

Political Communication and Conflict Discourse in Thai Online Social Networking

การสื่อสารและแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นประเด็นการเมือง บนเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent of online political discussion as appearing in the Ratchadhamnern café in pantip website during the Thai political crisis period in the year 2010. The data analyzed by using content analysis method indicates that the politician theme, the color-based protest movements in Thailand theme, the impact theme, the rights theme and the political impact-behavior theme, the policy output (commitment) theme, the justice theme, the political actors warning signal theme, the good governance theme, the confrontation conflict management style theme, the political communication in public sphere theme and the political conflict theme, the political elites theme, the facts theme, the practical judgment theme, and the action of voting theme, are the specific topics which bloggers posted the most during the Thai political crisis period in the year 2010. Additionally, involvement in political communication among the bloggers is about sharing conflicting ideas regarding political developments. Based on Social Exchange Theory, political communication and conflict discourse in Thai online social networking can build blogger satisfaction by providing the means to increase interaction and personalized messages between political actors--such as government, politicians, political supporters, protesters--and the Thai people in search for democracy that suited for Thai context.

Keywords: Political Communication, Conflicts, Content Analysis, Social Exchange

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทราบถึงประเด็นการสื่อสารบนเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์ เพื่อแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับการเมืองไทยที่ปรากฏในห้องราชดำเนิน เว็บไซต์พันทิป ในช่วงวิกฤติการเมือง พ.ศ. 2553 ผลการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาพบว่า การแลกเปลี่ยนทรศนะทางการเมืองที่ปรากฏบนเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์ในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวให้ความสำคัญเรื่องนักการเมือง การเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมืองของขบวนการเมืองคู่ขัดแย้ง ผลกระทบสิทธิและพฤติกรรมทางการเมือง นโยบาย ความยุติธรรม สัญญาณเตือนความขัดแย้งจากผู้เกี่ยวข้องทางการเมือง ธรรมชาติของการเมือง การเผชิญหน้าเพื่อแก้ไขความขัดแย้ง การสื่อสารในพื้นที่สาธารณะและความขัดแย้งทางการเมือง ชนชั้นนำทางการเมือง ความจริง การตัดสินใจตามความเป็นจริง และการเลือกตั้ง ทั้งนี้ การสื่อสารการเมืองระหว่างบล็อกเกอร์ยังเป็นการแบ่งปันความคิดเห็นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับพัฒนาการของการเมืองอีกด้วย ตามหลักแนวคิดทฤษฎีการแลกเปลี่ยนทางสังคม การสื่อสารการเมืองและความคิดเห็นต่างบนเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์ ทำให้บล็อกเกอร์เกิดความพึงพอใจด้วยการเปิดช่องทางการปฏิสัมพันธ์และสื่อสารเฉพาะส่วนบุคคลระหว่างผู้กระทำการทางการเมือง เช่น รัฐบาล นักการเมือง ผู้สนับสนุนทางการเมือง ผู้ชุมนุมประท้วง กับประชาชนชาวไทยในอันที่จะแสวงหาแนวทางประชาธิปไตยที่สอดคล้องกับบริบทของไทย

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารการเมือง ความขัดแย้ง การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา การแลกเปลี่ยนทางสังคม

I. Problem Statement

Political communication refers to all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. This includes communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians—such as voters and newspaper columnists—as well as communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics. Political communication focuses on what people think and do, so-called public opinion. To understand conflict discourse during a political crisis period, Galtung (2004) proposed focusing on citizen's opinions for investigating “what this approach to conflict carries in its wake for political systems”

Though the internet is heavily censored by the state, there is perceived safety and freedom among online users (Ramasoota, 2012). The Thais view the Internet as an open and free venue for political participation and discussion. During the crisis period, people turned to the blogs as a channel

to participate in political discussions (Porter, Sweetser, & Chung, 2009). For political scientists and communication scholars, the key question is whether the emergence and growth of the technologies are allowing a new kind of participatory democracy by raising political engagement and communication with the state, stimulating general awareness and involvement, and allowing the easy sharing of creative expression (David, 1995; Maxwell, 2000; Wang, 2009). Duncan McCargo (2000) noted that the Thai online forums are the major tools which the Thais use to communicate the facts with others during political crises. Thus, using the Blogosphere is a current trend in Thai politics as it is taking a major political role in informing the public about the political developments, or in tipping the balance of political opinion. In addition, the blogosphere is pushing the political actors and communication scholars to pay more attention to the citizen's opinions and interests of elements of the political structure.

Gomez (2002) stated that a political online forum can be designed to post political discourses and enables citizens to voice their political opinions quickly and easily. Ratchadhamnern café became a very popular blogosphere in Thailand for posting political opinion (Wikipedia website “pantip.com,” 2001). During the political crisis, this café was one of the public spheres used for posting political discussion (Ramasoota, 2012). Interestingly, Pirongrong Ramasoota (2012) reaffirmed that www.pantip.com (Ratchadhamnern café) was one of the first forums the Thais used to express their political interests and identities on a wide variety of political issues and to express their support for the authorities, the constitution, and the nation as a whole. As Llyin (1998) suggested that political scholars should study how people build and produce political discourses during political crisis period, a consideration of blog political discourse will help to explore the extent to which the themes and feelings related to political expression are posed at that point in time.

As mentioned above, given the political significance of Ratchadhamnern café as a public sphere of free expression, a special investigation was carried out using content analysis of argumentative discourse to explore important issues that are voiced in the political crisis period. The content analysis procedure based on work by Gordon and Miller (2005) help build more understanding of how online political expression influences Thai political style.

II. Review of Relevant Literature

With the sociocultural communication tradition and the sociopsychological communication tradition as a general grounding, the study focused on communication discourses between bloggers to illuminate how individuals use digital discourse to achieve a variety of communication goals such informing,

persuading and providing emotional support to others.

As the sociocultural tradition conceptualizes communication as the (re)production of social order, argumentative discourse has been conceived as a symbolic demonstration that produces shared political concern (Littlejohn, 1999, McNair, 2003), therefore, I applied thoughts from this tradition by reviewing the literatures related to roles of the Internet in supporting democracy in Thailand.

For the sociopsychological communication tradition that views communication as expression, interaction and influence and focuses heavily on the individual social behaviors, psychological variables, individual effects, personalities and traits, perceptions and cognitions, belief and feelings, of people in affecting each other’s ideas and opinions, the important aspect of communication is the role of the social world and how people work together to create meaning, therefore, I applied thoughts from this tradition by reviewing the literatures related to political communication, social exchange theory, and interpersonal communication in the Thai context.

Roles of the Internet in Supporting Democracy in Thailand

The Internet is the world’s largest data communications network, consisting of thousands of smaller networks interfaced in such a way that computers of any type can interact with one another. Emerging technologies are allowing a new kind of participatory democracy by raising public awareness and, thus, public participation, stimulating general involvement, and facilitating the easy sharing of political expression. There have been many online forums available for people to discuss politics, e.g. webboards, blogs, facebook, twitter, to name just a few, and Pantip.com is one of the most popular webboard in which a political forum is used for political discussion.

www.pantip.com is a popular Thai-language website and discussion forum (Wikipedia, 2001) for political communication, especially among the youth and young executives (generally more highly educated). Overall, there are twenty blogs on www.pantip.com discussing a variety of topics, such as films, sports, education, outdoor recreation, religion, celebrities, and politics. The blogs are named after famous places in Thailand, such as Siam Square, MBK Center, Silom, Chatuchak Weekend Market, and Ratchadumnern. To date, the www.pantip.com's café, named Rachadumnern table, has become a popular public sphere for discussions of Thai politics, such as heated and uncivil political debate. Accordingly, the study of blogs promises a particularly well-focused and politically salient area of investigation.

The notion that online social networking should come together and support public participation in Thai political communication carries a certain presumption of online social media significance. The path of blogging through interpersonal communication is an important dimension of the social process perspective (Jones & Puseg, 2008; Wang, 2009). The most obvious fact about blogging is that content is most likely about political conflict. That always has been, it always will be and there is no point denying or decrying the negative, alarming, conflict focused nature of political communication in the Thai context. If a negative side of online social networking performances is their preoccupation with conflict and alarm, a potential positive side is their role in conflict management (Arno, 2009). Recently, the path of interpersonal communication through blogging is a common form of political communication in Thailand. Accordingly, many political supporters have developed their communication strategies through the use of the Internet as a tool to express their opinions.

Political Communication, Social Exchange Theory, and Interpersonal Communication in the Thai context

This paper focuses on the role of interpersonal communication in fostering public participation in the Thai political communication process. Communication styles of individuals, especially with respect to the expression of emotions, affect how people think, feel, and behave in response to relational events (Guerrero, 2008). Interestingly, interpersonal communication is an alternative channel of public participation for Thai people. Based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), individuals attempt to maximize positive outcomes to extend their gratification (Stafford, 2008). The SET literature indicates that the reward-cost relationship is a determinant of the exchange agreement. The Thibaut and Kelly's Social Exchange Theory (1959), and the Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1964) provide three key characteristics for the determination of interpersonal interaction, or so called interpersonal relationship. Three key characteristics are as following:

- 1) Social Exchange is an important part of interpersonal interaction.
- 2) Individuals provide outcomes to each other through interpersonal interaction.
- 3) Individual is motivated to maintain or enhance his/her interpersonal interaction if the outcomes are seen as rewards.

Supporting by literature review, Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides an effective framework to explain and predict behavior that individuals take into account in making about the actions. Moreover, Social Exchange Theory helps increase understanding about factors that relevant to an interpersonal interaction. Social Exchange Theory suggests that behavior is driven by an internal drive to capitalize on positive experiences and diminish negative experiences through interpersonal interactions.

Social exchange theory views interpersonal interaction in ways that serve individuals' self-interests (Stafford, 2008). In the context of the new political culture in Thailand, the way Thai people behave depends on their own opinions. In addition, individuals are perceived to interact with others in order to minimize negative experiences (minimize costs) and maximize positive experiences (maximize rewards) (Willis, 2010). As a result, such exchange processes and their effects on individuals and social life are central to research on social exchange (Collett, 2006). Interestingly, political supporters' motives for communicating with others can be influenced by either rewards or costs. In other words, communication itself is a resource that can serve as either a reward or a cost (Stafford, 2008).

Accordingly, five main principles of SET are centrally relevant to this study. First, SET relies on the understanding that "Exchange is an important part of human interaction" (Collett, 2006). For SET, what is most important about interaction is that interaction was based on the exchange of rewards and costs to quantify the values of outcomes from different situations for an individual.

Second, SET has found that "individuals are motivated to interact with others in ways that serve their self-interests" (Stafford, 2008, p. 380) or the practice that fit and match one's personal interests and goals. In brief, an individual who is positively motivated is more likely to interact with the other, while an individual who experiences negative results is less likely to communicate with the other.

Third, SET suggested interpersonal interaction works from a cost-benefit concern (Blau, 1964). In sum, interpersonal interaction is based on perceptions of costs (what we are putting into a relationship) and rewards (what we are getting out of a relationship).

Fourth, SET has also found that social exchange relies on commitment and trust. SET conceptualizes relationship outcomes, so called relationship quality, as being influenced by the relational constructs of commitment and trust.

Last, SET proposes that social exchanges are voluntary. Individuals are perceived to interact with each other in order to obtain some kind of reward or an equitable exchange. An individual's reasons for volunteering based on the perception of rewarding, rewards for his/her costs referred to as the comparison level (CL).

Based on the underpinning of Social Exchange Theory, these five main principles will be utilized to determine and explain the political communication and conflict discourse in Thai online social networking.

The blogosphere becomes a great democratizing influence that assists in informing the public political developments, boosts political participation, creates new opportunity for political discussion, and gives voice to the speechless during times of political crisis (Gomez, 2002; Maxwell, 2000). The content analysis will show us the characteristics of conflictual discussion during a period of political crisis. Content analysis is used as a means to study the content of communication by many communication scholars. Content analysis is a methodology to explore the themes, feeling and values on the disclosure of specific items; these may include place (Devine-Wright & Lyons, 1997), politics (Gordon & Miller, 2005), and events (Clinton, Llyin, & Mey, 1998). In this study, I focus on meaningful messages relating narratives of the Thai political issues in past, present and future; these include the extent that bloggers chose to engage in a written confrontation, and the extent that bloggers intended to yield an agreement with the other political actors.

Based on Gordon & Miller (2005)'s coding scheme, the concept being measured in this study refers to the presence and absence of the political issues. In addition, categories of analysis were organized by themes as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts for determining key ideas and themes in blogs. All relevant aspects of the political issues were analyzed to identify the most prominent theme as negative, positive or neutral (Gordon & Miller, 2005).

As the purpose of this study is to figure out the prominent themes of political discussion through online social networking in Thailand, researcher employed content analysis as a methodology to investigate how discourse is used as a means of communicating attitudes toward the political crisis in Thailand. The general question guiding this study is: To what extent do bloggers discuss political issues in their internet communication?

As mentioned above, this study is intended to address a variety of questions; the following list provides an index into the content analysis of the selected Thai blog that centered on the political crisis:

Q1. What person or group of people is mentioned in the blog?

Q2. What political event/issue is mentioned in the blog?

Q3. What type/s of conflict discussion is/are presented in this blog?

Q4. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of the public interest?

Q5. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of outcome and expected outcome from political conflict?

Q6. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of creating and recreating understanding in the conflict situation?

Q7. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of conflict signal?

Q8. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of problem solving during political crisis?

Q9. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of conflict management style?

Q10. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of politics?

Q11. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of people engaged in political crisis?

Q12. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of peacefulness/disentangling approaches?

Q13. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of judgment?

Q14. What are the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of political actions?

Figure 1 summarizes the framework that illustrates how the sociocultural and sociopsychological communication traditions can be grounded.

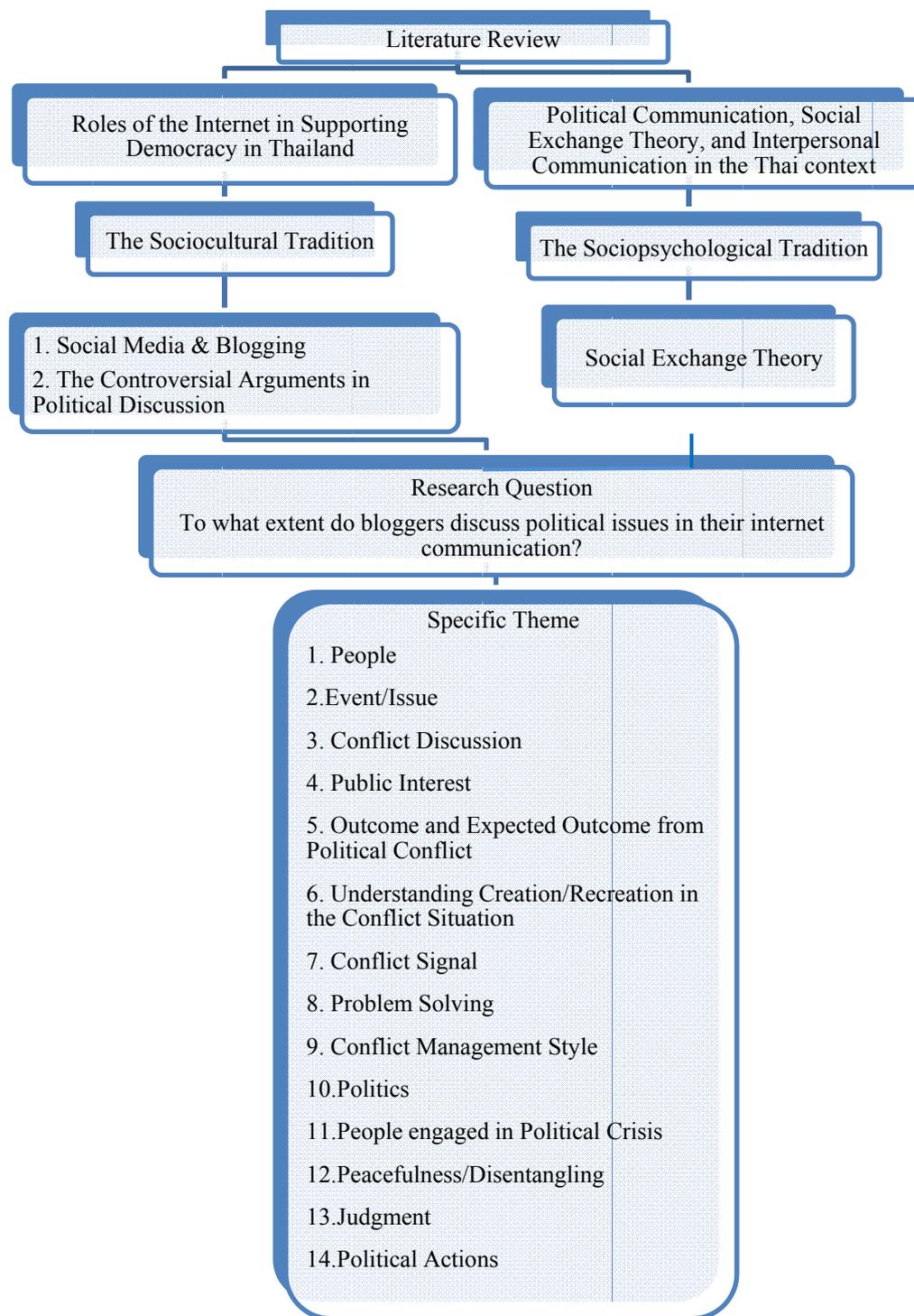


Figure 1 Theoretical framework for the study

III. Methodology:

Blogs can be studied through their different genres, such as political, educational, research, and narrative. For this study, researcher is interested in the verbal content of blogs, especially the issues that the bloggers addressed and emphasized during political crisis. Thus, this study focuses on what is being posted in the blogs. This content analysis of political communication and conflict discourse in the Thai online social networking investigated how individuals interact with society at large via the blogosphere. Furthermore, this study concentrated on the disclosure of specific items about which individuals discussed in the blogosphere.

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Interestingly, Pirongrong Ramasoota (2012) reaffirmed that www.pantip.com (Ratchadhamnern café) was one of the first forums the Thais used to express their political interests and identities on a wide variety of political issues and to express their support for the authorities, the constitution, and the nation as a whole. As a result, a consideration of blog political discourse will provide an awareness of the status of democratic institutions in Thailand (Clinton, Llyin, & Mey, 1998).

As mentioned above, given the political significance of Ratchadhamnern café as a public sphere of free expression, a special investigation was carried out using content analysis of argumentative discourse engaged in during the crisis. The content analysis was traced in the characteristics of political discussions

in the Ratchadhamnern café that emerged in the crisis period, from August 2, 2010 through September 30, 2010 (60 days), to investigate what bloggers discuss at this point in time. A method of codifying the content of text in the blogs is based on the categories or criteria that are chosen (Gordon & Miller, 2005). According to Gordon & Miller (2005), the first step in the content analysis is to determine the unit of analysis; in this study that will be the blog entries to be included in the formal analysis. In considering the written content of the blog, I identified the units syntactically, specifically, each blog entry was identified as a unit of analysis. For the purpose of the study, 198 blogs were chosen from Ratchadhamnern café, and the unit of analysis, blog entry, was easily identified by the blog identification number provided on the www.pantip.com website. All blogs published during a political crisis period within Pantip website were downloaded and numbered separately for each blog. Then, each recording unit was numbered by a new content ID (1 to 198). The entry messages posted by the primary author of the blogs were collected as the primary texts of those blogs. Based on Gordon & Miller (2005)'s guidelines, I focused on sub-segments of the topics as phrased for categorizing and creating definitions of each unit. The following are specific topic relating to what bloggers think and feel from blogs I focused on:

1. People

People in a democratic country exercise their political power based on the social system to which they belong (McNair, Hibberd, & Schlesinger, 2003). People who are involved in the political process represent their democratic power through discourse in the public sphere (McNair, Hibberd, & Schlesinger, 2003; Mey, 1998). People integrated into political discussion are referenced directly (or indirectly by title, etc.) (McNair, Hibberd, & Schlesinger, 2003). Examples include politicians, voters, supporters

and protesters. Therefore, I focus on discourse related to people in a conflict event and what they posted in the blogs: What are the roles expressed in relation to their beliefs regarding the conflict (e.g., politician, voters, supporters, protesters, military, third party and citizen)?

2. Events/Issues

Events/Issues are defined as public events (event-centered) for discussing and transforming political conflict. Additionally, the situation surrounding the text affects its production and determines what is appropriate for that particular situation (White & Marsh, 2006). Specifically, analysis of the discourse of conflict may reveal the constructing of events/ issues. Therefore, I focus on discourse in conflict events as a way of examining concentration of events/issues content in blogs: what is the definition of the situation that frames blogger's discourse in the Thai community or society (e.g., Thailand's color, the color-based protest movements in Thailand, the context of the Thai situation in year 2010, the Thai community or society, transforming of political conflict, the constructing of events/ issues and public events)?

3. Conflict Discussion

A main cause for a political crisis is the fight for important things, like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Additionally, conflicts are often distinguished into three main categories: interest, understanding, ideology/belief. Moreover, communication conflict among bloggers may present a more complex pattern of the conflict discourse systems. There are many forms of communication relating political talk may include: conflict in diverse societal and cultural setting, the political communication in public sphere and the contemporary cultural study understanding of conflict in the context of political identity. Therefore, the type/s of conflict discussion presented in this

blog may include outcome/expected outcome, impact, understanding, conflict signal, problem solving, ideology/belief or conflict management style.

4. Public Interest

For this sub-category, the topic is related to the perception of well-being, political thinking, political information sources, political impact and behavior, good governance and decision making. As the concentration of interest content in blogs concerns the degree to which individuals perceive their well-being, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of public interest presented in this blog may include the perception of wellbeing, political thinking, political impact and behavior, good governance, good decision making, return power to people, the struggle for their rights, agreement, securing peace, and wealth.

5. Outcome and Expected Outcome from Political Conflict

Outcomes refer to both positive and negative outcomes of political crisis in Thailand. Expected outcome refers to regulations of desirable characters of products gained from political communication including the blogger's satisfaction in political participation.

For this sub-category, the topic is related to the bloggers' discussions about outcome and expected outcome from political conflict. Therefore, concentration of outcome /expected outcome content in blogs regards "What is political communication for"; and "What are outcomes from political conflict." The topics that bloggers discussed in terms of outcome presented in this blog may include the perception of win-lose outcome, a new democratic institution, the policy output, commitment, wellbeing outcome, fairness, the population rules (democracy), unconventional protests, the clash between political actors, and the widening gap between social group (rich and poor, elite and masses, rural and urban).

6. Understanding Creation/Recreation in the Conflict Situation

In examining the new media in the Thai context, I will interpret a specific interaction situation and what the individual is likely to discuss initially in the blog, especially bloggers' interpretation of political crisis' motives.

The study of "understanding" is to investigate political communication in which political discourse can be seen as creating and recreating understanding in the conflict situation. Additionally, to understand Thai political history of political crisis from bloggers' standpoint, concentration on impact content in blogs regards "understanding the diversity of meanings that bloggers give to any political communication."

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of understanding may include being loyal to the King and the country's long terms goals, feeling of guilt or grievance, offer and assure smiles to the people by securing peace, justice, and real democracy.

7. Conflict Signal

The focus of this category is on "discourse signals" that express concern with interactions among language, culture, and social institutions. Such discourse "signals that blogger recognized and valued social warning during political crisis."

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of conflict signal presented in this blog may include social warning signal (e.g., unsatisfied society, tension, unsatisfied society, people disobey the rule and the law, polarization in society), media warning signal (e.g., news exposure), state warning signal (e.g., announcement, freedom of expression in Thailand, a military warning system), and political actors warning signal (e.g., a protester leader warning system, the country's political leader warning system).

8. Problems Solving

In this category, problem solving involves the solving of a conflict once it exists. I am interested how bloggers explicit attitude toward resolving conflict such as willing to work hard to overcome conflict, is expressed.

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of problems solving may include bloggers call for truth (e.g., bloggers call for a fact-finding committee), bloggers call for conflict resolutions (e.g., bloggers willing to work hard to overcome conflict, bloggers call for the coalition parties), bloggers call for democracy (e.g., bloggers call for new national election to get the new government supported by the majority of the Thais, bloggers call for the Election Commission), bloggers call for good governance (e.g., bloggers proposed curbing rampant corruption, bloggers suggest that parliament should work for the sake of people not self-interest), and bloggers call for peace (e.g., bloggers suggested that the Thais should be more patient and let the Abhisit Vejjajiva government work its four-year term, bloggers proposed to pray for peace building).

9. Conflict Management Style

Online social networking performance is their preoccupation with conflict and alarm, a potential positive side is their role in conflict management. Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed interms of conflict management style may include forcing (e.g., violence, gun, knife, bomb), confrontation (e.g., to take over government house to block a cabinet meeting, social movements, strike action, clash with military), compromise (e.g., resolved peacefully, sign agreement), withdrawal (e.g., give up the protest and go home), and smoothing (e.g., call for third party such as the coalition parties, the Election Commission).

10. Political Talk

The nature of political life in Thailand blog posted interesting questions such as: What makes such direct performance possible? What are their implications for the future relationships of the contending parties? And why do participants claim to find them satisfying experiences? In this section, we explore the bloggers' perceptions of politics and conflict.

The term, "political talk," refers to the groups' communication systems, their patterns of interaction within political systems, political regulations, and political structure that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse in conflict. Topics that bloggers discussed in terms of politics may include political communication in the public sphere (e.g., political opinion, Political behavior, freedom of expression), political conflict (e.g., conflict in diverse societal and cultural setting, separation of power), political stability (e.g., notion of authority, leadership, legitimacy, free/fair and frequent elections, political institution, political parties, associational autonomy), Thai political history (e.g., political phenomena), democracy (e.g., the political institution of democracy, alternative information), political structure (e.g., the elected official/representatives) or political actors (e.g., politician, voters, inclusive citizenship).

11. People engaged in Political Crisis

Political crisis impacts, directly or indirectly, bloggers' daily life. Their active participation would be represented as freedom during a crisis period. Political crisis in this section refers to an extended period of political instability and social unrest that culminated in Thailand, in year 2010. Thus, engagement in political crisis in this section refers to people who were socially linked in some way with political crisis in Thailand in year 2010.

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of engagement in political crisis may include political actors (e.g., politician, agents of political socialization, political supporters, political member, political party), political elites (e.g., political opinion leaders, experts, educators, professors, business association), state (e.g., parliament, government, military), citizens (e.g., voter, innocent people, family, friend, colleague, peer), social movement actors (e.g., protester, labor unions), and mass media (newspaper, radio, internet, television, magazine).

12. Peacefulness/Disentangling

Peacefulness/disentangling relates to creating and maintaining a peaceful society including: early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and negotiation, reconciliation, structuring of peace agreements, peacemaking, and participating in peace marches. Basically, the Thais are peace-loving people. In Thai political history, peacefulness/disentangling is defined as actions of government and society to resist or counter the conflicts of the collective actors by issuing A National Reconciliation Commission to enforce the law and reestablish peace (Wuthnow, 2007). The topics that bloggers discussed in terms of peacefulness/disentangling may include reconciliation plan, peace building, commitment, the facts, civil society, the idea of resolving conflict with long-terms policies?

13. Judgment

Bloggers reflect a judgment about what is accepted as public opinion in political crisis. Bloggers are involved in the conflict on the basis of their judgments of what is legitimate. Such expression can affect public judgments of legitimacy in such a way as to influence the outcome of the struggle and the status of the conflict actors. Thus, this section focuses blogger's opinion about the things that are right, proper, and appropriate for judging conflict actors.

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of judgment may include rational (e.g., legitimacy and justice, politician commitment, the role of the state, the Article 8 of Constitution of Thailand, the Penal code, the rule of law, Constitution and Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Thailand, the National Constitution), irrational (e.g., social pressure, attitude/favor or disfavor), practical (e.g., the Internal Security Act and Emergency Decree on 7 April, 2010), and ritual (e.g., the role of the supernatural as Phra Sayam Thewathirat (Thailand's guardian Spirit), a taboo for critical discussion).

14. Political Actions

Political action in this section refers to the process by which bloggers conceived and realized conventional political engagement: mainly efforts to influence the government and other large institutions through voting, discussing politics with others, reaching out to public officials about political crisis issues.

Therefore, the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of political actions may include political movement, the conduct of political activities, the way people behave depends on their own opinions, political participation, and action of voting.

Based on Gordon & Miller (2005)'s coding scheme, the concept being measured in this study will refer to the presence and absence of the political issues. In addition, categories of analysis will be organized by themes as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts for determining key ideas and themes in blogs. All relevant aspects of the political issues will be analyzed to identify the most prominent theme as negative, positive or neutral (Gordon & Miller, 2005).

IV. Findings: What is the specific theme of the blogs?

In this section, I proceed with the method of content analysis which follows through the coding sheets. The study presents quantitative data of the specific topic of the blog in the field of political communication. Interestingly, the politician theme related to people in a conflict event, the color-based protest movements in Thailand theme related to political event/issue, the impact theme related to conflict discussion, the rights theme and the political impact and behavior theme related to public interest, the policy output (commitment) theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of outcome and expected outcome from political conflict, the justice theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of creating and recreating understanding in the conflict situation, the political actors warning signal theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of conflict signal, the good governance theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of problem solving during political crisis, the confrontation conflict management style theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of conflict management style, the political communication in public sphere theme and the political conflict theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of politics, the political elites theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of people engaged in political crisis, the facts theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of peacefulness/disentangling, the practical judgment theme related to the topics that bloggers

discussed in terms of judgment, and the action of voting theme related to the topics that bloggers discussed in terms of political actions, are the specific

topics which bloggers posted the most during the Thai political crisis period in the year 2010. (see Table 1).

Table 1 The overall topic of the blog as appearing in the Ratchadhamnern café

No	The specific theme	The most prominent theme
Q1	People	The politician theme
Q2	Event/issue	The color-based protest movements in Thailand theme
Q3	Conflict discussion	The impact theme
Q4	Public Interest	The rights theme The political impact and behavior theme
Q5	Outcome and expected outcome from political conflict	The policy output (commitment) theme
Q6	Understanding creation/recreation in the conflict situation	The justice theme
Q7	Conflict signal	The political actors warning signal theme
Q8	Problem solving	The good governance theme
Q9	Conflict Management Style	The confrontation conflict management style theme
Q10	Politics	The political communication in public sphere theme The political conflict theme
Q11	People engaged in political crisis	The political elites theme
Q12	Peacefulness/disentangling	The facts theme
Q13	Judgment	The practical judgment theme
Q14	Political actions	The action of voting theme

V. Discussion

Based on the sociocultural communication tradition and the sociopsychological communication tradition, I created my theoretical frame to investigate the political communication themes through online social networking in Thailand (see Figure 1). However, the study of communication has many different communication traditions associated with it, therefore, in order to gain better understanding on political communication and conflict discourse in Thai online social networking, it is important to analyze what people are saying in blogs. As new media

technologies are not in themselves a solution to the complex communication issues in today's dynamic socio-economic environment, therefore, I applied Social Exchange Theory to make understanding on political communication in the Thai online social networking in order to search for more ingenious strategies to communicate with the confrontation groups and response to their needs effectively. Based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Thai online social networking was used for political discussion to lead the minds of Thai political supporters. SET suggests bloggers are aimed at getting reward with

self-interest and gratification, acting through their discourses of how Thai society views the cause and effect of social conflict. Bloggers seek opportunities to express their opinions, including opinions about justice (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001). The discourses of bloggers are part of the political expression in Thai politics, even with conflicting discourses about events. Furthermore, the overall themes relating to the political crisis posted in the blogs could enhance citizens' sense of political participation. According to findings in Table 1, we could infer that there are a number of Thai citizens dissatisfied with the outcomes from the political crisis. However, the Thais expressed their political views in more logical than emotional terms and their political expressions also reflect the degree to which they were interested in political crisis outcomes. Furthermore, many Thai citizens expected that the political actors would help with warning signals before political conflict would take place. At the same time, Thai citizens also expected that judgment--with facts and good governance--is the key underpinning to settle the understanding in Thai society. Importantly, many citizens called for new elections to reinforce unity in Thailand.

Currently, argumentative conflict in politics has urged me to think about the Spirit's illumination guided by bloggers in relation to the consolidation of political identities in Thailand. The Social Exchange Theory has great potential to see why they are creating their own social reality. Moreover, I think that argumentative conflict in politics is a conventional sign people use to show their ideas and feelings. Based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), individuals access online social networking to follow the political situation in Thailand and exchange opinions concerning the political event/issue in order to maintain relationship with their group (social reward) (Blau, 1964). The Table 1 shows that blogosphere

consists of several different types of posts concentrated on Thai political conflict events. Those posts include people theme, event/issue theme, conflict discussion theme, public interest theme, outcome and expected outcome from political conflict theme, understanding creation/recreation in the conflict situation theme, conflict signal theme, problem solving theme, conflict management style theme, politics theme, people engaged in political crisis theme, peacefulness/disentangling theme, judgment theme, and political actions theme.

Baxter & Braithwaite (2008) focused on the concept of "communication perspective" to describe how the inner world, the social structure, social interactions, and means of expression are reciprocally constituted with the self-referential system. As Blau (1964) suggested integration of the social exchange process needs to be focused at a different level of exchange to gain rewards (p. 6). By applying the frames of this theoretical dimension to analyze the research results related to the specific theme of the blogs as shown in Table 1, social exchange through online social networking can develop better relationship among bloggers (Blau, 1964). Therefore, findings from content analysis in this study reflects the definition of the situation that frame blogger's discourse related to political event/issue in Thailand in the year 2010. As such, bloggers' dialogue represented a basic movement of political life in Thailand.

By applying the frames of theoretical dimension to analyze the research results related to the specific theme of the blogs related to political event/issue in this study helped me to understand human interaction, events, and situations, in the real world of daily living, and to think about communication practices that enable and sustain authentic relationships during the political crisis period. The focus on phenomenon of communication can help

to identify the content of everyday consciousness, or meaning of the experiences, based on a careful content analysis of the structure of experience in which we recognize and verify the experiences of others by analogy with our own experience (Craig & Muller, 2007). This means that political communication and conflict discourse in the Thai online social networking will serve as the communication space for a constructive debate about the future direction of the Thai democracy. As such, bloggers' discourses represent as a mode of thinking and questioning that frame political situation in Thailand in the year 2010. I found that political communication in the Thai online social networking is the Thais' attempts to unmark the barriers to communicate during political crisis period.

Therefore, to ensure the freedom of political discussion during a political crisis, other stakeholders – such as politicians, political supporters, protesters and third parties—are also seeking public access channels for conveying their political expressions (Chulapimpan, 1999; Land, 2004). This is the future of Thai democracy. Interestingly, by reviewing the controversial arguments in political discussion in Thailand, Chulapimpan (1999) found that the political communication process would allow Thai citizens to raise issues and topics that shaped the new political environment. Though digital Medias tend to expand so widely, content in the online social networking extremely affected political communication between citizens and political actors such as government officials, party leaders, interest group advocates, or others (Esser & Pfetsch, 2004). In addition, Internet use opens more fora and e-communication in challenging national policy (Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). As a result, it is necessary for communication professionals to implement political communication

as ways to advocate social changes and to strengthen the health and future of democracy (Swanson, 2004). In particular, the communication professionals in Thailand should investigate political communication and conflict discourse in Thai online social network in order to understand the issues of interest among those in the blogosphere. The blogosphere is an online political forum that enables potentially effective two-way communication between the Thais who concentrated on the political crisis examined in this study and any persons who need the public's reaction on the indications of citizens' demands (Kriesi, 2004).

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