

การวิเคราะห์การรายงานข่าวสถานการณ์ ความไม่สงบในภาคใต้ของไทยและการใช้ แบบจำลอง IBIL

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้วิเคราะห์รูปแบบการรายงานข่าวสถานการณ์ความไม่สงบในภาคใต้ของไทยในหนังสือพิมพ์ระดับชาติ และนำเสนอ “รูปแบบของสาเหตุและผลกระทบ” เพื่ออธิบายปรากฏการณ์ดังกล่าวที่ยังยืดเยื้ออยู่ในขณะนี้ รูปแบบดังกล่าวประกอบด้วยแนวคิดหลัก 4 แนวคิดคือ (1) ปริมาณยิ่งมาก คุณภาพยิ่งด้อยลง (2) ยิ่งเร้าใจมาก ยิ่งน่าติดตาม (3) อำนาจยิ่งมาก เสียงยิ่งดัง และ (4) ยิ่งเห็นแก่ประโยชน์ส่วนตนมาก ยิ่งเห็นแก่ส่วนรวมน้อยลง จากรูปแบบดังกล่าว “IBIL Model” ได้รับการพัฒนาขึ้นโดยมีปัจจัยหลัก 4 ประการคือ (1) อุดมการณ์ขององค์กรสื่อมวลชน (2) ข่าวร้ายขายดีกว่าข่าวดี (3) ผู้มีอำนาจเป็นแหล่งข่าวสำคัญ และ (4) ข้อจำกัดของเวลาและเนื้อที่

“IBIL Model” ถูกทดลองใช้เพื่ออธิบายเหตุการณ์ระเบิดรถยนต์ที่โรงแรมลีการ์เดิน พลาซ่า หาดใหญ่และ

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โรงแรม ซี เอส บัตตานีในปี 2555 ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่า
ปัจจัยทั้ง 4 สามารถอธิบายเหตุการณ์ดังกล่าวได้เป็น
อย่างใดอย่างหนึ่งก็ตาม เพื่อให้ประชาชนทั่วไปเป็นผู้รับ
สารที่รู้เท่าทันสื่อ “ICON Model” เสนอว่าผู้รับสารต้อง
มีลักษณะ 4 ประการ ดังนี้ (1) มีภูมิคุ้มกันภัยจากผล
กระทบจากเนื้อหาสื่อ (2) มีวิจารณญาณในการวิเคราะห์
เนื้อหาสื่อ (3) ปราศจากอคติ และ (4) ไม่ด่วนตัดสินคน/
กลุ่มคน/สถานการณ์ บทความนี้พบข้อสรุปว่า “IBIL
Model” สามารถช่วยอธิบายสถานการณ์ต่างๆ เพื่อ
ตรวจสอบว่ารูปแบบดังกล่าวสามารถอธิบายการ
ทำงานของสื่อมวลชนได้อย่างไร และ/หรือควรได้รับการ
ปรับปรุงเพื่อให้เหมาะกับสถานการณ์เฉพาะหรือไม่

คำสำคัญ: การรายงานข่าว, ภาคใต้ของไทย,
สถานการณ์ความไม่สงบ, สามจังหวัด
ชายแดนใต้

An Analysis of News Reporting on South Thailand Insurgency and An Implementation of the IBIL Model

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Abstract

This article presents a pattern of news reporting on south Thailand insurgency in major national newspapers and demonstrates “a cause-effect model” to explain this on-going violent crisis. The pattern consists of four main conceptions: (1) the greater the quantity, the worse the quality, (2) the more sensational, the more attractive, (3) the more influential, the louder and (4) the more self-interested, the less altruistic. From such pattern, a cause-effect *IBIL Model* was then formulated with four contributing factors: *Ideology of media organization*, *Bad news almost always outselling good news*, *Influential individuals as major news sources* and *Limitation of time and space*.

The IBIL Model was later tested with two recent cases of car bombings at Had Yai Lee Gardens Plaza and C.S. Pattani hotels in 2012. Result analysis of IBIL Model implementation reveals that with all four contributing factors, the model could well explain how mass media covered similar violent incidents. However, in order to help the general public, as media consumers, to be media

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literate, a media literacy *ICON Model* is also proposed with four essential traits: *Immune*, *Critical*, *Objective* and *Non-judgmental*. The paper finally concludes that IBIL Model can and should help investigate different circumstances in order to see if the model can help elucidate how mass media exercise their journalistic functions and/or if it should or need be modified under particular circumstances.

Keywords: insurgency, news reporting, southernmost province, south Thailand

Introduction

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2010), the Asia-Pacific region is considered to have the most conflicts in terms of absolute numbers ranging from high intensity violent conflicts across Afghanistan and Pakistan through to violence and severe rioting in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Increasingly intrastate conflicts are seen as a major challenge, with violence in Southern Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines all related to sub-national requests for greater autonomy. Thailand's southern border provinces include Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkla. South Thailand insurgency is an insurgency led by a group of local Muslim insurgents that is taking place in Southern Thailand, mostly in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand: Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Violence has increasingly spilled over into other provinces. Although separatist violence has occurred for decades in the region, the campaign escalated in January 2004 when over 400 rifles and other ammunition were stolen from Narathiwat Ratchanakarin military camp in Cho Airong district, Narathiwat.

The most recent data by Deep South Watch (March 12, 2013) reveal that, in over nine years (January 4, 2004 - February 28, 2013), there were reportedly 12,517 violent incidents, claiming 5,410 lives and 9,526 injured. Overall, the number of incidents has dropped, however, the extent of loss and damage has intensified (ISRA News, June 20, 2012; Jitpiromsri, 2012). Despite all efforts to alleviate the violence, the situation is getting more "protracted" and "complicated" (Jitpiromsri, 2012) and more sophisticated approaches of attack are used, making it even more complex to handle (Kai-nunna, 2010).

Like any other conflict, the southern crisis is believed to be alleviated by genuinely sincere and effective communication. For over nine years, regardless of forms, mass media have been main, if not sole, resources from which people learn about violent incidents in the area. Although media can be highly effective in reducing conflict in strife-ridden societies (Howard, 2001), irresponsible ones will and can do otherwise. Reliable information is an essential element of stabilizing a society while biased or hatemongering media can sabotage almost any other peace-building effort (Howard, 2001). Among others, for economic reasons, mass media choose to report some things while ignore others. They know well what makes the headlines and what does not. As a result, what and how most mainstream media, both print and electronics have reported, have taken very similar, if not the same, directions. Media coverage on the south unrest is no exception.

Numerous studies were conducted on south Thailand insurgency, especially in the fields of *journalism* and *political science*. Most research looked into how mass media reported violent incidents and potential effects while little has shown why media have covered the way they have. Additionally, recommendations from those studies have been proposed to all parties involved. However, that has not seemed to help alleviate the violence in the area.

More often than not, among others, mass media have been to blame for causing negative impacts. There have been a great number of studies and research carried out both by academics and media organizations before and after January 2004 when the insurgency flared up again. The project of *Information Technology and Mass Communication for National Peacefulness* (Lertpongsoombat et al.,

2007) is interdisciplinary, combining *information technology* and *mass communication* perspectives in order to bring out proper approaches of communication management and to propose appropriate roles of media. Out of nine studies from the whole project, this paper, however, bases the analysis solely on four studies: (1) The direction of news reporting on three southernmost provinces (Arttanuchit, 2007); (2) Peace journalism: Ethics, management and suggestions for development (Changkamol, 2007); (3) Representation, ideology and discourse of news media on the southern situations of Thailand (Yaena, 2007); and (4) Effects of mass media: Attitudes of people in the three southernmost provinces towards news coverage on violent crises (Thapthiang, 2007). Details on methodology of the four studies are provided in the Appendix.

This article is divided into five parts. First, a pattern of how newspapers report and frame the crisis in southern Thailand is presented. Second, from the pattern, a cause-effect *IBIL Model* is formulated to explain the violent situation in the area. Third, the model is trialed with two similar violent incidents of car bombings at Lee Gardens Plaza Had Yai and C.S. Pattani hotels. Fourth, result analysis of the model implication is discussed and a media literacy *ICON Model* is also proposed for media consumers. Last, the paper concludes the exploration and recommendations are given for all stakeholders to help improve news reporting on violence and peace building process.

A Pattern of News Reporting on South Thailand Insurgency

The analysis of the news reporting on southern crisis is framed as follows: (1) what and how newspapers report with regard to deep

south of Thailand between 1993 and 2005, (2) has “Peace Journalism” been practiced? (3) how have mass media framed the south unrest? and (4) how have media coverage on the crisis affected individuals and society? In order of the studies mentioned above, the investigation reveals the four following main conceptions:

1. *The Greater the Quantity, the Worse the Quality*

Of 1,500 pieces of news on the southernmost area, 636 were from 1993-2003 while 864 were from 2004-2005 alone (Arttanuchit, 2007). Not all 1,500 news reports were inclusively related to the violent unrest. However, the last two years of 2004 and 2005 produced twice as many news articles as the previous ten years due to the fact that the insurgency escalated in January 2004. The size of news stories on the front page increasingly rose each year; from one to ten and 41-50 in 1994-2001 to 91 square inches in 2005. Additionally, the placement switched from the inside to the front page. Over that period, the news selection criteria remained unchanged. Most news items involved regular violent incidents. The most reported theme was *follow-up reporting on arrests of criminals or suspects*, followed by *bombings, shooting government officials and civilians*. Contrarily, the number of general news reports such as development of the southern border region, lifestyles and locals’ quality of life was relatively limited.

Arttanuchit (2007) has argued that why mainstream media reported more on the crisis situation than on general topics was possibly due in part to limited time of news production process.

Realizing that people are generally more interested in stories of conflict, violence and losses than in positive aspects, media tend to make assumptions that southern unrest would draw more attention than general news would. Local media professionals, therefore, rushed to finish news reports and send them to editorial staff waiting in Bangkok-based offices for final selection and approval. More often than not, their criteria of news selection are *immediacy* and *conflict*, hoping to grab audience's attention. Local news reporters are also believed to have saved time, not having to come up with other news angles to report.

2. The More Sensational , the More Attractive

The analysis reveals that all newspaper samples placed emphasis on “war journalism” with three indicators of language use: emotive, demonizing and victimizing (Changkamol, 2007). Similarly to Arttanuchit's (2007) study, this suggests that mainstream media used “violence” as a frame of news reporting. Among others, *conflict* and *human interests* were the most used news criteria when considering what to report. More specifically, out of 232 news items, 43 (18.53%) used “Peace Journalism” (PJ) approach, 169 (72.85%) “War Journalism” (WJ) and the rest (8.62%) “Neural”. In comparison with one another, all three newspapers focused on the practice of “war journalism” regardless of category (quality or tabloid). Looking particularly into frequency, on the one hand, the five most used WJ news reporting indicators include (1) dichotomize between the good and the bad guys, victims and villains, (2) partisan, (3) use

emotive words, (4) differences that led to conflicts and (5) here and now. On the other, the top five PJ indicators are (1) stays on and report aftermath of war, (2) multiparty orientation, (3) both visible and invisibles effects, (4) people-oriented, and (5) avoids victimizing language (Changkamol, 2007).

What is obvious is that all national papers' tendency to form judgments and to be unfair by both their use of language and selection of news resources. This discovery especially suggests that using such languages, emotive in particular, only worsens the heated situation. More importantly, when reporting conflicts, *balance* and *fairness* need to be taken into account. Good reporters do not only report "facts" but also aim to help bring "peace" as their goal. As Veen (1997) puts it, conflict news reporting has nothing to do with "*taking side*" since media professionals should act as a third person, watching and reporting with peace as a common goal to achieve.

3. *The More Influential, the Louder*

Quantitatively, Yaena (2007) studied 3,521 news items during the study period of January 2004 – December 2005 (731 days). The three national daily papers; Thairath, Matichon and Bangkok Post, reported the southern unrest daily, making it 1.77 pieces of news a day, while local papers, Focus (weekly) and Smart News (bi-weekly), had 103 (2.7) and 48 (5.8) respectively. Most news stories that Thairath and Matichon covered appeared to be problems and situation in the southernmost area, whereas Bangkok Post laid an emphasis on policies for and solutions to the insurgency. Linguistically,

in the national papers, the word “*southern insurgent*” was most found in the headlines, followed by “*Maew*” (former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawattara’s nickname) while in local papers “*southern border provinces*” appeared the most, followed by “*problems in the south*”. In Bangkok Post, an English newspaper, “*south/southern/far south*” were used most, followed by “*suspect (s)*.” Individuals, referred to the most, are different from paper to paper. In Thairath, *insurgents* are referred to most, followed by *police* and *military personnel*. In Matichon, *Prime Minister* as news sources was ranked first, followed by the *military* and *local politicians*. Bangkok Post cited *military personnel* the most, followed by *general public* and *government officials*. Like Bangkok Post, those mentioned the most in both local papers are *general public* and *government officials*.

More interestingly, Yaena (2007) qualitatively looked into mass media “functions” and “power,” using discourse analysis to reveal socio-psychological characteristics of a person/persons rather than text structure. The findings show that mass media have a tendency to frame audience’s perceptions by using languages in particular ways to construct discourses on different issues in the area. These include the root cause of the unrest believed to be illegal drugs and separatism, images of Muslim religious teachers, “*ponoh*” (Muslim schools) accused of conspiracy of the unrest, and the image of the three southernmost provinces being heated by the insurgency. In addition, use of verbs related to fire such as “*flare*” and “*flame*” is also considerably obvious

Most importantly, mass media's growing tendency to "choose" to give precedence to the government, politicians and government officials with regard to determining the root cause of the crisis and other situations in the area is evident in all papers investigated. The media have definitely played a crucial role in sending out "ruling ideology" to the society. Therefore, discourses appeared in the texts are not only what is reported but also the "fighting tool" used by the influential and powerful government personnel to make their perceptions of the southern unrest socially accepted. Media have reproduced interpretations of government discourse to define problems. Thus, reflection of reality on the southern situation is presented through the discourse of "ruling class." Additionally, how discourses on image of the southernmost provinces portrayed in the mass media have been framed is similar to the way media cover crime news.

4. The More Self-interested, the Less Altruistic

Most informants agreed that, to great extent, mass media have failed to report news on southern violence efficiently and professionally, resulting in negative media reflection of Muslims and Islam affecting both individual and societal levels (Thapthiang, 2007). On the individual level, the effects include fear, hatred, distress and anxiety over one another. On the societal level, they involve misperception of Islam and Muslims. The effects on both levels are, however, inevitably related and overlapping. Additionally, the participants share a common perception that media have long ignored "public interest" as

they have paid little attention to social integration and good tastes. Importantly, due to media professionals' lack of cultural diversity recognition, local Muslims have been treated with less respect. The informants strongly recommend that mass media cover any incident and convey their reports and messages professionally, fairly and thoroughly, with clear understanding of situations, critical and ethical mind as well as respect for cultural differences. In addition, media should also share more constructive aspects of Muslim communities. That will accordingly provide audience with facts and accurate messages which can then help them better understand situations and people involved.

A Design of Cause-Effect IBIL Model

The four conceptions described above are associated with four main factors of news reporting on the southernmost crisis. The first concept of *"the greater the quantity, the worse the quality"* relates to *"Limitation of time and space."* Newspapers are generally forced to report *some* things that they are certain would grab readers' attentions while ignore *others*. Regular violent incidents in the area would make headlines and save the media time not to have to think about "other" things to cover. The number of news reports on southern insurgency, therefore, increased, worsening the quality of the newspapers by the way the crisis was presented and framed. The second notion of *"the more sensational, the more attractive"* deals with *"Bad news almost always outselling good news."* People, in general, are more attracted to events that are concerned with elite, are dramatic, have negative

impacts, or can be personalized than to others. In order to economically survive, newspapers, like any other media, need to make sure that what they cover can sell. The third conception of *“the more influential, the louder”* has to do with *“Influential individuals as major news sources.”* Mass media tend to use and pay more attention to news sources from government officials and authorities than to civilians or locals. The last but most important concept of *“the more self-interested, the less altruistic”* involves *“Ideology of media organization.”* Professional ideology can obviously be seen by journalistic practice.

From the four causes, a cause-effect model was originally formulated to help explain the violent situation in southern Thailand (Thapthiang, 2012a). The tentative model was later modified using the first four letters of the causes; *LBII* and named an **“IBIL Model”** (Thapthiang (2012b), as shown in Figure 1 and discussed in details as follows. **“I”** represents the *“Ideology of Media Organization”*. Thapthiang (2012b) considers this component as the first and most important factor as she views that news values are particularly important since they demonstrate organization ideology in terms of journalistic practices (Hall et al., 1978). Equally crucial, in addition to professional ideologies, the staffing and structure of the newspaper, and the moment of construction of the news story itself are organizational factors affecting news selection. Moreover, the professional ideology of news helps in easily identifying those qualities that constitute what is newsworthy (Hall et al., 1978, 54).

“B” concerns *“Bad News Almost Always Outselling Good News”*, supporting Hall et al’s view in that newsworthy items include “events which are concerned with elite persons or nations; events which are

dramatic; events which can be personalized so as to point up the essentially human characteristics of humor, sadness, sentimentalism; events which have negative consequences and events which are part of, or can be made to appear part of an existing newsworthy theme” (1978, 53).

Another “I” involves “*Influential Individuals as Major News Sources*”, explaining what Poole (1999) observed; factors involved in the news production process include the predominance of elite media personnel, the news selections/gathering process, the continued persistence of news values, the privileging of elite news sources that constructs to marginalize alternative voices and the lack of ethnic reporters and understanding as well as processes of integration and constraint on ethnic reporters. Consequently, news is a reproduction of the dominant ideology of leading groups in society (p. 38).

Lastly, “L” stands for “*Limitation of Time and Space*” linking to what Hartmann and Husband’s (1981) view; the nature of the news itself, the kind of production it generates, together with physical limitations of time and space, and the need to attract audiences, imposes constraints both on what events make the news and on the kind of treatment they receive. Like air time on electronic media such as television and radio, each newspaper can and only has limited space to cover what its editorial staff regard the most important and attention-catching stories.

An Implementation of the *IBIL Model*

This part presents how the *IBIL Model* was first trialed with similar incidents. With slight modification, Thapthiang (2012b) tested the *IBIL*

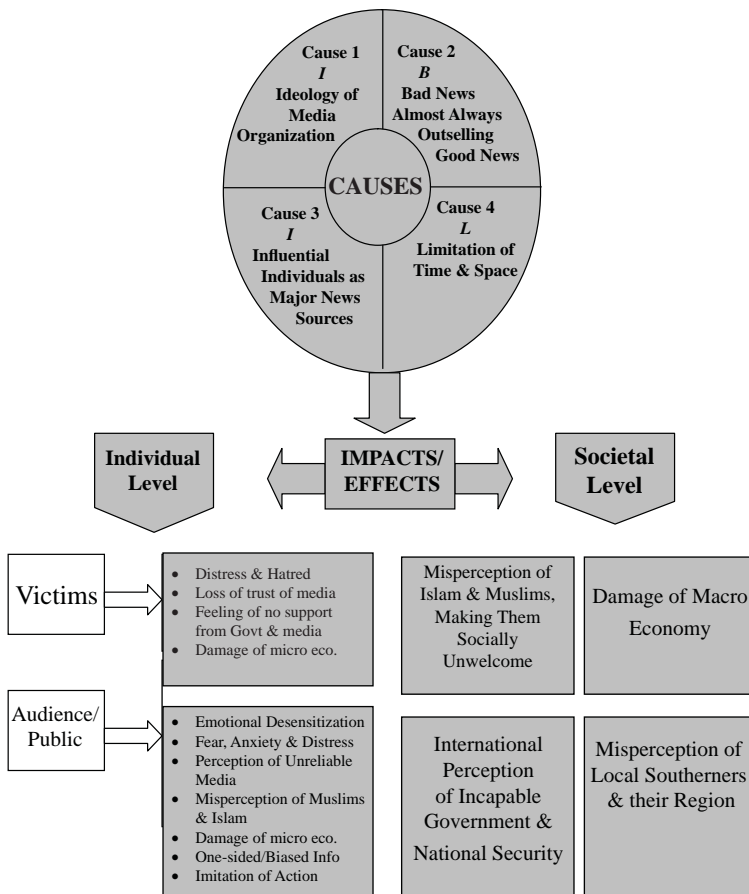


Figure 1 *IBIL Model* for News Reporting on Southern Thailand Insurgency

Model with two recent cases of car bombings at Lee Gardens Plaza Had Yai and C.S. Pattani hotels. *IBIL Model* was used to explain the specific incidents reported in four major national newspapers: Thairath, Daily News, Matichon and Siamrath. Thapthiang (2012b) found the following:

I – Ideology of Media Organization: When covering conflicts and violent incidents such as these two car explosions, it would be more interesting to classify whether each paper practices “War Journalism” (WJ) or “Peace Journalism” (PJ)¹ as this is, among others, one aspect of how a given media organization practices. Regardless of classification, almost all news items in hardcopy fell in “War Journalism” (WJ) while only three reports could be classified as “Neutral” (N) and none exercised “Peace Journalism” (PJ). Three WJ indicators of language use: emotive, demonizing and victimizing were obviously emphasized. Interestingly, online news reports fell more on “Neutral” than WJ, yet none could be classified as PJ. This could be argued that hardcopy version of news articles have been processed and edited by editorial staff who have more time to edit and select what and how to cover in order to get more readers’ attention. This finding supports what Hall et al. (1978) noted; news values are particularly important as they demonstrate organization ideology in terms of journalistic practices. They are also criteria used in newsroom practice to select only a few items that qualify for inclusion in the new (Kisuke, 2004).

¹ More details on indicators of both practices can be found in Changkamol (2007), Galtung (1998) and McGoldric & Lynch (2000).

Consequently, media houses play a significant role in shaping their audience's perceptions on events (Mhango, 2012). In addition, both in hardcopy and online forms, use of emotive and sensational words is apparent, particularly on front page headlines and inside leads. Such words include "southern militants", "gangsters", "south fire", "dare", "turmoil", "sabotage", etc. Demonizing labels and photographs of destructions and the injured are also evidently prevalent. Such evidence suggests that these four media houses still use the same pattern to cover the two car bombings as they have used to other news on insurgency in southern Thailand.

B – Bad News Almost Always Outselling Good News: Two car bombs at the most famous hotels are no exception. Undoubtedly, any explosion has negative consequences, making them newsworthy (Hall et al., 1978). Thairath has long held Thailand's biggest circulation and been well-known for soft news to attract audience's interest. Among others, bad and sensational coverage, generally generates public's curiosity, making them want to find out more about events. The placement of two car explosions is mostly on the front page and made headlines, making it much easier to catch the reader's attention. This confirms what Croteau and Hoynes (2000) observed; the front-page story "identifies the editors' selection of the most important event of the day" which then influences "which stories will be the most visible" (p. 126). Number of deaths and the injured is greatly emphasized both in the headlines, leads and body of news reports. Emotive and sensational wording and photography as well as exaggeration are other factors to worsen any crisis.

I – Influential Individuals as Major News Sources: – These two car bombs could be perfect examples in that news reports rely heavily on influential individuals as news sources. This is more obvious in Lee Gardens Plaza Hotel case than in C.S. Pattani bombing. This could be due to the fact that Pattani has encountered various forms of violence almost daily while Hatyai only faced a few previous destructive incidents. Most direct and indirect quotes are from high-ranking military personnel, governors and police chiefs while a few from the hotel owners as victims and very little from those in the incidents. Evidently, authoritative personnel speak more loudly than ordinary individuals do although in most cases the latter are victims of violence. This suggests that interpretations of government discourse to define problems are repeatedly re-produced. As a result, reflection of reality on the southern situation is presented through the discourse of “ruling class” (Yaena, 2007).

L – Limitation of Time and Space: Generally, each paper has deadlines to meet. Time limitation in news production inevitably forces newspapers to work quickly. It is the editors and/or the journalists that decide what to leave out or what to include in the news casts and in so doing they champion certain things (Mhango, 2012). For online version, despite less process of news production involved, reporters have less time to verify details on incidents. Interestingly, Daily News electronically reported Lee Gardens bombing at 13:33, only about 33 minutes after the bomb exploded. Thairath posted its first online version at 20:15 and was the only paper to electronically report C.S. Pattani bombing at 23:45, 4.5 hours after the explosion. Most importantly, there were numerous discrepancies in reported details on bombings.

Despite being a faster channel, online news coverage is limited to verifying information received. In addition, in less than a month, there are no further investigations in the aftermath of the explosions. This suggests that media organizations do tend to give more time and space and pay more attention to current and daily events rather than to investigative past incidents.

Result Analysis and Discussions

This section discusses the result analysis of the model trial. *IBIL Model* could well explain how four major papers covered the two bombing incidents at well-known hotels in Hadyai and Pattani with reference to all four contributing factors as follows. First, with regard to *Ideology of media organization*, it is clear that despite classifications, almost all news items were grouped into “War Journalism” (WJ) category, with three WJ indicators of language use: emotive, demonizing and victimizing. Media professional ideology is a key factor in journalistic practice. Second, the notion of *Bad news almost always outselling good news* is obviously demonstrated by headlines with sensational wording and photography. Third, in terms of *Influential individuals as major news sources*, government officials, particularly high-ranking military personnel, governors and police chiefs were visibly treated as reliable information providers. Fourth, in connection with *Limitation of time and space*, in less than a month in the aftermath of the bombings, all papers failed to investigate them further.

However, Thapthiang (2012b) considers the first concept, *Ideology of media organization* as the most important contributing factor, leading to the other three conceptions of the model. Ownership is seen to be

a key factor in having the power to represent (McLellan, 1973, cited in Poole, 1999). Poole (1990) also claims that the need for national media to attract large and well-defined audiences means the owner is most likely to promote a conservative consensual ideology. Writers on Islam in the media mainly make reference to the non-Muslim journalist working within a specific historical, political and social arena. For some, unfortunately, this involves purposeful distortion by governments, media institutions and/or media personnel as explanation for images of Islam (pp. 37-39).

Poole (1999) also observes that factors involved in the news production process include the predominance of elite media personnel, the news selections/gathering process, the continued persistence of news values, the privileging of elite news sources that constructs to marginalize alternative voices and the lack of ethnic reporters and understanding as well as processes of integration and constraint on ethnic reporters. Additionally, with respect to the placement, Croteau and Hoynes (2000) note that the front-page story “identifies the editors’ selection of the most important event of the day” which then influences “which stories will be the most visible” (p. 126).

When this result analysis of the first implementation of the IBIL Model was presented and discussed at *the 2nd USM-PSU International Conference on Art and Sciences: Transforming Research for Sustainable Community*, in December 2012 in Penang, Malaysia, it was recommended to keep in mind that the model was only tested once with similar violent incidents that occurred in Thailand and were reported in Thai newspapers. Thus, in order to increase reliability of and justify the four contributing factors of the model, much further

exploration is needed using different approaches with regard to different types of media, any different violent situations in other parts (whether Thailand or elsewhere), and news coverage by different international media organizations. As Kai-nunna (2010) pointed out, most local news reporters did not think that the concept of *peace journalism* would work in practice. It would be, therefore, beneficial to consider using focus group and in-depth interviews to gain insights of local media professionals. The IBIL Model can and should be useful to investigate different circumstances in order to see if the model can help elucidate how mass media exercise their journalistic functions and/or if it should or needs to be modified under particular circumstances.

The *IBIL Model* clearly and solely demonstrates (dysfunctional and unpleasant) characteristics of mass media. Nonetheless, it would be quite unfair not to mention that, to some extent, people in general get more excited by negative than positive events. For that reason, among others, mass media are well aware of the nature of their audience and what they expect. Newspapers, in particular, have an important task of choosing from the millions of possible news items around the world. Those are “pieces of information that reporter and editors think are significant” and which they assume readers will think are important (Zoch and Turk, 1998, p. 763). In fact, there is a straightforward media-audience relationship. Mass media usually provide what their target audience expects to read, hear and see. It is worth keeping in mind such fact. On the one hand, media know exactly how they can draw readers’ attention. On the other, the audience needs to be as much “media literate” as the media know

their nature. In other words, general public needs to be armed with “media literacy”.

With four traits, a media literacy *ICON Model*, as shown in Figure 2, is then proposed for the audience as to how to be *media literate* users. The four features are discussed as follows. *I*, the first attribute, is to be “*Immune*.” Due to potential negative impacts, caused by unaccountable media, general public as media audience needs to be immunized in order not to be susceptible to or fall victims of those media effects. The more audience is armed with the knowledge of how media houses function in terms journalistic practices, the less they become susceptible. This first needed characteristic contributes to the other three following traits.

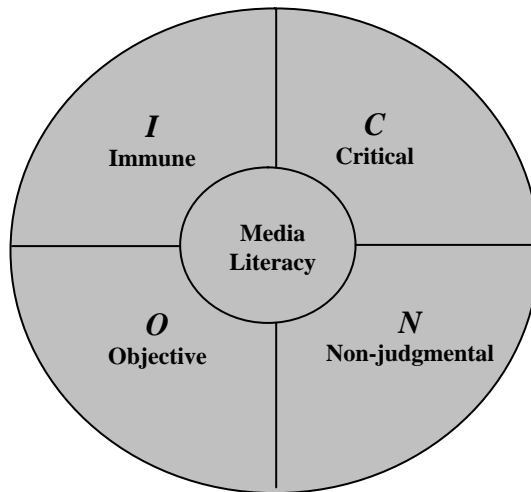


Figure 2 *ICON Model*

C refers to being “*Critical*”, suggesting that since sensational headlines, together with graphic photographs usually and easily grab

more attention than simple wording, cautious must be taken for media users about what they read, hear and see. Exaggerating language, mostly used to report the intensity and magnitude of extraordinary incidents, can usually overwhelm audience. It is thus advisable to be skeptical and sensible when consuming news reporting on any violent crisis. If any suspicion arises, questions should and must be raised rather than believing everything that is presented through the mass media. Partly, it is general public as media users who should examine the role of media in conflict resolution.

O deals with being “*Objective and Open-minded*”, implying that media consumers should always keep in mind that in order to help make sense of the news facts, non-journalistic witnesses or actors have been mainstreamed in journalism to interpret issues, which in essence lends authority of information in the eyes of the audience (McNair 1998, p. 6). The source selection depends on the journalists’ judgments of news and the suitability of sources to the news. Journalists use certain qualities like past suitability, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulation to select the sources. Availability and suitability of news sources can somewhat explain why public officials are most frequent and regular sources of news (Kisuke, 2004). In this study, high ranking authorities such as governors and chief policemen are selected on the basis that the individuals enforce or add value to the news about which they speak and are also qualified on the basis of their newsworthy qualities (McNair 1998). However, the sources must be available at the shortest time possible and be able to offer suitable information (Gans, 1979, cited in Kisuke, 2004).

Most importantly, the reliance on public officials can also explain why news paints a picture of the nation and society, and how values are shown to reflect societal and national values, and come to be embedded in the news. This suggests that the nation and societal values that the official sources embody tend to focus the journalists' attention on the extant social order. In the process, the values they hold about society and nation are extended in the news (Kisuke, 2004). Journalists "prefer material that conforms to prevailing conventions of what is news (news values) and which in an increasingly competitive news market, contains those elements of drama, conflict, etc., which audience expect" (McNair, 1998, p. 154). To some extent, as McNair observed, some sources use this knowledge to exploit journalistic hunger for news. Among others, this is one reason why poor and ordinary people lack access to news: they lack the resources and ability to know what it takes to contact the journalists, while knowledge and skill place the powerful in an advantaged position. Hence, it is essential for the audience be objective and open-minded and to look for information from different media houses and especially from different groups of sources; victims in particular. In so doing, audience would better understand the situation and be able to make informed and unbiased conclusions.

The last but most important characteristic is **N** as being "Non-judgmental", proposing that mass media, whether intentionally or unintentionally, shape audience's perception, resulting in stereotypical views towards particular individuals or groups of people. This article confirms that Muslims and Islam are repeatedly presented as terrorists and threatening faith respectively. The southernmost area is also

perceived as an unsafe region. Despite being main resources, information from the media alone should not be used to judge individuals, particularly minorities. On the contrary, media consumers should learn how to accept cultural differences. Being neutral and non-judgmental could also help audience to better understand people with different cultural backgrounds leading to alleviate potential misunderstandings and the crisis situation as a whole.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that with its four major contributing factors, the *IBIL Model* is useful to help understand causes and effects of news reporting on violent crisis in southern border provinces of Thailand. This exploration confirms that over the years, how national newspapers practice their news reporting on violence and conflicts in south Thailand remains unchanged. It thus proves that mass media, in this case, Thai major newspapers, shape audiences' perception of Muslims and the southernmost area by way of their agenda-setting position, by framing, by priming and by cultivating beliefs. The media, which, according to Stuart Hall, are vehicles of those in power, take advantage of the fact that audiences trust them to sell the same unsuspecting audiences ideology (Mhango, 2012). As a result, a media literacy *ICON Model* is also proposed that general public needs to be actively "media literate." In order to be "active media audience", they need to be equipped with four main traits: *Immune*, *Critical*, *Objective* and *Non-judgmental*.

Finally, this paper also hopes to make contributions to major stakeholders, namely mass media, the public, state agencies and

academics. It encourages media professionals to be more responsible and to focus more on public interest as accurate and reliable information is an essential element of stabilizing a society (Howard, 2001). With his propose of five-stage mapping of journalistic practice from conventional to sophisticated journalism in peacebuilding, it is needed for conventional journalists to examine their work and the potential impact of that work, beyond traditional limitations. In addition, more ethic news reporters, both in the area and in the central editorial offices, can also be beneficial. For the general public, increasing the awareness of *media literacy* is urgently recommended and needed. Undoubtedly, no one organization can or should act alone in restoring peace back to the deep south, rather all bodies must work closely together. In cooperation with academics and reporters in the area, Thai Public Broadcasting Service (better known as Thai PBS), the first and only public television station, is in the process of producing “Conflict News Reporting Guideline.” Most importantly, the government agencies should fairly treat, listen to and pay more attention to what the locals; Muslims and victims in particular, have to say in order to alleviate the situation;

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Table 1 Summary of Research Purpose and Methodology of Four Previous Studies

Research Purpose	Samples	Unit of Analysis	Methodology	Analysis Framework
1. To analyze the direction of news on southernmost provinces between 1993 and 2005	1500 news articles in Matichon, Thairath and Bangkok Biz News	News articles	Content analysis	What and how is reported and to whom it is referred
2. To examine whether "Peace Journalism" has been practiced	232 news reports on three major incidents (arm robbery, Krue-se and Tak Bai) ² in Matichon, Thairath and Bangkok Biz News	News reports	Content analysis	Peace Journalism

² **An arm robbery** on January 4, 2004 – Over 400 rifles and other ammunition were stolen from Narathiwat Ratchanakarin military camp in Cho Airon district, Narathiwat (Bangkok Biz, January 4, 2012).

Krue Se mosque incident on April 28, 2004 – More than 100 militants carried out terrorist attacks against 10 police outposts across Pattani, Yala and Songkhla provinces. 32 gunmen retreated to the 425-year-old Krue Se Mosque, regarded by Muslims as the holiest mosque in Pattani. **Tak Bai incident** on October 25, 2004 – Hundreds of locals, mostly young men, were arrested. With their shirts taken off, bound with their hands tied behind their backs, and made to lie face down on the ground, they were thrown by soldiers into trucks to be taken to an army camp in Pattani. The prisoners were stacked five or six deep in the trucks, and by the time the trucks reached their destination three hours later, at least 78 had suffocated to death.

Table 1 Summary of Research Purpose and Methodology of Four Previous Studies (Continued)

Research Purpose	Samples	Unit of Analysis	Methodology	Analysis Framework
3. To investigate how mass media have framed the south unrest	3,521 news items during January 2007 and December 2008 in Thairath, Matichon, Bangkok Post and Focus	News items	Quantitative content analysis & discourse analysis	Framing
4. To look into impacts of news coverage on south Thailand insurgency	23 local Muslims from four groups of religious leaders, community leaders, women and youth as well as 12 local in-depth interviewees	Interview transcripts	Focus group discussions & in-depth interviews	Media effect

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