy'* (lesbian smell). Some of the illustrations that accompanied these news items were overtly sexual.

5.2 Gay men and other men who have sex with men were represented in one dimension as obsessed with sex and beauty. They were also frequently linked with HIV transmission and with crime. In certain cases, calling someone *'gay'* or *'homosexual'* was used in an attempt to discredit the person who was the focus of the news item. Many stigmatizing words and terms were found that were degrading to the human dignity of gay men and other men who have sex with men, for example *'om nok kaw'* (suck a dove: dove is a slang word for penis in Thai), *'gay gang' 'mai pa diew kun'* (a grouping of trees in the same

4 The total number of news items analysed found 1,047 mentions of LGBTIQ people or issues, which is higher than the number stated earlier (870). The reason is that some news items covered more than one subgroup of LGBTIQ.

forest: implying homosexual behavior), *'suam tem'* (full toilet), *'ra bert suam'* (explode a toilet), *'seur leung or sai leung'* (feces lovers). The last three terms were used to imply anal sex by presenting it as something dirty and disgusting.

5.3 Bisexual persons were portrayed as being sex-obsessed, with the assumption that as they are attracted to more than one gender they are thus sexually promiscuous.

5.4 Transgender people were reported about in three main ways: as a reflection of social problems or the decay of the norms and values of 'good' society; as jokers, clowns or comic relief; and/or as persons who are obsessed with sex. Prejudiced ways of reporting and the use of suggestive and negative illustrations were also often found. There were also many words and designations used to label transgender women that disrespected their human dignity such as *'faggy moan'* (a stereotypical reaction of transgender women towards good-looking men), *'dupe giant fag'* (buffalo-sized faggots who scam the world), *'fake shell'* (fake pussy), *'born to kill gibbons'* (gibbon is a slang term for woman in Thai) 'feminine explosion' or *'ass wriggle'* (acting or walking in a feminine way). It was also noticed that news reporters still lack knowledge and sensitivity about male transgender identities. This was reflected in the use of terms such as *'tom'* (tomboy) and *'saw lor'* (handsome lady) and the presentation of male transgender identities as something that transgender men had appropriated.

5.5 Queer people were represented either as jokers, clowns and comic relief or as strange people who deviated from normality.

5.6 Intersex people were only mentioned in two articles. The first news item was about Hindu gods who were depicted as being both male and female, while the other was a piece on a documentary about the difficulties faced by an intersex person. The lack of proportional representation of intersex people in Thai news media reflects a broader invisibility of intersex people in Thai society.

5.7 LGBTIQ people and issues in general (the keywords used were LGBT, 'gender diversity or gay) The majority of these articles represented LGBTIQ persons in neutral manners while a very limited amount of articles still made use of negative stereotypes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, certain journalists displayed a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding the LGBTIQ population in their reporting. Consequently, LGBTIQ people were presented in news media in ways that differed from the general public. Agenda setting and representation are two important lenses that can be used to analyse Thai news media outlets in their portrayal of LGBTIQ people and issues and their use of specific imagery and terminology that was for the most part stereotypical or offensive. Several news reports utilized judgmental narratives that intentionally linked transgender gender identities and gender non-conforming expressions as well as non-heterosexual sexual orientations to negative personal characteristics or social phenomena in order to create the impression that LGBTQ people are unstable, mentally disturbed or outright dangerous. Intersex people on the other hand were not represented in news media to reflect that proportion of society, and are thus rendered invisible.

The study further reveals that subgroups of the LGBTIQ population are represented to different degrees in Thai news platforms with gay men and other men who have sex with men as well as transgender women most prevalent among LGBTQI media representations. A large sample of the news media analysed perpetuated the dominant representations of LGBTIQ people by portraying just a small number of stereotypical characteristics, and ignoring the variance and complex personalities of individual LGBTQI people. These stereotypes were commonly focused on the binary composition of masculinity and femininity that dominates Thai cultural attitudes towards sex and relationships.

Moreover, the content analysis of this study explored the influence of gender stereotypes in Thai society on news media reporting related to sexual orientation, gender identity and SOGIE, sex characteristics and LGBTIQ. Such reporting can strengthen the imbalance and inequality between genders and sexualities. Lastly, several instances of news coverage related to LGBTIQ people were found to be against the *Code of Ethics for members of the Press Council of Thailand*.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy advocacy as a result of the study can be made for a diverse range of stakeholders, as found below:

- 1. Government organizations** should support the legal and human rights of LGBTIQ people, and should ensure that social welfare provision is provided to LGBTIQ people the same way as it is for other Thai citizens. Government employees should participate in learning activities on SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people organized by responsible agencies. Other related government organizations such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture should take an active role in creating positive attitudes and providing accurate knowledge about SOGIE, sex characteristics and LGBTIQ people. A professional Code of Conduct, outlining guidelines on how to uphold professional ethics in reporting news on SOGIE, sex characteristics and LGBTIQ issues among journalists needs to be developed. Related governmental, independent, private and civil society organizations should regularly monitor media content and be empowered to take investigative and legal action if the professional ethics code is breached. Funding should be mobilized to support community-based activities and research projects. And strong mechanisms and platforms for collaboration, such as the establishment and empowerment of a media consumer alliance, should be ensured.
- 2. Media organizations** should proactively raise awareness among administrative and editorial board members, journalists and other related media personnel regarding SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people. Media organizations should support their employees to participate in learning activities on SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people organized by responsible agencies which are working on these issues. Establishing awareness and understanding regarding SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people among journalists, including capacity-building for practitioners and junior news reporters, should also be prioritized. Moreover, media organizations should support the development of a network among journalists in order to facilitate learning from each other and to obtain skills in how to report on and promote the human rights of LGBTIQ people.
- 3. Press councils, and journalist and press associations, including other agencies responsible for media monitoring and press development** should take an active role in supporting news reports that follow professional ethics as well as respect the human rights of LGBTIQ people. Experts and representatives of the LGBTIQ community should also be involved in the media monitoring process as key stakeholders. Press councils, associations and agencies should play an active role in disseminating information to the public regarding the processes to provide suggestions and complaints regarding media content that violates the human rights and dignity of LGBTIQ people. Lastly, issues of SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people should be integrated into training courses and capacity-building sessions organized by press development agencies.
- 4. Educational institutions** should integrate SOGIE, intersexuality and LGBTIQ human rights issues into the curricula of educational institutions for journalism, mass communication and communication arts. Capacity development in research and teaching among faculties on these issues should also be supported.
- 5. Organizations working on SOGIE, sex characteristics and LGBTIQ issues** should develop a handbook for those reporting on LGBTIQ issues which can be utilized as an authoritative guideline for journalists seeking to be sensitized on these issues. The development and empowerment of networks of journalists should also be supported so that its members' capacity and knowledge regarding SOGIE, sex characteristics and the human rights of LGBTIQ people can be further enhanced to make a positive impact in the future.
- 6. General audiences and LGBTIQ persons** should realize that they can be active audiences by practising critical thinking and by developing media literacy skills. They should actively participate in organized social network activities to monitor and investigate media content presentation in various ways and be encouraged to report and take action against violations.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) are vastly underrepresented in news media reports and when represented are often represented inaccurately, stereotypically, harmfully or without a clear understanding of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) or intersex variations. Although LGBTIQ persons have been recently provided more platforms, especially in Thai entertainment media,⁵ comparing to the past, the media has often portrayed this group of people as physically, sexually and mentally deviant in some way compared to other people, whether heterosexual or 'male' or 'female' cisgender people, the term used to describe when one's gender identity corresponds with their birth gender.⁶

How issues are portrayed in the news media and dominant social rhetoric are closely interconnected. Negative media representations of LGBTIQ people and SOGIE issues currently play a role in the perpetuation and legitimization of widespread stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people in Thai society. Moreover, agenda-setting practices through heterosexist and sexist narratives, negative portrayals, harmful stereotypes and lack of representation in media, as well as explicit or implicit discriminatory speech add to a climate of stigmatization.⁷ Considering the pervasive nature of modern media, LGBTIQ discriminatory content is widely accessible and often difficult to avoid. Such negative and ill-informed portrayals feed into a larger discriminatory 'grand narrative' that subliminally reinforces pervasive discriminatory associations and stigma of what it means to be LGBTIQ.⁸ This reinforcement further entrenches stigma and discrimination within the media and wider societal context. Additionally, LGBTIQ persons may be exposed to negative representations and assaulted by hate speech on a regular basis which can have a profound effect on their psychological and emotional well-being, affecting their ability to integrate and belong, resulting in increased social exclusion, self-stigma and marginalization.⁹

In Thai society, LGBTIQ people have commonly been perceived negatively. Thai society generally adopts the attitude that LGBTIQ people are sexually deviant, abnormal and have a disorder. Prejudice and various forms of both overt and hidden discrimination as well as basic human rights violations against LGBTIQ people result from these associations.¹⁰

Historically in the Asia-Pacific region, the portrayal of LGBTIQ people in the media has been negative, reflecting a general intolerance for LGBTIQ people in many cultures in the region.¹¹ Negative media representation of LGBTIQ people, SOGIE and intersex issues play a role in the perpetuation and legitimization of widespread stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people in this region. According to the latest UNDP report on the situation of the human rights of LGBTIQ people in Thailand, there are several obstacles and problems faced by LGBTIQ people, such as restrictive national law and policies, social cultural and religious discrimination, lack of acceptance by Thai families, educational obstacles, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of access to health services, as well as the absence of protection against discrimination and stigma through (social) media.¹²

It is with this as background that the **Being LGBTI in Asia programme** initiated the **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics in the Media Study** as the first of four strategic activities under a media engagement project entitled **'A Tool for Change: Working with the Media on Issues Relating to**

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- 5 Kaewmak, S. (2016). *Creation and Narration of Male-Homosexual Main Characters in Thai Entertainment Media*. Bangkok: Faculty of Communication Arts. Chulalongkorn University.
 - 6 Artid, N. (2009). *View Gay through Mass Media*. In *Thai Gay and Kathoey Media: Claiming Space for Voices of Sexual and Gender Diversity*. Peter A. Jackson and Narupon Duangwises, eds. Bangkok: Quality Graphic House, pp. 152–158.
 - 7 McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing.
 - 8 Lyotard, J. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
 - 9 Singhakowinta, J. (2014). *Media's Stigmatization: Production of Gay Myths in Thai Society*. *NIDA Journal of Language and Communication*. 18(20), pp. 64–76.; Sangarun, W. (2011). *Communicate as a Professional: Guideline for the News Report on Gender Diversity Persons*. Bangkok: Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand.
 - 10 De Lind van Wijngaarden, J. & Ojanen, T. (2016). *Identity Management and Sense of Belonging to a Gay Community Among Young Rural Thai Same-sex Attracted Men: Implications for HIV Prevention and Treatment*. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 18(4), pp. 377–390; Fongkaew, W., Wongpanarak, N., Fongkaew, K., Lertmunlikaporn. S. (2006). *A Study of Sexual Identity among Adolescents*. Chiang Mai: Nopburi Publishing.
 - 11 UNDP (2013). *Stigma, Discrimination and Key Affected Populations: Strengthening the Role of Media Advocacy in Sri Lanka through a Critical Analysis of News Media Coverage*. Bangkok; UNDP, USAID (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report*. Bangkok; UNDP, USAID (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: Philippines Country Report*. Bangkok; USAID (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: Indonesia. Country Report*. Bangkok; Fongkaew, K. (2014). *School Girls' Sexualities, Media and Popular Culture in Chiang Mai, Thailand*. Chiang Mai. Ph.D. Dissertation, Chiang Mai University.
 - 12 UNDP, USAID (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report*.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics in Thailand' to show the frequency and occurrence of negative portrayals and stigmatization of LGBTIQ people in Thai news media in order to raise awareness and strengthen the role of media in advocating on LGBTIQ issues.

Objectives of the study

1. Demonstrate the role of news media in reflecting and perpetuating stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people.
2. Identify key trends and patterns of reporting and representations of LGBTIQ people including the volume of LGBTIQ news covered, sources, location, content, presentation of news stories and representations.
3. Identify key issues and challenges in tackling negative and harmful media portrayals of LGBTIQ people.
4. Provide recommendations for policy advocacy to strengthen the role of media advocacy in creating an enabling environment for the human rights of LGBTIQ people and addressing stigma and discrimination.

Research methodology

Content analysis was employed to examine coverage in five print media outlets (four in Thai and one in English) and one online media outlet for a period of one year between July 2014 and June 2015. The list was purposively chosen based on the popularity and coverage of targeted readers as follows:

- One daily newspaper: Thairath
- Two weekly news magazines: Manager Weekly & Matichon Weekly
- One weekly entertainment magazine: GossipStars
- One English language daily newspaper: The Bangkok Post
- One online news outlet which is well-known for its LGBT section: Voice TV (www.voicetv.co.th)

For the actual data search and collection from the selected media outlets, five research team members were trained to source, identify and collect relevant media content. The online news was systematically reviewed and news reports related to LGBTIQ people and issues were compiled based on a list of keywords (see Annex II). The process of data collection was designed and closely monitored by the lead researcher. Then the collected data was coded, categorized and analysed with participation of the researcher team members.

In terms of the process of data analysing, the coded data was systematically categorized according to several themes that emerged during the research process. After that, the groups of meanings and their relationship to a particular theme were examined, and the data was analysed in order to answer the research objectives.¹³

Scope of the study

1. This study exclusively focused on print and online news media. However, today, media is converging. Cooperation and collaboration between previously unconnected media forms and platforms is occurring widely. Therefore, the analysis of this selection of Thai print and online news media is not an accurate representation of overall media portrayals of LGBTIQ people and issues.
2. The findings of this study cover only a limited time frame, that is, the data collection was done employing purposive sampling during a period of one year between July 2014 and June 2015. The findings might have been slightly different if done over another time period.

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13 Potisita, C. (2004). Science and Art of Qualitative Research. Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW OF MEDIA AND NEWS REPORTS ON LGBTIQ PEOPLE AND ISSUES

Agenda-setting theory and the theory of representation

This study draws from two main theoretical lenses, namely 'agenda-setting theory' and the 'theory of representation', and explores the ways in which Thai news media outlets have either reflected and perpetuated stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people or have worked to address or diminish it.

Agenda-setting theory looks at the controlling of content presented and discussed in the media through the selection, editing, mode of presentation, positioning, and prioritization or even silencing of a particular news story. According to this theory, the media uses objects or issues to influence their audience on what and how they should think. Therefore, the media plays an active role in affecting the presentation of news reports about issues in the public mind. The process of agenda-setting depends on various internal and external factors affecting a specific media organization. The news that is given utmost importance by the media is likely to give people the impression that this is indeed the most important event or piece of information. In summary, agenda-setting processes influence the perceptions, attitudes and reactions of audiences toward particular groups of people or events, led and influenced by the media they access.¹⁴

A second theory, **the theory of representation**, was also employed in this study to investigate the process of how the media selects particular dimensions or characteristics of particular groups to report on that are popular for their audiences. The goal of this process is to reduce the complexity of a particular object or individual through emphasizing just a few obvious or stereotypical characteristics.¹⁵ Kaewthep states that dominant representations are formed and promoted by particular groups of people who have a superior position in society. Through the process of representation, stereotypes about a targeted group of people are constructed; in doing so, this group is being discriminated against and placed in the role of the 'other', which is different to 'us', effectively marginalizing the group in question. According to this theory, the media play a role in constructing and perpetuating representations of 'the inferior other'. While doing so, this perpetuates the status quo of people in higher positions and, by implication, of the readership/audience.¹⁶

Although it can be argued that stereotypical media representation is unavoidable due to the limitations of time and particular media platforms, the impact of these representations is not merely limited to within the media. In practice, the constructed representations also negatively affect particular groups of people who are targeted by the media in the broader world. Employing the theory of representation also helps us to understand that there are important aspects of politics and power that are involved in media representation.

News media: News values and quality

According to Buranadechachai, the definition of '**news**' is a report of fact and/or opinion about a particular incident which is current, important and regarded as interesting by a particular audience. The news considered the best is news that has significance and attracts interest from a larger group of people.¹⁷

In line with journalism principles, **news with high value** has the following attributes:

- 1. Immediacy:** The news coverage should be recent, should be new and/or never before reported by another news outlet.
- 2. Proximity:** The news report should make audiences relate to the incident in ways that it is likely to affect their lives, either in a positive or in a negative way.
- 3. Prominence:** The news coverage should place emphasis on the particular distinctive aspects of the focus issue or person such as social position, popularity and special ability – including the prominence of place, items or incident.
- 4. Consequence:** The news story should inform audiences that the incident could impact them. The more influence of the news on public in general, the more importance it has.

14 McCombs & Shaw (1972) cited in Siriyuvasak, U. (2007). *Mass Media, Culture and Society*. Bangkok: Edison Press Products.

15 Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

16 Kaewthep, K. (2006). *Science of Media and Cultural Studies*. Bangkok: Edison Press Products.

17 Buranadechachai, S. (2005). *Introduction to Journalism*. Chonburi: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University.

5. **Oddity or novelty:** Any incident which rarely occurs or is uncommon, such as breaking a record, the occurrence of a 'miracle' or any other uncommon practice is likely to engage audiences and be considered sensational.
6. **Suspense:** News in which audiences follow an investigation of an ongoing mysterious story or a series of incidents will create doubt or inspire fear.
7. **Conflict:** News about conflicts on various issues may draw audience attention such as a conflict of ideas, opinions or law.
8. **Disaster:** Audiences are likely to be interested in bad news or thrilling stories.
9. **Sex:** Reports which are related to sex or issues relating to sex, or explore issues related to sexuality are often fascinating for audiences.
10. **Human interest:** Audiences are likely to be attentive to other people's issues, especially those they can relate to, having experienced something similar before or if the issues are something they are likely to face in the future.

Despite the news attributes mentioned above, various factors should also be taken into consideration in practice, such as organizational policy, who are the targeted audiences and what are the governmental, economic, political, cultural and social contexts.

In terms of **news quality**, several aspects should be considered:

1. **Accuracy:** The news report should be the truth and not be distorted nor presented with bias. Names and information mentioned in the news coverage need to be checked and verified.
2. **Balance:** The news coverage should represent the facts from different viewpoints so that audiences can accurately understand the story or form their opinion about it. Especially in reports where there is conflict involved, different parties should be provided equal space to express their views in the media.
3. **Objectivity:** Bias and prejudice must be avoided in the news report. News reporters should be sincere and fair in investigating and reporting the news story.
4. **Concise and clear:** For the style of reporting, the news should place emphasis on being clear, concise and understandable.
5. **Recentness:** The news should be recent, fresh and suitable to the current situation.

News media and LGBTIQ issues

LGBTIQ people have existed in Thai society in different forms and incarnations for as long as living and written memory. They used to be categorized as being sexually deviant or abnormal and in many cases they were forced to live their lives in secrecy, repressing their feelings and/or their identities. Without any organizations working on the human rights of LGBTIQ populations, they accordingly often accepted their own fate. A positive transformation in Thai society has been recent developments in the recognition of gender and sexual diversity. The struggle for the human rights of LGBTIQ people in governmental, public and private sectors has progressed. Moreover, LGBTIQ people have been provided with more space in mainstream media, such as in magazines, television programs, movies and prime-time series which target a specific group of audiences. Moreover, male homosexual, transgender and gender non-conforming characters have been increasingly found in those media.¹⁸

Thailand is well known for its relative acceptance and provision of LGBTIQ rights; many Western and some Asian visitors would call it a "gay paradise".¹⁹ The 2007 Thai Constitution provided the basis to treat people with gender diversity with the same rights as other Thai citizens, especially Article 30 which stated that all citizens are entitled

18 Archavanitkul, K. (2011). *Sexuality Transition in Thailand*. Nakhon Pathom: Institute for Population and Social Research Mahidol University; Jackson, P. A. (2011). *Tolerant but Unaccepting: The Myth of a Thai "Gay Paradise"*. In *Genders & Sexualities in Modern Thailand*. Jackson, P. and Cook, N., Eds. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. pp. 226–242.; Kaewmak, S. (2016). *Creation and Narration of Male-Homosexual Main Characters in Thai Entertainment Media*. Bangkok: Faculty of Communication Arts. Chulalongkorn University.

19 Jackson, P. A. (1999). *Queer Bangkok after the Millennium: Beyond Twentieth-Century Paradigms*. In *Queer Bangkok: 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights*. Jackson, P., Ed. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. pp. 1–14.

to receive protection from the State regardless of their gender.²⁰ The way LGBTIQ citizens are protected in the Constitution is an indication of progress in Thai society. There is also less social resistance against LGBTIQ people compared to many other countries in the region.

Still, current legislative policies and laws fail to protect certain rights and to prevent discrimination against LGBTIQ citizens, and intersex issues in particular remain largely invisible. Examples of where progress still needs to be made are the right to legal gender recognition including change of legal title, name and gender marker (from female to male or otherwise), protection from violence, discrimination in education and employment and equal access to social service provisions.²¹

For over a decade, organizations working for the human rights of LGBTIQ people have been demanding that the media portray more positive images that reflect the diversity of LGBTIQ people.²² Most research on the representation of LGBTIQ people in the media has affirmed that although LGBTIQ people are provided more space in the mainstream media nowadays, stigma and negative portrayals are still widely found, as will be discussed in this report. LGBTIQ people have frequently been presented as jokers, deviants, as sex-obsessed or having tragic lives; all these stereotypes have contributed to a generally negative perception of LGBTIQ people among the general public. Additionally, same-sex relationships have commonly been presented as impermanent and of a short duration.²³

Regarding the portrayal of LGBTIQ people in news media, little research has been found comparing these studies to portrayals in other genres of media such as television, cinema, magazines or online media. Moreover, most studies on LGBTIQ people and media have focused on the most prominent and widely known subgroups, especially gay men and other men who have sex with men and transgender women.

Studies on the historical representation of men who have sex with men in Thai daily newspapers during the period of 1965–2000²⁴ reveal that it was mainly transgender women (*kathoey*) who were represented during this period. It is presumed that news reporters and readers did not accurately understand the diversity of or differences between gender identities and sexual orientations, subsuming all of them under the label *kathoey*. Between 1965 and 1990, there was general confusion around the terms, mostly offensive, used to describe men who have sex with men. These were associated with terms used to describe transgender women/*kathoey* such as *'tud'* (feminine gay) *'tui'* (anal penetration) or *'pratueng'* (a name of Thai pop song written about transvestite) among others. These words were slang terms that implied flexible gender identities. The images of transvestites that were used in media mostly portrayed men who dress like women, rather than transgender women. During 1991–2000, a greater understanding of gender identities and expressions, and the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity in Thai media, were developed, for example wider use of distinguishing terms such as *'gay'* and *'sao pra pet song'* (second kind of women or transgender women).

However, most of the portrayals and representations of men who have sex with men in the daily newspapers were negative in tone. Men who have sex with men and transgender women were mostly found in criminal news as both the perpetrators of crime, including murder, and as victims. The reported primary causal factors of these crimes were in most cases portrayed as promiscuity or an attempt to take advantage of young men for sexual purposes. In cases in which the cause of a murder was still unclear, the media usually cited the assumptions of involved police officers that the *kathoey* or men who have sex with men involved must have been adulterous or jealous. This was reported whether those assumptions were correct or not, perpetuating negative images of men who have sex with men and transgender women as violent and jealous.

20 Intentions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand'; UNDP, USAID (2014). Thailand Country Report. p. 22.

21 UNDP, USAID (2014). Thailand Country Report.

22 Wajanasara, K. (2008). What Kind of Sexual Issues Available in Library and News Report: Books, Academic Documents, News and Articles in Sexual Health Database. Bangkok: Women's Health Advocacy Foundation; Sangarun, W. (2011). Communicate as a Professional: Guideline for the News Report on Gender Diversity Persons. Bangkok: Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand.

23 Jackson, P. A. (1995). Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand. Bangkok: Bua Luang Books; Sinnot, M. (2004). Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press; UNDP, USAID (2014) Thailand Country Report; Singhakowinta, J. (2014). Media's Stigmatization: Production of Gay Myths in Thai Society. NIDA Journal of Language and Communication. 18(20), pp. 64–76.

24 Thaeyaporn, T. (2000). The Image of Male Homosexuals as Reflected in the Content of Thai Daily Newspapers During 1965–2000. Bangkok: Faculty of Communication Arts. Chulalongkorn University.

The use of sensationalist language in news headlines also promoted these topics by emphasizing sexual orientation or gender identity as a contributing factor to the crime. Men who have sex with men and transgender women were, as a result, portrayed and perceived as being deviant to social norms. The same study also highlighted how it was widely believed that the more men who have sex with men or transgender women were represented in media, the more young men and supposedly impressionable adolescent boys would start to 'imitate' these behaviors. In summary, the negative representation of men who have sex with men and transgender women in Thai daily newspapers during the period 1965–2000 perpetuated negative attitudes, prejudice and fear against this group of people among readers.

A further study by Wajanasara on the representation of LGBTIQ people in online news during a ten-year period between 1998 and 2007 found that there was an increase in news about LGBTIQ people available online as of 2004, responding to increasing interest among online audiences. However, the emphasis of reporting remained on men who have sex with men and transgender women. An increasing recognition of diverse gender identities was also found during the last period of data collection.

Most of the news captured on LGBTIQ people in this study was tabloid news. Slang words were commonly used instead of words that had a direct meaning about particular subgroups of LGBTIQ, for example, '*pratueng*', '*num na ya*', '*tud*', '*taew*' (these four words mean a feminine gay), '*tui*', '*tua dum*' (black beans, implying anal sex) and '*mai pa diew kun*' (the trees in the same forest).

However, the study also found online news content about social movements advocating for the human rights of LGBTIQ people. These articles dealt with issues such as the promotion of legal rights and protection from violence as well as various events organized to promote the human rights of LGBTIQ people.²⁵

Lastly, Panudech collected 1,345 news items on LGBTIQ issues between 1997 and 2007. She found that one out of five of the collected news items were reports about the LGBTIQ social movement for human rights. She found a significant rise in this area of news from one report per year in 1997 to ten reports per year in 2007. Most of the news stories detailed the reactions of LGBTIQ organizations against social policies that discriminated against or violated the human rights of LGBTIQ people, or were around conferences or information about LGBTIQ issues provided by various organizations, as well as the coming out of LGBTIQ persons.²⁶

The above literature review was only one of a limited number of academic studies on the representation of LGBTIQ people in Thai news media. It showed that what research does exist has focused primarily on men who have sex with men and transgender women and in the vast majority of cases is limited to tabloid reporting. The review showed that within Thai news media, the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity have been commonly conflated and that reporters commonly lack or disregard the use of sensitized language, freely using stigmatizing and insulting language in relation to LGBTIQ persons. Most significantly the review showed that lesbians, bisexual people, transgender men and intersex people are not well represented in the media. The extent of the frequency and caliber of their representation in Thai news media is unknown.

This research project hopes to fill this gap in knowledge by revealing the representation of LGBTIQ people and issues in a diverse array of contemporary news media, in order to provide suggestions for policy advocacy for organizations working in media and on LGBTIQ issues to improve this situation.

25 Wajanasara, K. (2008). What Kind of Sexual Issues Available in Library and News Report: Books, Academic Documents, News and Articles in Sexual Health Database. Bangkok: Women's Health Advocacy Foundation.

26 Panudech, J. (2008). 11 of Gender Diversity News Movement. In What Kind of Sexual Issues Available in Library and News Report: Books, Academic Documents, News and Articles in Sexual Health Database. Kullapa Wajanasara Ed. Bangkok: Women's Health Advocacy Foundation. pp. 92–98.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY: LGBTIQ PEOPLE IN THAI NEWS MEDIA – HOW HUMANS PORTRAY OTHER HUMANS

“The mission of newspapers is to communicate between humans. It is thus closely linked to human life and mind. The newspaper is hence simply a medium of the human life and mind”²⁷

The quote above explains that news media is not simply a form for communicating certain social incidents between humans. Media reports are also reflections of the mindsets and attitudes of news reporters themselves as well as dominant groups in wider society. In this chapter, the findings from the content analysis are presented.

1. Volume of LGBTIQ news items covered

In a period of one year, 870 news reports were collected related to LGBTIQ issues or in which LGBTIQ people were mentioned. There were 291 news items (33 percent) from Thairath, 189 (22 percent) from the Bangkok Post, 155 (18 percent) from GossipStar, 137 (16 percent) from Voice TV, 51 (6 percent) from Manager Weekly, and 47 (5 percent) from Matchon Weekly.

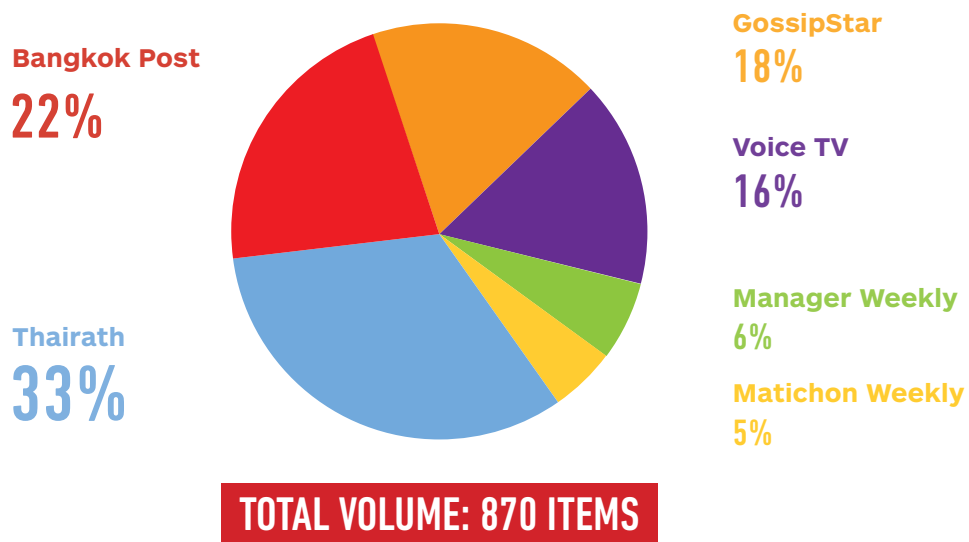


Figure 1: Volume of LGBTIQ news covered

When comparing the coverage of the different subgroups in the LGBTIQ population, news reports on gay men or other men who have sex with men were most common with 351 news stories (33.5 percent). The second most commonly covered group was transgender persons, who were covered 195 times (18.6 percent), consisting of 185 (17.7 percent) reports on transgender women and only 10 on transgender men. News coverage on lesbians was found 143 (13.6 percent) times, 74 (7.1 percent) items were found on bisexuals or bisexuality, 41 reports (4 percent) were about people with a queer identity and just two news items reported (0.2 percent) on people who are intersex. News items that covered LGBTIQ in general were found 241 times (23 percent).²⁸

27 Boonpawat, T. (1995). *Principal of Newspaper: Handbook of Experience*. Bangkok: Matchon Publishing House. p. 22.

28 The total volume of news coverages presented in this part was 1,047 items which were higher than the actual number stated earlier of 870 items of news coverage. Certain items (177) were discarded from the study as they included LGBTIQ generally only as one among other subgroups of the general population.

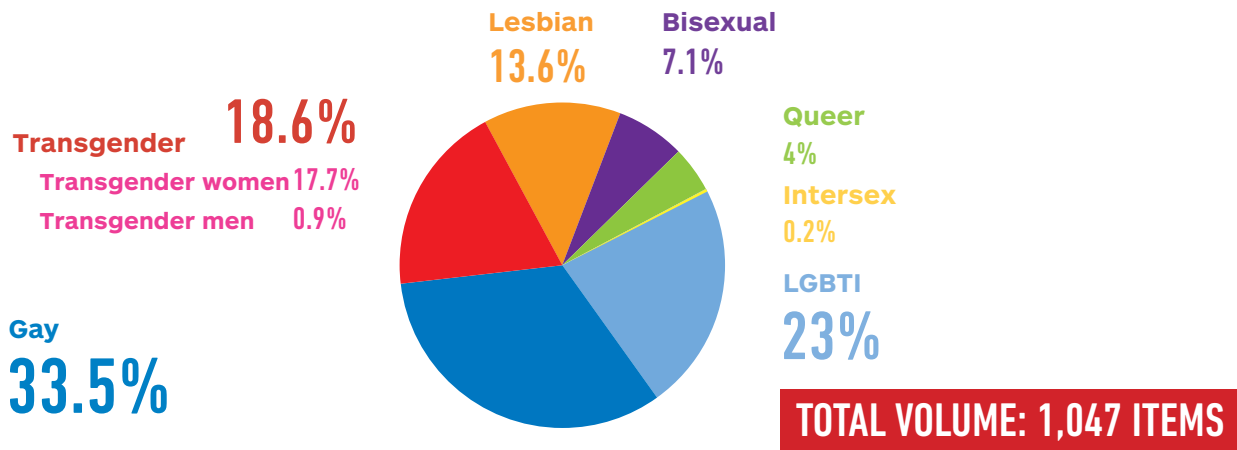


Figure 2: Comparison of news coverage among different subgroups in the LGBTIQ population

2. Source and location

This section explores the extent to which journalists created stories from primary or secondary sources, as well as the extent to which the news sources contained local coverage on topics related to LGBTIQ people or whether they depended on wire services for international news.²⁹ News reports which are derived from different sources imply different levels of credibility. Moreover, the difference of news locations reflects the political, social and cultural contexts of a particular period of time, as well as the editorial policy of a news outlet.

This study found that most of the news coverage about LGBTIQ people (88 percent) came from a secondary source, meaning it was provided by people who were not themselves LGBTIQ. This means that only 12 percent of the news reports were collected from primary sources in which LGBTIQ persons were the direct providers of the information.

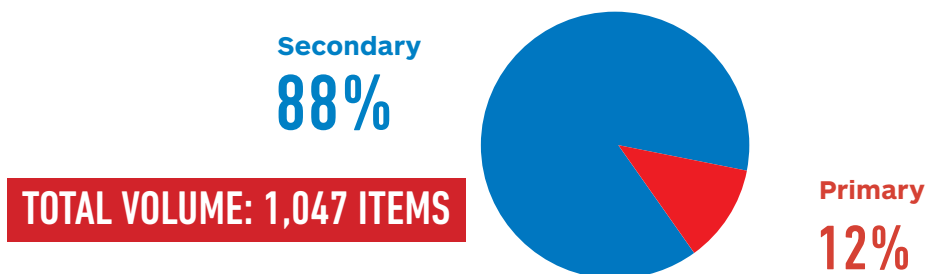


Figure 3: News source

Most of the news coverage on LGBTIQ people was derived from a secondary source. The rest of reports were collected from primary sources, such as interviews of LGBTIQ persons. Many of these stories highlighted gender identity and sexual orientation, despite the fact that they were not related to the main points of the news story. News reports which perpetuated stigma and negative representations of LGBTIQ people were commonly found. Such stories claimed, for example, that LGBTIQ people had high sex drives,³⁰ had extensive sexual experience and/or with a large number of sexual partners,³¹ expressed obvious feminine characteristics (in the cases of gay men

29 A wire service is a news agency that supplies syndicated news by wire to subscribed newspapers and radio and television stations. Some prominent examples are Associated Press and Reuters.

30 Gay guys gathered at 'male restrooms' in a famous mall, warning sign needed, Thairath, 20 July 2014, p. 1.

31 Thai kathoey won making a famous actor forgot gibbons (a slang term for woman in Thai), GossipStars, 5–11 February 2015, p. 20.

and *kathoey*)³² or strong masculine characteristics (in the case of ‘tomboys’ (lesbians)),³³ and had less ability to control their temper.³⁴ News coverage that portrayed positive human characteristics and the diversity of LGBTIQ people were also found, but in a much smaller amount (see Annex 3).³⁵

As mentioned, the majority of news coverage about LGBTIQ people was derived from a secondary source. Stigmatizing and negative language was widely present in such reports. This use of prejudiced and insulting language focused on particular stereotypical aspects of assumed LGBTIQ people, often sexual in nature. Harmful and derogatory language that was found included ‘*klap jai khob phuchai*’³⁶ (after which she “came back from hanging out with masculine lesbians to have a new [and more appropriate] relationship with a man”), ‘*yeun yan chob chanee*’³⁷ (insisting on preferring a “gibbon”, which is a slang term usually used by gay men and *kathoey* to refer to a heterosexual woman). News reports that associated being LGBTIQ as a causal factor of violence and crime were also found.³⁸ Photographs of LGBTIQ persons, especially youth, were often used without their permission and their faces were shown without being censored, revealing their identities to the public. Sometimes photographs were used without the persons in them even being connected to the news story.³⁹ A smaller number of unbiased news reports were found. Most of these were news about the achievement of LGBTIQ persons and life stories, and items about the social movement of LGBTIQ rights organizations. The reporting in these news items, used neutral language (see Annex 3).⁴⁰

Regarding the origin of news reports, 65 percent of the reports about LGBTIQ persons were from local and national coverage. Most of the news presented was sensationalistic in nature, especially entertainment news. This news was usually of a low priority and was not considered to be important to both news reporters and audiences. The rest (35 percent) of the news items came from international news outlets; these were mostly of higher quality, focusing on useful information and knowledge, for example on the basic human rights of LGBTIQ people and LGBTIQ art, culture and education.

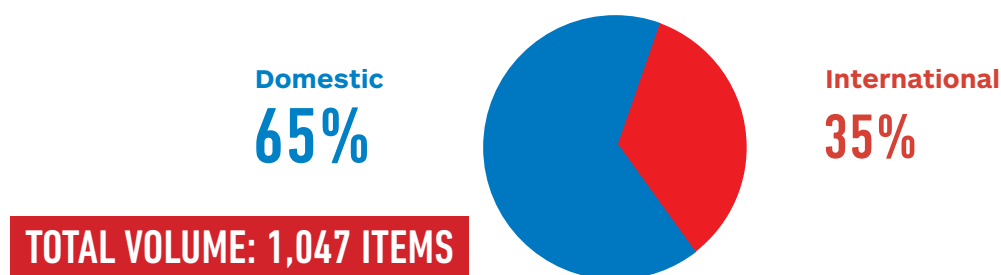


Figure 4: News location

To conclude the analysis of this part of the chapter, quality reports about or featuring LGBTIQ people derived from the Thai context itself were rare. Where found, these quality reports were limited to reporting on lawsuits against discriminatory practices, politics and the social movement for LGBTIQ rights. Mainstream media reports about LGBTIQ issues were mainly dedicated to ‘soft news’ coverage, which will be discussed in the next part. Soft news

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32 Male oops! female singer, GossipStars, 14–20 May 2015, p. 51.

33 Debut a tomboy ‘Juu’ volunteered to take care of her heart (instead of man), Manager Weekly, 26 July–1 August 2014, p. 35–36.

34 Wai (paying respect in Thai way) yet? Otherwise you will be damned by Jae (older sister) Off, Thairath, 4 June 2015, p. 31; Threatened to be slapped after asking for break up with her tomboy lover’, Manager Weekly, 20–26 September 2014, p. 26.

35 New vision Constitution Drafting Commission protected ‘transgender’ rights, Manager Weekly, 17–23 January 2015, p. 17; In a Family Way: Thailand’s proposed surrogacy bill has raised concerns among the LGBT community, unmarried couples and single mothers, who claim that it violates their rights, Bangkok Post, 22 October 2014, p. 1.

36 GossipStars, 31 July–6 August 2014, pp. 48–49.

37 GossipStars, 4–10 December 2014 p. 73.

38 Threatened to be slapped after asking for break up with her tomboy lover, Manager Weekly, 20–26 September 2014, p. 26; Kathoey involved in sex trafficking arrested, Thairath, 19 November 2014, p. 15.

39 GossipStars, 19–25 February 2015, p. 69.

40 Global LGBT Associations Argued TU on Its Discrimination Against Professor Kath, Voice TV, 27 April 2015; Elton John, Partner Guests of Honour at US Gay Rights Gala Source: Bangkok Post, 6 October 2014, p. 3.

refers to stories that were not serious and are characterized by a lack of investigative depth. Most high(er) quality news was found in the English-language press or were derived from international news outlets.

3. Content

This section explores the different kinds of content, showing the different levels of significance given to particular news reports.

It was found that 42.5 percent of news coverage on LGBTIQ issues was entertainment news emphasizing celebrities, fashion and popular culture. Twenty-five percent of the collected news items focused on social issues, particularly stories and opinions on mainstream issues in that particular period of time. Meanwhile, 9.5 percent were crime and violence news reports; 8.5 percent were sport-related; lifestyle news accounted for 8 percent; and political news items comprised the least at 6.5 percent.

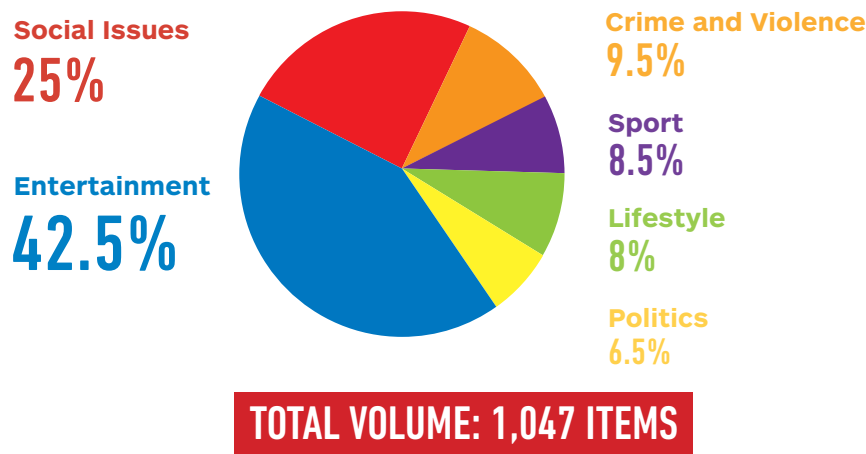


Figure 5: News content

From the result of the analysis, it can be concluded that LGBTIQ persons are provided only limited space and are placed in a comparatively inferior position in Thai news media compared to non-LGBTIQ people. Most LGBTIQ people were portrayed in entertainment news as artists, actors/actresses, singers, musicians, fashion designers or other positions related to the entertainment industry. Most of the news emphasized the gender identity or sexual orientation of the persons that were the focus of the news item, even in news items that were little relevance.

In terms of the news coverage, priority was placed mainly on LGBTIQ health, sexual health and HIV and AIDS. In accordance with the results of the previous section, quality reports about LGBTIQ on serious issues such as those related to politics, law, human rights, education or religion, were rare.

4. Presentation of news stories

The particular form of storytelling of a news story indicates the importance and the depth of the news report.

Based on the collected data, most of the news stories analysed regarding LGBTIQ persons (69.5 percent) were categorized as 'soft news'. 'Soft news' refers to storytelling styles that are generally accessed by a small group of people. The emphasis of such news is on entertaining and sensationalistic items rather than on educating and providing useful information. The content of soft news items is perceived not likely to have an influence on a larger readership in mainstream society.⁴¹ The rest of the news reports (30.5 percent) were considered hard news, highlighting significant and useful news stories related to human rights, law and education.

41 Buranadechachai, S. (2005). Introduction to Journalism. Chonburi: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University.



Figure 6: Presentation of news stories

Figures 7 and 8 below illustrate sexualized and ‘soft’ news characteristics that dominate the representations of LGBTIQ persons in Thai news media. In comparison, ‘hard’ news about LGBTIQ persons is given limited space and a limited platform in Thai news media. This dominance of ‘soft’ news coverage would indicate that LGBTIQ issues are not considered important to overall Thai society. Figure 8 also demonstrates the lack of in-depth analysis, investigative journalism or knowledge provision inherent in ‘soft’ news coverage.

5. Representation of LGBTIQ

As mentioned previously, news reports are a reflection of the mindsets and attitudes of certain dominant groups in society and of the news reporters producing news for or on behalf of them. In this section, the overall treatment of LGBTIQ in the news reports is discussed, particularly how LGBTIQ people are represented.

This section demonstrates that LGBTIQ persons were widely stigmatized and represented in particular ways in news reports that harmfully distinguish them from non-LGBTIQ people.

5.1 Lesbians

Most of the reports about lesbians were tabloid news. The use of words and designations in ways that stereotype lesbians and threaten and degrade their human dignity was common. Examples include such derogatory phrases as *'don tree Thai'*⁴² (playing Thai music: referring to small cup-shaped cymbals, Thai musical instruments, that are commonly compared to the vagina), or judgmental language such as referring to a woman who was *'klap jai khob phuchai'*⁴³ (after which she “came back from hanging out with masculine lesbians to have a new [and more appropriate] relationship with a man”), insinuations about lesbian sex such as *'long dat cha nee'*⁴⁴ (crazy about fingers) or *'klin lesbian chouy'*⁴⁵ (lesbian smell). Some of the photos that were part of these news items were overtly sexual (see Figure 7). The study also found that marriage between two women was treated in a sensational manner and thus was a newsworthy event.⁴⁶ News coverage about lesbians in which neutral words and reporting styles were used was limited and when found was located mostly in sport news, with a focus on competition and results.⁴⁷ A few news stories reported on the professional achievements of a person without undue emphasis on their gender identity or sexual orientation.⁴⁸

42 GossipStars, 11–17 December 2014, pp. 50–51.

43 GossipStars, 31 July–6 August 2014, pp. 48–49.

44 No boyfriend in this life, Mo is crazy about fingers, GossipStars, 31 July–6 August 2014, p. 90; Finger impression!!! Air is fascinated with handsome lady, GossipStars, 25 September–1 October 2014, p. 90.

45 Lesbian smell is all around 'Michelle Rodriguez' can survive without a man, GossipStars, 22–28 January 2015, p. 70.

46 Tom-dee got married, Thairath, 27 September 2014, p. 1, 15.

47 Fun Home gives voice to first lesbian lead character, Bangkok Post, 26 March 2015, p. 5; Thai athlete troop was hot, won 3 golds, sepa takraw was excellent, Thairath, 4 October 2014, p. 17.

48 An English cottage in the Thai country, Preeyaporn Pumhiran on bringing the archetypal homes to the Kingdom, Bangkok Post, 30 October 2014, p. 9.



Figure 7: This photo accompanied a news item about lesbians and is overtly sexual in nature (GossipStar, 14 July 2014, p. 8)

5.2 Gay men and other men who have sex with men

As noted in the literature review, gay men and other men who have sex with men were the most represented of LGBTIQ populations studied in Thai news media. However, when portrayed they were represented in one dimension as obsessed with sex,⁴⁹ beauty,⁵⁰ and plastic surgery.⁵¹ They were also frequently linked with HIV transmission⁵² and with crime.⁵³ In certain cases, calling someone 'gay' or homosexual was used in an attempt to discredit the person who was the focus of the news item – utilizing 'gay' as a derogatory term in itself.⁵⁴

Many stigmatizing words and terms were found that were degrading to the human dignity of gay men and other men who have sex with men, for example 'om nok kaw'⁵⁵ (suck a dove: dove is a slang word for penis in Thai), 'gay gang'⁵⁶, 'mai pa diew kun'⁵⁷ (the group of trees in the same forest: implying homosexual behavior), 'suam tem'⁵⁸ (full toilet), 'ra berd thang'⁵⁹ (explode the toilet) and 'seur leung or sai leung'⁶⁰ (feces lovers). The last three words are used to imply anal sex by presenting it as something dirty and disgusting. Other terms were 'keng kwang'⁶¹ (barking

49 Couldn't stand an om-nok-kaw monk, litigation urged, Thairath, 5 January 2015, p. 1.

50 Willing to waste money since imperfect face leads to agitation, Thairath, 20 June 2015, p. 27.

51 She was born for doctor's knife: Bookko spent 2 million for plastic surgery, GossipStars, 11–17 September 2015, p. 22.

52 Outbreak of AIDS in gay community, Thairath, 17 June 2014, p. 7.

53 Arrest warrant: hunting an anal rapist killed 1 year old boy, Thairath, 6 April 2015, p. 1.

54 Still being questioned... Suspected actor James Mars: gay smell is all around!!, GossipStars, 12–18 March 2015, p. 90.

55 Supreme Court adjudged an om-nok-kaw Dutch for 37 years in jail, Thairath, 29 October 2014, p. 21.

56 Lie detected 'Boy-Pinky' linked to 'Ladkrabang' gay gang, Manager Weekly, 17–23 January 2015, pp. 35–36.

57 Mai pa diew kun...good nose detected Big M's keng kwang smell is obvious!, GossipStars, 16–22 October 2014, p. 26.

58 OMG full toilet!! Dracula Untold is gay, GossipStars, 15–19 November 2014, p. 70.

59 Gossiping John Travolta exploded the toilet in a gym, GossipStars, 29 January–4 February 2015, p. 70.

60 Thairath, 19 July 2014, p. 1, 5.

61 Y girls (male-homosexuals female fan club) get ready, 'A' supported 'Rom' to be famous with a keng kwang role, GossipStars, 6–12 November 2015, p. 4.

deer: the pronunciation of the word 'keng' is similar to 'gay' in English), 'na ja'⁶² (this word implies femininity in the Thai language), 'jae'⁶³ (older sister), 'rok ra baad'⁶⁴ (infectious disease), 'kathoey rang yak'⁶⁵ (giant transvestite), 'keng kwang bang chanee'⁶⁶ (barking deer, deer and gibbon), 'gheed sai phuchai'⁶⁷ (scream at men: a stereotypical reaction of effeminate gay men towards good-looking men), 'kon look'⁶⁸ (goose bumps) and 'pra tu lung'⁶⁹ (back door) among others. Moreover, news reports were also found that half-seriously portrayed homosexuality as an illness, and highlighted instances where men were successfully cured of their homosexuality.⁷⁰ Additionally, nude or sexualized images were widely used to accompany stories of gay men and other men who have sex with men (see Figure 8 below).



Figure 8: Sexualized photos were used to accompany news stories about gay men and other men who have sex with men. The image on the left is captioned: 'OMG what are you doing!? Yuck!!' (Thairath, 30 September 2015, p. 29). The images on the right portray a gay man solely in relation to other men and as if he is obsessed with sex (GossipStar, 15 February 2015, p.4).

A minority of news reports about men who have sex with men portrayed them in positive ways, focusing on life stories and professional achievements. In such cases, neutral words were used that did not link their gender identity or sexual orientation to the targeted persons.⁷¹

5.3 Bisexual persons

Bisexual persons were provided much less space in Thai news media compared to all other subgroups with the exception of queer people, transgender men and intersex people (see Figure 2.). Bisexuals were portrayed as being sex-obsessed with the assumption that as bisexual people are attracted to more than one gender that they are inherently promiscuous as they do not 'choose' partners of one gender and could sleep with people of any gender.

62 Bangkok Fashion Week KEEP WALKING na ja, Manager Weekly, 7–13 February 2015, p. 7.

63 Thairath, 7 July 2014, p. 24.

64 Thairath, 1 June 2015, p. 31.

65 GossipStars, 14–20 May 2015, p. 63.

66 GossipStars, 28 August–3 September 2015 p. 34; GossipStars, 11–17 September 2014, p. 22.

67 GossipStars, 4–10 September 2015, p. 20.

68 Thairath, 12 November 2014, p. 31.

69 GossipStars, 1–7 January 2015, p. 69.

70 "Sunny" cured from being gay by eating sticky rice, Thairath, 30 January 2015, p. 35.

71 Real life is more drama than a soap opera, a life story of the forefront promoter 'A-Suphachai Sriwichit', Thairath, 10 May 2015, p. 20.

The news coverage that was analysed perpetuated the above pervasive stereotypes and stigma against bisexual persons by highlighting their sexual orientation in negative news stories. For example, one story claimed that bisexual men were able to enter heterosexual marriages in order to live their lives 'normally' while having sexual affairs behind their spouses' backs with people of any gender should the opportunity present itself.⁷² Other reports sexualized bisexual people and portrayed them as sexually appealing. This was primarily focused on female bisexuals.⁷³ A very small number of the analysed news coverage presented bisexual people in their professional lives and in relation to their achievements.⁷⁴

5.4 Transgender people

Transgender women

Apart from being mostly presented in entertainment news, as mentioned previously, transgender women are portrayed in a predominantly negative way in Thai news media. Transgender women are often represented as a reflection of social problems or the decay of the norms and values of a 'good' society. They are often depicted as murderers,⁷⁵ thieves,⁷⁶ sex workers or involved in the sex trade,⁷⁷ rapists⁷⁸ and as a threat to the Buddhist religion.⁷⁹ In reporting these negative news items, the gender identity of transgender women was emphasized as the main highlight of the news piece although the topic or incident often had nothing to do with their gender identity. In other incidences, transgender women were represented as sex-obsessed or as comic relief. Prejudiced ways of reporting and the use of suggestive and negative photos were also found (see Figure 9). Similarly to the language used in relation to gay men and other men who have sex with men and lesbians, news items referencing transgender women commonly used words and designations that stereotyped them and threatened and degraded their human dignity. These included insulting terms like '*kathoey rong seed*'⁸⁰ (faggy moan: implying a reaction of male homosexuals towards good-looking men), '*tud yak loung lok*'⁸¹ (buffalo-sized faggot who scams the world), '*fake shell*'⁸² (fake pussy), '*eat men*'⁸³ '*being eaten by men*'⁸⁴, '*saaw tak*'⁸⁵ (fail to hide their femininity), '*kerd ma peur kha cha nee*'⁸⁶ (born to kill gibbon: gibbon is a slang for woman in Thai), '*kon kra dock priew dee da*'⁸⁷ (moving ass: acting or walking in a feminine way), '*kud thum thong*'⁸⁸ (dig into the golden hole: golden hole is a slang for anus), '*thang*'⁸⁹ (straddle the fake pussy) or '*sao pra pet song*'⁹⁰ (second kind of women). In conjunction with this, photographs of

72 Lights, camera, 'action': A journey deep inside Bangkok's underground porn cinemas reveals a secret world of sex and prostitution, but police say there's little to worry about, Bangkok Post, 24 August 2014, p. 6–9.

73 Obsessed fan club forbid 'Mim' to hangout with guys, GossipStars, 19–25 March 2015, p. 28; Love has no gender!! Kratai likes both females and males, GossipStars, 19–25 March 2015, p. 28.

74 "Mai" stop searching for love from "handsome lady" best friend: Devoting her life for work and taking care of herself since no dreamed guy is waiting, Thairath, 22 November 2014, p. 29.

75 Westerner was attacked by kathoey, Thairath, 16 August 2014, p. 15.

76 Kathoey's dirty tricks for cheating Japanese out of their money revealed, Thairath, 29 January 2015, p. 11; Kathoey gang arrested for breaking into soldier's house, Thairath, 4 August 2014, p. 17.

77 Kathoey involved in sex trafficking arrested, Thairath, 19 November 2014, p. 15; Kathoey-grade tenth girls arrested in a motel for prostitution: claim in tears, dumped by parents so did it for tuition fee, Thairath, 8 August 2014, p. 1.

78 Sexual obsessed kathoey arrested for attempting to rape an old lady, Thairath, 17 July 2014, p. 19.

79 Drunken monks drove around with women and kathoey- chasing with thrill, Thairath, 21 February 2015, p. 1.

80 Kathoey rong seed! Robot actor took virginity of a fake pussy, GossipStars, 14–20 May 2015, p. 1, 20.

81 Tud yak loung lok is too confident!!! Pretending to be an organizer to cheat news reporters, GossipStars, 30 April – 6 May 2015, p. 1, 20.

82 GossipStars, 5–11 February 2015, p. 20.

83 GossipStars, 4–10 December 2014, p. 73.

84 [Inter]net idol fan club couldn't take it: kathoey was eaten by a former junior actor, GossipStars, 30 September–5 November 2015, p. 20.

85 A bear singer saaw tak secretly went to [gay] sauna, GossipStars, 30 September–5 November 2015, p. 20.

86 Manager Weekly, 23–29 May 2015, p. 25–29.

87 Tak kon kra dock priew dee da in a movie Satee Lek Top Lok Tak: hilarious indeed, GossipStars, 18–24 December 2014, p. 65.

88 GossipStars, 30 October–5 November 2014, p. 69; GossipStars, 30 October–5 November 2014, p. 69.

89 GossipStars, 30 October–5 November 2014, p. 69.

90 Thairath, 26 January 2015, p. 15.

transgender women were used to draw readers' attention, even in cases where they were not related to the news stories at all.⁹¹ In other incidences, having sexual relationships with transgender women was used in an attempt to discredit the person who was the focus of a news item.⁹² Even a well-known Buddhist monk was ridiculed in a news report by focusing on how his mannerisms presumably reflected those of a transgender woman.⁹³



Figure 9: On the left a photo of transgender women was used to draw readers' attention to a police crackdown on entertainment venues (*Bangkok Post*, 23 November 2014, p. 1) while on the right, an image of a crossdresser was used as comic relief to promote a television series with the caption 'Ben... is pretty!? Babe.' (*Thairath*, 11 November 2014, p. 19).

A minority of news items talked about transgender women in a respectful manner, used neutral words, portraying them as ordinary persons or supporting the positive transformations in Thai society on transgender rights.⁹⁴

Transgender men

Only 10 news items were found that reported on the issues of transgender men, which was significantly less compared to other subgroups (with the exception of intersex people). Most of these news items focused on the way many transgender men conformed to dominant notions of masculine characteristics in their private and love lives.⁹⁵ It was also noticed that news reporters still lack knowledge and sensitivity about male transgender identities which was reflected in the use of terms such as 'tom'⁹⁶ (tomboy) and 'saw lor'⁹⁷ (handsome lady) and the presentation of male transgender identities as something that transgender men had appropriated from masculine characteristics.

5.5 Queer people

Queer people were represented in various judgmental ways as comic relief, jokers and clowns or as strange people who deviated from normality. In accordance with the way news media reported on transgender men, Thai news media reporters demonstrated a limited knowledge and sensitivity towards queer identities. This resulted in news items that focused on the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity in Thai culture. For example, the

91 Smile, you're on candid crackdown, *Bangkok Post*, 23 November 2014, p. 1.

92 Robot actor joined group sex with kathoey, *GossipStars*, 9–15 October 2014, p. 20.

93 'May Dhamma be with you [the prosecution against you] is not finished yet na ja, *Manager Weekly*, 28 February–6 March 2015, p. 1.

94 Open-minded Gojji's father accepts his kathoey son, *Voice TV*, 6 December 2014.

95 Pii Mai won't go anywhere: devotes her life to Pa Top, *GossipStars*, 18–24 December 2014, p. 88–89.

96 *Matchon Weekly*, 6–12 March 2015, p. 71.

97 *GossipStars*, 25 September–1 October 2104, p. 90.

terms '*kathoe y wai nuad*'⁹⁸ (bearded ladyboy) was used in some news reports although many people who identify as queer reject being categorized within the binary of male or female.

5.6 Intersex people and issues

Out of 870 news coverage items explored, only 2 reports on intersex people or issues were found, representing 0.2 percent of the studied news items. The first news item was about Hindu gods, especially Ardhanarisvara, who were depicted as being both male and female⁹⁹ while the other was a piece on a documentary about the difficulties faced by an intersex person. This story painted the life of the intersex person as tragic.¹⁰⁰ According to even the most conservative estimates by experts, between 0.05 percent and 1.7 percent of the population is born with intersex traits.¹⁰¹ The lack of proportional representation of intersex people in Thai news media reflects a broader invisibility in Thai society.

5.7 LGBTIQ people and issues in general

One in four of the news items that were analysed focused on LGBTIQ people and issues in general. The keywords used were '*LGBT*', '*gender diversity*' or '*gay*' (in this context '*gay*' was also linked to other subgroups, especially lesbians and transgender men). The majority of these articles represented LGBTIQ persons as ordinary and diverse human beings, while a very limited amount of articles still made use of negative stereotypes. It was noted by the researchers that when more neutral keywords were used to search for articles, this often correlated with locating news stories that were more unbiased or positive in their representation of LGBTIQ people and issues.

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98 Thairath, 9 October 2014, p. 2.

99 Ardhanarisvara: Sculpture of gender equality, Matichon Weekly, 18 September 2014, p. 3.

100 Intersex activist comes to terms with a painful secret, Bangkok Post, 14 June 2015, pp. 10–11.

101 UN Free and Equal Campaign, Intersex Factsheet, 2015, available at: https://unfe.org/system/unfe-65-Intersex_Factsheet_ENGLISH.pdf [Accessed 19 April 2016].

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION: KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

When reflecting on the findings presented earlier, it can be demonstrated that many journalists displayed a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding the LGBTIQ population in their reporting. Consequently, LGBTIQ people were presented in news media in ways that differed from the general public and which therefore marginalized them in comparison with other people in society.

'Agenda-setting theory'¹⁰² and the 'theory of representation'¹⁰³ were two theoretical lenses used while performing a content analysis of LGBTIQ representation in Thai news media. Agenda-setting theory describes the role and ability of news media to influence what news or topics hold salience in society, while the theory of representation examines how particular persons or groups are presented to an audience.

It was found that Thai news media selected and perpetuated popular stereotypes of LGBTIQ people among their audiences. Thai news media represented LGBTIQ people in a limited number of dimensions with a specific emphasis on sex, sexualization and sexual activities that are different to the way the mainstream population is represented. Examples include the terminology utilized to call gay men and other men who have sex with men '*feces lovers*'¹⁰⁴ and '*full toilet*'¹⁰⁵ or the use of designations for lesbians referring to '*playing Thai music*'¹⁰⁶ or '*crazy about fingers*'¹⁰⁷ and accompanying articles with sexualized photographs.

Many news reports were also judgmental in the way they intentionally linked transgender identities and non-heterosexual sexual orientations to negative personal characteristics or social phenomena. This has the effect of creating the impression that LGBTIQ people are unstable, mentally disturbed or outright dangerous. Examples include references to a '*drugs-trafficking tomboy*'¹⁰⁸ and a '*sex-obsessed transvestite*'¹⁰⁹ among others. This clearly reflects a lack of sensitization among journalists and news editors, as well as limited knowledge and understanding about LGBTIQ individuals.

It is likely that some journalists may not realize the power of the words used in their news reports, and how such words can create or amplify bias, stigma and stereotyping of LGBTIQ individuals among the general population. The tone of their reports may even make a certain minority of their readership feel justified to use violence and discriminate against LGBTIQ persons. The phenomenon of representing LGBTIQ people in degrading terms through news coverage presentation can therefore be considered as a form of 'hidden violence'.

The opposite phenomenon – reducing stigma, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people by portraying them in an accurate, positive and encouraging manner – was rarely found in the content analysis conducted for this report. Several research projects in the past also confirmed that stigma and negative portrayals against this group of populations are still widely found in Thai media, including in the news media.¹¹⁰ Analysing **news elements** and **news values** according to various principles of journalism,¹¹¹ the results of this study reveal that Thai news media have prioritized sensationalistic, sexual or unusual story angles in reporting on LGBTIQ people and issues, whereas a more serious issue such as human rights is underreported with little attention paid to accuracy and fact-checking. Small details were often missed or neglected in news reports that had the effect of disrespecting

102 McCombs & Shaw (1972) cited in Siriyuvusak, U. (2007). *Mass Media, Culture and Society*. Bangkok: Edison Press Products.

103 Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

104 Thairath, 19 July 2014, pp. 1, 5.

105 OMG full toilet!! Dracula Untold is gay, *GossipStars*, 15–19 November 2014, p. 70.

106 Turned out playing Thai music seriously: who did Kristen Stewart ridicule with???, *GossipStars*, 8–14 January 2015, p. 70.

107 No boyfriend in this life, Mo is crazy about fingers, *GossipStars*, 31 July–6 August 2014, p. 90; Finger impression!!! Air is fascinated with handsome lady, *GossipStars*, 25 September–1 October 2014. p. 90.

108 Thairath, 19 October 2014, p. 15.

109 Sex-obsessed kathoey arrested for attempting to rape an old lady, *Thairath*, 17 July 2014, p. 19.

110 Jackson, P. A. (1995). *Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand*. Bangkok: Bua Luang Books.; Sangarun, W. (2011). *Communicate as a Professional: Guideline for the News Report on Gender Diversity Persons*. Bangkok: Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand.; Singhakowinta, J. (2014). *Media's Stigmatization: Production of Gay Myths in Thai Society*. *NIDA Journal of Language and Communication*. 18(20), pp. 64–76; Sinnot, M. (2004). *Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press; Thaeyaporn, T. (2000). *The Image of Male Homosexuals as Reflected in the Content of Thai daily Newspapers During 1965–2000*. Bangkok: Faculty of Communication Arts. Chulalongkorn University. UNDP, USAID (2014). *Thailand Country Report*; Wajanasara, K. (2008). *What Kind of Sexual Issues Available in Library and News Report: Books, Academic Documents, News and Articles in Sexual Health Database*. Bangkok: Women's Health Advocacy Foundation.

111 Buranadechachai, S. (2005). *Introduction to Journalism*. Chonburi: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University.

the chosen identities of LGBTIQ persons. For instance, incorrectly gendered terms such as *'nai'*¹¹² (mister) or *'num suay'*¹¹³ (beautiful man) when referring to transgender women could easily be avoided. While a limited number of negative and inaccurate representations may be unlikely to have a huge effect on the perceptions of the general public, this study has shown that these representations are the vast majority and thus have the ability to shape perceptions of LGBTIQ persons.

This study has demonstrated that LGBTIQ persons have been provided with limited space and are often presented in Thai news media in entertainment news or news presented in a 'soft', non-serious tone – indicating that LGBTIQ issues are not taken seriously.

The study also reveals that certain subgroups of the LGBTIQ population are underrepresented in Thai news platforms, especially people who are bisexual, intersex and queer. Certain news media perpetuated popular stereotypes of LGBTIQ people by portraying just a small set of characteristics of their complex and diverse personalities. Those stereotypes focused on the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity in Thai society, amplifying the femininity (or perceived lack of femininity)¹¹⁴ of transgender women, or the masculinity of lesbian 'tomboys' or transgender men. Judgmental language that made assumptions regarding LGBTIQ people was also frequently found, for instance, the terms *transvestite*, *feminine gay*, *tomboy* or *lipstick lesbian*. At the same time, by focusing mostly on transgender women and on masculine lesbians, individuals who belonged to other subgroups under the LGBTIQ umbrella were rendered largely invisible in terms of media attention and, consequently, for society as a whole. The latest study by Kaewmak (2016) also reaffirms that masculine characters have retained hegemonic power in comparison with others, especially those who appropriate feminine roles, in Thai entertainment media.¹¹⁵

The content analysis of this study has also demonstrated that strict gender roles and stereotyping in Thai society has influenced news media reporting related to SOGIE, sex characteristics and LGBTIQ issues. Such reports have a role in reinforcing and strengthening the imbalance and inequality between genders and sexualities.¹¹⁶ An example of this was the previously mentioned news report that ridiculed a Buddhist monk from a particular Buddhist cult by focusing on how his mannerisms presumably mirrored those of a transgender woman. This monk was later portrayed in retouched news photographs as a monk wearing female clothing; the headlines would add the word *'na ja'* to refer to him (these words imply femininity in the Thai language). The headline was also presented in a stereotypically feminine style, making use of a pink font color and using a more 'feminine' cursive and 'pretty' font style (see Figure 10).

As outlined in the content analysis, other news reports and illustrations about LGBTIQ individuals commonly portrayed them as sexual objects. This served to emphasize the sexual aspects of consensual adult relationships rather than focusing on the individuals themselves as distinct personalities for whom their sexual orientation was simply one aspect of their identity. Additionally, this placed a voyeuristic slant onto the relationships of LGBTIQ people that sought to 'other' them.

With regards to gay men and other men who have sex with men, this sexualization was often used to demean them and portray them as sex-obsessed with sex between men portrayed as something unwholesome. In the cases of lesbian and bisexual women, this overt sexualization was widely used to commodify their sexual orientations. This sexualization presented lesbian and bisexual women as something to be sexually desired. Such overt sexualization and emphasis in news reports neglects to represent LGBTIQ in a manner that showed respect for their dignity as human beings.

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112 Manager Weekly, 6–12 June 2015, p. 7.

113 'Num suay in [female] student uniforms... Now Thai women are crying so hard!!!', Manager Weekly, 25 April–1 May 2015, pp. 30–31.

114 It is common for transgender women who do not satisfy dominant feminine beauty norms to be insulted for their lack of femininity. A prime example of such language in the analysis were insults such as *'kathoei rang yak'* (giant transgender) and *'kathoei kwai'* (buffalo transgender).

115 Kaewmak, S. (2016). *Creation and Narration of Male-Homosexual Main Characters in Thai Entertainment Media*. Bangkok: Faculty of Communication Arts. Chulalongkorn University.

116 Walby, S. Gender Mainstreaming: Productive Tensions in Theory and Practice. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 12.3 (2005): 321–343.



Figure 10: A photo of a news report that ridiculed a Buddhist monk, focusing on how his mannerisms presumably mirrored those of a transgender woman. The headline 'May Dhamma be with you [the prosecution against you] is not finished yet na ja' is presented in a stereotypically feminine style, making use of a pink font color and using a more 'feminine' cursive and 'pretty' font style (*Manager Weekly*, 28 February–6 March 2015, p. 1).

Lastly, several instances of news coverage related to LGBTIQ people were found to be against the *Code of Ethics for Members of the Press Council of Thailand*. In particular, it was found that many of the news items analysed especially violated items 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 27 and 30 of the Code (see Annex I). It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide Thai media organizations with a greater understanding of the extent, impact and ramifications of perpetuating negative, limited and inaccurate portrayals of LGBTIQ people and issues in Thai news media. It is hoped that this study contributes to the sensitization of Thai media organizations in the future, including those who are responsible for monitoring media reports on SOGIE and LGBTIQ issues, and as a result lead to more responsible, accurate and accountable reporting in Thailand.

Chapter 5

SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY ADVOCACY

Several suggestions for policy advocacy can be derived from this study. These suggestions apply to a wide range of stakeholders, each of who is important to ensure that media reporting becomes more sensitive and less stigmatizing and discriminatory towards LGBTIQ people. These stakeholders include governmental organizations, media organizations and educational organizations; suggestions are made below for each of them.

1. Government organizations (including political organizations as well as national policy and law makers)

- Key leaders of and influential advisors to governmental and political organizations should publicly support the legal and human rights of LGBTIQ people. They should, for example, push for legislative change ensuring that social welfare provision is provided to LGBTIQ people in the same way as it is for other citizens. Openly stating support for this would be a milestone in the necessary paradigm shift in society – including among media personnel – towards safeguarding the basic human rights of LGBTIQ people.
- Governmental organizations should support the participation of their employees in learning activities on SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights. Such learning activities should be organized so that government officers will be able to understand and be up to date on trends and progress relating to these matters. Moreover, government officers who received such training would be in a better position to provide positive, unbiased services to people of all sexualities and genders with respect for their individuality and diversity.
- Other related government departments such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture should take an active role in promoting positive attitudes and providing accurate knowledge about SOGIE and LGBTIQ people and the need to protect and promote their human rights in Thai society. This could include advocating for policies to integrate LGBTIQ and broader human rights issues into the Thai curriculum to be officially taught in schools.
- A professional Code of Conduct, outlining guidelines on how to uphold professional ethics in reporting news on SOGIE and LGBTIQ issues among journalists needs to be developed. Related governmental, independent, private and civil society organizations should regularly monitor media content and be empowered to take investigative and legal action if the professional ethics code is breached.
- Funding needs to be mobilized to support community-based activities and research projects, especially those applying participatory approaches among key stakeholders in order to make a positive change regarding the role of media in advocating for human rights and social justice issues, including the human rights of LGBTIQ people. For this to be effective and successful, there is a need to systematically evaluate and share lessons learned in an open and transparent process, and to ensure strong mechanisms and platforms for collaboration, such as the establishment and empowerment of a media consumer alliance.

2. Media organizations

- Awareness-raising and technical trainings to improve attitudes and knowledge among media organization owners, administrative and editorial board members, journalists and other related media personnel regarding SOGIE, intersex issues and LGBTIQ populations are needed. This should include the establishment or development of a network for sharing lessons learned among responsible individuals in the hope that positive peer pressure could lead to a positive trend in developing media content about LGBTIQ and other marginalized groups. This would entail policy advocacy at the organization level to be more sensitive to SOGIE, intersex issues and the human rights of LGBTIQ people.
- Media organizations should support their employees to participate in learning activities on SOGIE and intersex issues and the human rights of LGBTIQ populations. These would be organized by responsible agencies that are working on these issues to sensitize media professionals who would then be able to understand the issues, be up to date and accurately report on them.
- Establishing awareness and understanding regarding SOGIE and intersex issues and the human rights of LGBTIQ groups among journalists should be prioritized, including capacity-building for practitioners and junior news reporters. Then, the production of quality news, such as creative news reporting or investigative news on SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights, can be encouraged.

- Media organizations should support the development of a network among journalists in order to learn from each other and to obtain skills in how to report on and promote LGBTIQ human rights. Through these networks, the Code of Conduct on professional and ethical journalism in respecting SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights can be implemented and strengthened. The members of these networks should be empowered to object to news reports that violate the human rights of LGBTIQ or other marginalized groups and they should be trained how to approach colleagues who wrote them and how to address their concerns properly and constructively.

3. Press council, journalist and press associations (including other agencies responsible in media monitoring and press development)

- Journalist and press associations, as well as other media monitoring and press development agencies, should take an active role in supporting news reports that follow professional ethics as well as respect LGBTIQ human rights. At the same time, a formal monitoring mechanism on how LGBTIQ issues are reported in the media should be designed and implemented.
- Organizations that are responsible for media monitoring and media monitoring committee members should be sensitized on issues of SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights. Experts and representatives of LGBTIQ people should also be involved in the media monitoring process as key stakeholders. Moreover, these organizations and committees should report on the effectiveness of their efforts in the form of an annual report, which is presented and distributed to the public.
- Press councils, associations and agencies should play an active role in widely and continuously informing the public regarding the process of providing suggestions, opinions and complaints regarding the media content that violates LGBTIQ human rights. Moreover, they should firmly express objection against, as well as enforce sanctions, on any media content that creates or perpetuates stigma and discrimination based on SOGIE and against LGBTIQ human rights.
- Issues of SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights should be integrated in training courses and capacity-building sessions organized by press development agencies. Experts or representatives of LGBTIQ communities should participate in the process of content development and in organizing this, be linked to the above-mentioned proposed networks of LGBTIQ-friendly trained journalists.

4. Educational institutions

- SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights issues need to be integrated in the curricula of educational institutions for journalism, mass communication and communication arts, with participation of experts or representatives of LGBTIQ communities. The process should start with curriculum development and critique and the evaluation of the quality of graduates.
- Capacity development in research and teaching among faculties in the issues of SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights should be supported. They should also be empowered to play an active role in organizing training or capacity-building courses to promote these issues for students, journalists and communities.

5. Organizations working on SOGIE and LGBTIQ issues (including community-based, non-governmental and academic organizations)

- A handbook for reporting news coverage on LGBTIQ issues should be developed with the participation of all key stakeholders, especially experts or representatives of LGBTIQ communities, in order to be used as the main guidelines for journalists to be sensitized on these issues. This handbook should be closely linked to the development and implementation of a Code of Conduct for journalists and media producers mentioned above.
- The development and empowerment of networks of journalists should be supported at the national, local, citizen, and online journalist levels so that its members' capacity and knowledge regarding SOGIE and LGBTIQ human rights can be further enhanced to the make future impact.

6. General audiences and LGBTIQ persons

- General audiences and LGBTIQ individuals should realize that they should not be passive, but that they can be active audiences by practising critical thinking; by developing media literacy skills; and by empowering themselves to take action against media content presentation that is biased against or mocks and stigmatizes LGBTIQ people. They should actively participate in organized social network activities to monitor and investigate media content presentation in various ways and be encouraged to take action against violations.

Suggestions for further research

1. The study of representation of LGBTIQ people, SOGIE and intersex issues in other genres of media is suggested. Analysing the research data collected by employing different perspectives, such as feminism or semiotics (the study of meaning making), could also assist understanding the representation of LGBTIQ people and issues in media from different dimensions.
2. Research among general audiences, especially LGBTIQ populations as key stakeholders, should be pursued in order to understand their actual perception, understanding, meanings and negotiating practices regarding media content on SOGIE and LGBTIQ issues.
3. This study should be further developed to make a tangible change in the future, for example by employing participatory action research.

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Annex I: Code of Ethics for Members of the Press Council of Thailand

The Press Council of Thailand, together with publishers, editors, and reporters from the country's independent media, deemed it necessary that the institution remains independent and self-regulated in line with democratic tradition and that a code of ethics be established to ensure professionalism, accountability, and responsibility. The Council supports freedom of expression and the idea that the public should be educated about the world in which they live through independent media. The Council holds the Institution of the Monarchy to be the highest social and political organ in the Kingdom.

The following code of conducts was established by the executive board of the Press Council Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997).



Section I: General

Item 1: The following guidelines will from this point on be referred to as the code of conduct for journalists, B.E. 2541 (1998)

Item 2: That this code of conduct be put into effect on the day of the announcement.

Item 3: In this code of conduct, the word "news" refers to the printed text, headlines, photos and the caption that goes with the photos presented in the newspapers. "Newspaper" is defined by the Press Council of Thailand, B.E. 2540 (1997), Item 3.

Section II: Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Newspapers

Item 4: Newspapers must hold the truth to be the highest principle.

Item 5: Newspapers must present news taking into consideration the benefit of the public, not of an individual.

Item 6: Newspapers must be fair to all parties mentioned in the news stories.

Item 7: Newspapers must not make up false stories.

Item 8: Newspaper must be neutral with its presentation with the understanding that bias reporting could results in a legal action taken against the party/parties mentioned in the article.

Item 9: Newspapers must refrain from putting the opinion of the individual reporter in the news article.

Item 10: Newspapers must make references to the source regardless if the information is obtained from a printed text or an individual.

Item 11: When making references that could damage the reputation of an individual, newspapers must give that party the opportunity to state his case.

Item 12: In cases where an error has been committed, newspapers must issue a correction as soon as possible.

Item 13: Newspaper must not present news in such a way that the source of the stories could be revealed.

Item 14: Newspapers must ensure that confidentiality of the source and take into the consideration that the well being of the source could be at stake if the identity of that source is revealed.

Item 15: Newspapers must take into consideration the humanitarian principle and the dignity of an individual person when he or she is being presented in photo or mentioned in news story.

Item 16: Headlines must not be exaggerated to the point that it distorted the truth or the news story.

Item 17: Newspapers must use their judgment when presenting photographs that may be violence or pornographic in nature.

Item 18: Newspapers must be just when making references to any party in its editorial or analysis.

Item 19: Advertisements in the newspaper must present itself as a paid advertisement and not a news story.

Section III: Code of Ethics for Reporters

Item 20: Journalists must not violate the integrity of the institution of the independent media and the profession in which he or she works.

Item 21: Journalists must not abuse his position or make use of the profession in such ways that would result in obtaining favors.

Item 22: Journalists are prohibited from taking bribes or accepting valuable gifts or favors from sources because it could influence directly or indirectly the content of news reporting.

Section IV:

Item 23: Journalists must not accept any privilege or position that will influence their professional performance in disseminating correct and comprehensive information.

Item 24: When presenting news reports, newspapers must take into consideration the welfare and the benefit of the general public.

Item 25: Newspapers must obtain information in a dignified manner

Item 26: Newspapers must not have a hidden motive when expressing opinions or news analysis.

Item 27: Newspapers must take into consideration the rights of an individual and balance it with the public's right to know.

Item 28: Newspapers must not allow paid advertisements to violate the established code of ethics of their industry and take into consideration the customs and values of the Kingdom.

Item 29: Newspapers must avoid paid advertisements that knowingly distribute false information to the public.

Item 30: Newspapers must not use profanity and avoid obscene gestures in its reporting.

Source: <http://www.presscouncil.or.th/code-of-ethics-for-members-of-the-press-council-of-thailand/>

Annex 2: List of keywords used in searching for LGBTIQ news on online news websites

English keywords

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
 Drag queen
 Facebook
 HSBC
 Human Rights First
 Human Rights Watch
 IOC
 LGBT
 LGBT voice
 LGBTIQ
 LGBTQ
 RCA
 Sydney Siege
 The Circle

Thai keywords

1448 รักเราของใคร
 LGBTกับธุรกิจ
 กฎหมายควบคุม
 กฎหมายคู่ชีวิต
 กฎหมายแต่งงาน
 กลุ่ม yes lgbt
 กลุ่มคนหลากหลายทางเพศ
 กลุ่มผู้มีความหลากหลายทางเพศ
 กลุ่มรักเพศเดียวกัน
 กลุ่มหลากหลายทางเพศ
 กะเทย

การกีดกันกลุ่มผู้มีความหลากหลายทางเพศ
 การเคลื่อนไหวเพื่อสิทธิความหลากหลายทางเพศ
 การทำนิติกรรมร่วมกัน
 การปกป้องสิทธิของกลุ่มLGBT
 การยอมรับจากครอบครัว
 การสังหารกะเทย
 เกย์
 เกย์กำลังจะครองโลก
 คณะกรรมการ โอลิมปิกสากล
 คนข้ามเพศ
 ครอบครัวเพศหลากหลาย
 ความต้องการในชีวิตคู่
 ความเท่าเทียมทางเพศ
 ความเท่าเทียมทางเพศกับเพศชายและหญิง
 ความเปิดกว้างทางเพศของรัฐ
 คอมมิวนิสต์
 ความมั่นคง
 ความมั่นคงของชาติ
 ความรุนแรง
 ความรุนแรงทางเพศ
 ความหลากหลายทางเพศ
 ความเหลื่อมล้ำทางเพศ
 คอลัมน์นิสต์

คู่รักเพศเดียวกัน
 ฆ่าตัวตาย
 งานมหกรรมหนังสือ
 จดทะเบียนสมรส
 จับกระแส
 ชายรักชาย
 ชาวสกอต
 ชุมชนสีรุ้ง
 ชุมชนออนไลน์
 ชีคินีย์
 ซีวิล พาร์ทเนอร์ชิพ
 ซีอีโอ
 โซเชียลเน็ตเวิร์ก
 แคร็กควีน
 ต่อต้านเกย์
 แต่งงาน
 ทอม
 ดี
 ไปเซ็กชวล
 เลือไบ
 ทรานส์เจนเดอร์
 ทรานส์เซ็กชวล
 เคิวรี่
 ชายรักชาย
 หญิงรักหญิง

สาวประเภทสอง	พลเมืองชั้นสอง	สถานะทางเพศในเฟซบุ๊ก
สาวประเภท2	พิธีกรรม	สถานะทางเศรษฐกิจ
หญิงข้ามเพศ	พื้นที่ปลอดภัย	สวิตเซอร์แลนด์
ผู้ชายข้ามเพศ	เพศสภาพ	สหภาพคนข้ามเพศยุโรป
ตีลัง	หนังเกย์	สหรัฐอเมริกา
ไม้ป่าเดียวกัน	ฟรีแลนซ์	สหราชอาณาจักร
ชาวสีรุ้ง	ภัยคุกคาม	สังคมชายเป็นใหญ่
ชุมชนสีรุ้ง	ภาพยนตร์ไทย	สังคมไทย
กลุ่มคนรักเพศเดียวกัน	ภาพยนตร์ LGBT	สิทธิเท่าเทียมทาง LGBT
สถานะทางเพศ	ภาษาจีน	สิทธิเสรีภาพ
เพศสถานะ	มูลนิธิเครือข่ายเพื่อนกะเทยไทย	สิทธิเสรีภาพของชาวLGBT
เพศวิถี	มูลนิธิเพื่อสิทธิและความเป็นธรรมทางเพศ	ตีลม
ทัศนคติ	มูลนิธิอัญจารี	หนังเกย์ไทย
ทำธุรกิจส่วนตัว	รักร่วมเพศ	หนังสือ
ทิม คุก	รักแห่งสยาม	หนังสือ
เทยเที่ยวไทย	รัฐธรรมนูญ	หมา เป้าหลี่
นักวิชาการด้านเพศภาวะ	รัฐธรรมนูญฉบับสุวรรณ	หยุดเหยียดเพศ
นางแบบข้ามเพศ	รัฐบาลพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์	หลอกหลวง
บรรณาธิการ	เว็คนาม	ห้ามกะเทยเข้าฝับ
บารัก โอบามา	ร่าง พ.ร.บ. คู่ชีวิตฉบับประชาชน	เหยียดเพศ
เบิกค่ารักษาพยาบาลได้	ร่าง พ.ร.บ. คู่ชีวิต	อินเตอร์เซ็กซ์
ปกป้องสิทธิชาว LGBT	เลสเบี้ยน	ออสเตรเลีย
เปิดตัว	เลือกปฏิบัติ	อังกฤษ
ผู้ชาย	วรรณกรรม	อันโตนิโอ ซีมอยล์
ผู้บริหาร	วรรณกรรมสีรุ้ง	อุ้มบุญ
ผู้บริหารเกย์	วัดแขก	แอปพลิเคชัน
ผู้มีความหลากหลายทางเพศ	วันสิทธิความหลากหลายทางเพศ	แอปหาคู่
ผู้หญิง	สกอตแลนด์	อินดู
พระแม่ศรีอุมาเทวี	ส่งเสริมสิทธิชาว LGBT	
พระราชบัญญัติคู่ชีวิต	สตรีข้ามเพศ	
พราหมณ์	สติฟ จ็อบส์	

Annex 3: Examples of unbiased news reports about LGBTIQ people and issues

News in Thai

สมาคม LGBT ระดับโลก จี้ มธ.ไม่ควรเลือกปฏิบัติ อ.เคท

by Janewit Chausawathee

ตัวแทนสมาคมอิลก้าเอเชีย และสมาคมอิลก้าโลก ยื่นหนังสือถึงอธิการบดีมหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ กรณีไม่รับ ‘เคท ครึ่งพิบูลย์’ เข้าเป็นอาจารย์ พร้อมเรียกร้องให้มหาวิทยาลัยทบทวนกระบวนการคัดเลือกอาจารย์ใหม่ ให้โปร่งใสและยุติธรรม

ตัวแทน สมาคมอิลก้า เอเชีย และสมาคมอิลก้า โลก ซึ่งเป็นองค์กรระหว่างประเทศที่เคลื่อนไหวในประเด็นการพิทักษ์สิทธิมนุษยชน ของ LGBT มากกว่า 30 ปี ใน 80 ประเทศทั่วโลก และมีองค์กรในเครือข่ายกว่า 1,200 องค์กร เข้ายื่นจดหมายเปิดผนึกถึงอธิการบดี มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ กรณีคณะกรรมการบริหารมหาวิทยาลัย มีมติไม่จ้าง เคท ครึ่งพิบูลย์ เป็นอาจารย์ คณะสังคมสงเคราะห์ศาสตร์

เนื้อหาในจดหมายระบุว่า กรณีนี้เป็นการเลือกปฏิบัติด้วยเหตุแห่งเพศ ขัดกับหลักการสิทธิมนุษยชนสากล พร้อมเรียกร้องให้มหาวิทยาลัยทบทวนกระบวนการคัดเลือกอาจารย์โดยด่วน เพื่อให้อยู่บนหลักการของความเท่าเทียมและยุติธรรมระหว่างเพศ เน้นหลักการความโปร่งใส และคำนึงถึงความเป็นธรรม

และเห็นว่า อาจารย์เคท ควรมีสิทธิต่อสู้ในกระบวนการยุติธรรมทุกขั้นตอน พร้อมแสดงความคาดหวังว่าธรรมศาสตร์ จะยังคงไว้ซึ่งปรัชญาของมหาวิทยาลัย ที่จะดำรงไว้ซึ่งเสรีภาพและความเท่าเทียมกันของคนทุกคน โดยไม่เลือกปฏิบัติด้วย สถานะทางสังคม เชื้อชาติ สถานะทางเศรษฐกิจ อัตลักษณ์ทางเพศและการแสดงออก

ประธานร่วม สมาคมอิลก้า เอเชีย ย้ำว่า จากกรณี อาจารย์เคท ทำให้นับแต่เนิ่น องค์กรระหว่างประเทศที่ทำงานด้าน LGBT จะจับตาปัญหาการเลือกปฏิบัติการทำงานของคนข้ามเพศ ในธรรมศาสตร์ และในประเทศไทยต่อ ด้านเจ้าหน้าที่ซึ่งเป็นตัวแทนรับจดหมาย ก็เปิดเผยว่า จะดำเนินการส่งจดหมายถึง นายสมคิด เลิศไพฑูรย์ อธิการบดีต่อไป

Source: Voice TV, 27 April 2015

Global LGBT associations argued TU on its discrimination against Professor Kath

by Janewit Chausawathee

The representatives of ILGA ASIA and ILGA WORLD submitted an official letter to the President of Thummasat University (TU) disagreeing about the rejection of 'Kath Khangpiboon' from a lecturer position, as well as demanding transparency and fairness in the process of recruiting new staff.

The representatives of ILGA ASIA and ILGA WORLD, the international organizations which have been working on LGBT human rights for 30 years in 80 countries around the world with 1,200 networking organizations, submitted an open letter to the President of Thummasat University (TU) on the rejection of 'Kath Khangpiboon' from a lecturer position in the Faculty Social Administration.

The letter indicated that this case was recognized as discrimination on the basis of gender which was contradictory with international human rights principles as well as demanding gender equality, transparency and fairness in the process of recruiting new staff.

The letter also urged that Professor Kath should have had her own right in a justice system; and expressed its will that TU would acknowledge human freedom and equality as well as the eradication of discrimination on the basis of social status, nationality, economic status, gender identity and gender expression according to the University's philosophy.

The co-chair of ILGA ASIA insisted that, starting from the case of Professor Kath, international LGBT organizations would keep their eyes on any discrimination against transgender persons in TU and Thailand. The officer who received the letter stated that the message would be further sent to the TU President, Professor Somkid Lertpaitoon as requested.

Source: *Voice TV*, 27 April 2015

โลกาภิวัตน์

GLOBALIZATION



กีดกันเกย์และเลสเบียน



ผู้ร่วมเดินขบวนแสดงการต่อต้าน การแสดงความรังเกียจเกย์และเลสเบียน ในกรุงเบอร์ลิน ประเทศเยอรมนี พวกนักเฉลิมฉลองที่จะมีการถอนข้อความ การถือว่าความรักร่วมเพศเป็นโรคอย่างหนึ่ง ที่มีอยู่ในประกาศขององค์การอนามัยโลกออกไป.

Globalization Discrimination Against Gay and Lesbians

A parade against homophobia in Berlin, Germany celebrated the removing of the definition that homosexuals are ill from the WHO classification of diseases

Source: *Thairath*, 21 June 2015, p. 7



PHOTO: AFP

ELTON JOHN, PARTNER GUESTS OF HONOUR AT US GAY RIGHTS GALA

British pop music icon Elton John and his partner David Furnish will be the guests of honour when the Human Rights Campaign hosts its annual gala, the LGBT rights group said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the HRC — at the forefront of efforts to legalise same-sex marriage in the United States — said it wanted to salute the couple for their work as global Aids activists and philanthropists.

“As we celebrate the progress we’ve made over the last year while focusing on what we have yet to accomplish,” said HRC president Chad Griffin.

“Their life’s work inspires us as we keep moving forward for equality,” he added.

Former president Bill Clinton, whose wife Hillary is considering a White House bid, is to deliver the keynote address at the sold-out HRC National Dinner on Oct 25 in Washington that is expected to attract more than 3,000 guests.

British-born John, 67, one of the world’s most popular recording artists, is founder of the Elton John Aids Foundation, which has raised more than US\$300 million (9.7 billion baht) to support Aids programmes in more than 50 countries.

He entered into a civil partnership with Furnish, 51, a Canadian-born filmmaker and former advertising executive, in December 2005. The couple, with homes in Britain and the US, have two sons via a surrogate.AFP

Source: *Bangkok Post*, 6 October 2014, p. 3



UNANIMOUS DECISION: Isabella Santiago, centre, beat 21 contestants from 18 countries to win the 'Miss International Queen' title and 440,000 baht in prize money.

Venezuelan wins transgender title

» A 22-year-old Venezuelan was crowned "Miss International Queen" on Friday night at a beauty contest that bills itself as the world's largest pageant for transsexuals and transvestites.

Isabella Santiago beat 21 contestants from 18 countries to win the title and 440,000 baht in prize money at a glittering event in the resort town of Pattaya. She is also eligible for free cosmetic surgery, among other gifts from sponsors.

Thai contestant Nitsa Katrahong was named first runner-up and received 150,000 baht, while Lao contestant and second runner-up Piyada Inthavong took home 95,000 baht.

When asked what she planned to do after her win, Ms Santiago, who wore a shimmering white evening gown, laughed and said "sleep".

"When on stage, she is so elegant and

that's why the judges' decision was unanimous," said media personality and academic Seri Wongmontha, one of the pageant's judges.

The 10th annual contest was held at Tiffany's nightclub, which is famous for its transgender cabaret shows. Pageant applicants must be male-born transvestites or pre- or post-operative transsexuals.

Like other beauty pageants, contestants for "Miss International Queen" paraded in national costume, evening gowns and swimsuits.

Miss USA Samira Sitara said participating in the contest was a "dream come true". She said the pageant was the first time she was coming out publicly after being encouraged by friends.

"You know what, this is life and you can't run away from the past. I can't hide it anymore," she said. Post reporters and Reuters

Biographies

Lead researcher

Dr. Kangwan Fongkaew currently works as a lecturer in the Department of Communication Arts in Burapha University, Chonburi, Thailand. Dr. Kangwan has done research projects and academic publications in both English and Thai on gender, sexuality, LGBTIQ people and issues, media, youth culture, popular culture, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV prevention. Dr. Kangwan has been serving as a researcher and national consultant for several organizations such as UNFPA, Plan Sri Lanka, UNDP, USAID, RTI and FHI 360.

Research team members

Anoporn Khrutaeng is a specialist psychologist and a passionate teacher. Anoporn currently works as an activist and trainer in the areas of sexuality, gender diversity, empowerment, human rights and NLP (neuro-linguistic programming); as well Anoporn started Life Skills Thailand as an education hub for specific learning. Anoporn has a decade of experience in marketing communication, new media and online media.

Sumon Unsathit graduated from the Faculty of Humanities, Ramkhamhaeng University. Sumon jumped into the NGO world after working as a producer for a small television program broadcast by True Vision. Sumon is interested in topics related to lesbians and transmen. The Inconvenient Truth, a short film Sumon produced, was part of the Rainbow Short Film Project in 2008. From 2010–2011, Sumon served as a coordinator for the Capacity Building of Lesbians Project under Love Galaya, supported by the Healthy Sexuality Program (Thai Health Promotion Foundation). Sumon is currently active in organizing activities and workshops on capacity-building of LGBTIQ people and sexuality with LovePattaya.

Matawii Khamphirathasana is a BA graduate in philosophy from the Prince of Songkla University. Having a passion for topics related to gender diversity, Matawii has followed academic movements and activities since 2007 and then joined with Love Galaya, supported by the Women's Health Advocacy Foundation, in 2010. Matawii is serving as a recorder and writer for Love Galaya, in collaboration with LovePattaya. She is also a manager of the project 'Social Network for LGBT Rights' supported by the American Jewish World Service.

Nisarath Jongwisat joined a safe-zone activity initiated by Love Galaya in 2011 and then followed the activities of Love Galaya for several years until becoming a member of LovePattaya in March 2014. Nisarath has specialized in activities and organizing processes for lesbians with LovePattaya and was self-educated in the areas of sexuality and gender diversity from being one of the members of LovePattaya. Nisarath is currently a writer and training assistant of LovePattaya and for the website www.lgbtnewsthailand.com

Oranong Arlunaek started her career as a volunteer for Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand. Oranong likes exploring new dimensions of life through traveling and playing music. Apart from being a freelance consultant on human and LGBTIQ rights, Oranong works as a reporter and radio broadcaster for an international news outlet.

Jensen Byrne is an international consultant with UNDP working on the human rights of LGBTIQ people. Jensen holds an MA in International Relations from Dublin City University, and a BA from Trinity College Dublin. Jensen was an elected executive board member of the International Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) in 2016.



Burapha University
169 Longhad Bangsaen Road, Saen Suk Sub-district, Muang District,
Chonburi Province 20131, Thailand