'As if it was something spoken by a friend':

Political Public Relations and Digital Vote-canvassing Networks via Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok Gubernatorial Election Campaign

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Abstract

Social networking sites (SNSs) are an emerging channel of political mediation in Thailand for political figures to establish and develop their relationships with Thai citizens. Through focusing on the online political public relations work by candidates (and their teams) in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, this thesis contributes a Thai perspective and experience to the growing literature on the use of SNSs globally in election campaigning.

This research utilises multimodal textual analysis and interviews with Thai politicians, candidates and public relations personnel to explore the management of candidates' images on Facebook via photographs, text and interactions, the management relationship between candidates and public relations personnel and citizens, the dynamics of what can be understood as 'digital vote-canvassing networks', and the various associated possibilities and challenges of using SNSs to contest for political power in the Thai context.

This thesis finds that the political public relations work carried out via Facebook during the 2013 election campaign constituted a new and complex process of managing content and of managing human resources and relationships. The construction of candidates' political images integrated existing Thai archetypes and connotations with more global images and strategies. The publication of campaign content on Facebook over the entire election campaign was managed to facilitate followers' interpretations of the candidates' campaigns. Election campaigns on Facebook developed digital vote-canvassing networks as candidates and their teams used different tactics to engage, interact with and manage citizens, as well as attempt to maximise the 'spreadability' of their content and thus extend their reach. As candidates campaigned on Facebook under election campaign rules not defined particularly for Facebook, the decentralisation of interaction among Facebook users was a major concern in controlling their election campaign on Facebook.

Glossary

Digital vote-canvassing network: A term coined in this thesis. A digital vote-canvassing network is a network connecting Facebook users based on Facebook algorithms and the interaction on a candidate's status update. Digital vote-canvassing networks are established and developed as a result of the media affordance of Facebook in relation to the traditional vote-canvassing systems in Thai political culture and two-step flow communication. Vote-canvassing systems become 'digital' when a candidate's public relations personnel act as core vote-canvassers to manage and transmit campaign messages on the candidate's Facebook page on behalf of the candidate, while the candidate's followers interact and spread the candidate's campaign message to their own networks, enabling more SNSs users to be exposed to the campaign content. The core idea of digital vote-canvassing networks is to make campaign messages on SNSs reach as many SNS users as possible.

Nakleng: A person who can be characterised brave and confident in the way he/she speaks, makes decision or behaves.

Nakleng **keyboard:** This term can be translated as 'keyboard warrior', referring to someone who hides his real identity or uses pseudonyms in order to be express their thoughts online. In the context of political communication online, a '*nakleng* keyboard' tends to give unconstructive criticism on other people's SNS pages in order to challenge the SNS user's image.

Phakphuak: A group of people who are related based on the same interest.

Phi nong: Elder (*phi*) and younger (*nong*) siblings.

Phudi: A person who has a good family background and/or has good manners.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

This research sets out to explore political public relations operations on social networking sites in Thailand, with a particular focus on Facebook as the social networking sites platform and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign as the context of study. This chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant issues on the development of using media for political communication and election campaigns in Thailand as well as to give a synopsis of this thesis. It begins by providing a short summary of politics in Thailand, Bangkokians' voting behaviour, social problems in Bangkok, the role of the Bangkok governor and the background knowledge of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign in relation to the role of social networking sites. The background knowledge in this research also contains the main issues of election campaigning and political communication on old media and new media, which will be reviewed later in this chapter. Based on the issues introduced in this chapter, this chapter ends by outlining the objectives of this research, research questions, research contributions, thesis outline and research arguments.

Brief background knowledge of Thai politics

After the fall of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand formally adopted constitutional rule. Since then, there have been nearly 20 military coups (Pavin, 2011, p.45), indicating the fragility of constitutional order (Connors, 2009, pp.366-368). Consequently, the achievement of political succession in Thailand has been through both 'peaceful and constitutionally sanctioned transfer of power' as well as nonauthoritative coups d'etat (Neher, 1992, p.585). A number of these coups fit a pattern which Pasuk and Baker (1998, p.328) describe as a 'conservative reaction' against constitutional rule.

The coup in September 2006 occurred during the second term of Thaksin government. The latest coup was in May 2014. For some commentators these coups fit the pattern of 'conservative reaction' against an expanding democratic sphere, while for others, they are attempts to stop the emergence of a new populist regime based around former prime minister Thaksin that would diminish the standing of the royal family and the military (see Farrelly, 2013; McCargo, 2015).

The rise of Thaksin has roots in Thailand's economic transformation. In the mid-1980s, the economy in Southeast Asia including Thailand was doing well until Thailand was faced with the 1997 financial crisis as a result of 'the strains of rapid transformation, magnified by exposure to the erratic behaviour

of the over-powerful and under-regulated world of international finance' (Pasuk and Baker, 1998, p.315). Both Thais and foreigners were affected by the financial crisis. The baht value depreciated dramatically (Church, 2006), affecting trade and foreign investment in Thailand. Unemployment increased and some Thais received lower income, which led to social problems such as crime and poverty.

Against this background, the businessman Thaksin rose to political power (McCargo and Ukrist, 2005). Thaksin's party Thai Rak Thai Party won the 2001 general election and he became the prime minister of Thailand. The implementation of Thaksin's 'populist policies' were able to somehow recover the Thai economy and businesses. His policies also aimed to provide financial support offering low-interest loans and debt relief for farmers and sponsoring local entrepreneurs (Sripan, 2009, p.7). The 30 baht universal health care system was also popular (ibid.). Thaksin gained a lot of support from Thai people. After his first term in office, his party won the next election to form a majority government in 2005. Despite his popularity, opposition groups were critical about policy corruption, human rights abuses and control of the media (Connors, 2008). Political polarisation led to the coup of 2006 and Thaksin went into exile.

The military ruled until a new election in December 2007 which was won by pro-Thaksin parties. Thai politics became more polarised with the anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirts (People's Alliance for Democracy) or PAD, and the pro-Thaksin Red Shirts (United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship) or UDD amplified their political interests and engaged in street politics. From 2006 to 2014, there were many incidents of political violence, occupations of central Bangkok and violent clashes from both sides. Most dramatically, the two months protest by the Red Shirt in front of luxury shopping malls in central Bangkok turned into a major military crackdown against Red Shirts in May 2010, causing property damage, an estimated 91 deaths and 1300 injuries (Dalpino, 2011, p.157). In 2013-2014 the anti-Thaksin movement fought to bring down the Pheu Thai government, led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluk. They called for the boycott of elections in February 2014 and blocked registration and voters (McCargo, 2015).

In general, the Yellow Shirt protesters were mainly middle-class people who were against Thaksin's government. The Yellow Shirt social movement constituted of people from various background and occupation, including NGO networks, the powerful state enterprise unions, old democracy activists, journalists, and a range of intellectuals, poets, musicians, and artist (Pasuk and Baker, 2009, p.357). The Yellow Shirts criticised Thaksin as corrupt and they claimed to 'fight for the King' (ibid., pp.255-256).

On the other hand, Red Shirt protesters have been described as coming from the lower middle classes, including political office holders at the district or municipal level, vote canvassers for political parties and people who had previously not been involved in politics such as 'self-employed and semi-skilled workers, low-ranking members of the security services, and farmers holding sub-contracts to produce crops for agribusiness' (McCargo, 2010, p.9). While some were fighting for democracy and social justice, others were more focused on Thaksin's return. Notably, the Red Shirts became associated with the pro-Thaksin parties, while the Yellow Shirts were identified with the Democrat Party.

It might be thought that this conflict was reflected in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, and that this would have impacted greatly on the use of social networking sites in the campaign. This was not the case. The Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt social movements were not active during the Bangkok election campaign. This reflected the fact that after the pro-Thaksin party, Phue Thai party, won the 2011 elections and formed government, there was relative peace as both sides returned to institutional and parliamentary contest. During the gubernatorial election campaign, the governing Phue Thai Party government assisted its candidate, while the candidate from Democrat Party who had won the Bangkok governorship in 2004, 2008 and 2009, hoped to win another term. Although political party based issues on implementing policies were referenced by the candidates and political parties throughout the election campaign, the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was free from violence and aggressive uses of language on political attacks, because it was essentially an election about governing Bangkok, not a referendum on the political conflict. The Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign focused mainly on the social and economic problems in Bangkok, rather than the contestation of power among national politicians, the drafting and proposal of referendum or even the political movement of Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt protesters. However, political conflicts and demonstrations occurred once again in late 2013 by Thais who were against the proposal of amnesty law by the Yingluck Government and Phue Thai Party, which led to the dissolve of parliament in December 2013, an unsuccessful general election on 4th February 2014 and military coup on 21 May 2014 (McCargo, 2015).

As a result of the ongoing political crisis in Thailand, some readers may expect a detailed treatment of democracy, power and ideology in this thesis. However, as this thesis is predominantly interested in political public relations of the management of election campaigning and political communication on social networking sites in Thailand, the concepts of democracy, power and ideology are only occasionally referred in this thesis, used with the intention to touch on the discussion on followers' ideological perception of candidates' images and information posted on candidate's Facebook page during the candidates' contestation of power during election campaigning on Facebook (Chapter 4

and Chapter 5), the way in which the emergence of new media is decentralising the control of political communication within the atmosphere of deliberative democracy (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). As this thesis focuses specifically on the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and the managerial side of operation on political public relations elements during the election campaign on social networking sites, analysis and discussion in this thesis does not predominantly contribute to the concept power, ideology and democracy. However, the background knowledge given about the national politics and contemporary social movements in Thailand gives indications on the contrasting approach that candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign had taken to proceed with their campaign. To gain a better understanding the role of Bangkok governor in relation to Bangkokians and the capital, the next part contextualise the social problems and voting behaviour of Bangkokians, with reference to the voting behaviour of non-Bangkokians.

Bangkok Metropolis: governor, people and social problems

Unlike the seventy-six provinces of Thailand Bangkok or *Krung Thep Maha Nakhon* is a special administrative region in Thailand, with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in authority presided over by an elected governor. In Thailand, other provincial governors are centrally appointed by the Ministry of Interior. The capital is made up of fifty districts. The official name of Bangkok in Thai *(Krung Thep Maha Nakhon)* was shortened from the full name '*Krung Thep Maha Nakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Yutthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Phiman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit',* which has been officially recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest place name in the world (Simons, 2014). The full name of Bangkok in Thai is composed from the Pali and Sanskrit languages, with meaning '*The magnificent city of angels, supreme unconquerable city of the great immortal gods, the grand regal capital of nine noble gems, the pleasant metropolis with plenty of royal palaces, divine home of the godly incarnations, built by the god Viświákarman as commanded by Indra'* (ibid.). The full name of the capital is used as the lyrics of a song which is commonly played on television programmes related to Bangkok issues or during Bangkok gubernatorial election campaigns.

About 5.6 million people (8.8.% of the Thai population) lived in Bangkok in 2012 ("รายงานสถิติจำนวนประชากร และบ้าน ทั่วประเทศ และรายจังหวัด ณ เดือน ธันวาคม พ.ศ. 2555 [Report of demographic and homes across the country and province, as of December 2012]," n.d.) (This figure is based on the number of households and Bangkokians registered, which is an underestimate of the actual number of people living in Bangkok)ไ The Bangkok gubernatorial election is an important election at both local and national

levels. Bangkokians elect their governor every four years. Voters who are eligible to vote in the Bangkok gubernatorial election must be Thai by nationality, aged 18 and above, and have a house registered in Bangkok at least one year before the election.[1] Thais who move from provinces outside Bangkok have the opportunity to vote if they meet the three conditions.

According to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act, 1985, Section 49, part of the Bangkok governor's power is to set policies and manage the Bangkok Metropolis, appoint and allocate human resources to coordinate work relating to Bangkok Metropolis.[2] Surapongse (2002) notes that as a result, the image of candidates in Bangkok gubernatorial elections is focused on the candidate, because not every candidate is nominated by a political party; however, the image of candidates in general elections is constructed according to the image of her/his political party or the way the political party wants the candidate to project her/his image (p.43). On the other hand, candidates in Bangkok gubernatorial elections do not have to be nominated by a political party to register as candidates. Independent candidates can advocate administration and the implementation of policy in a way to make Bangkok Metropolis free from national politics. Thus, Bangkok gubernatorial elections are different from general elections.

The Bangkok gubernatorial election is seen as an election for city-based Thais, who are thought to be rational and have certain kind of voting behaviour, to elect their governor. Thai political discourse distinguishes city-based people (คนเมือง) from simple country folk (คนบ้านนอก) according to the place they come from and the differences in values and tastes between the two groups of people (Askew, 2002, p.1). Sometimes the term country folk (คนบ้านนอก) is used pejoratively and is equivalent to country 'hicks'. The middle-class Thais are ranked as moderately well-off between the economic elite and ordinary people struggling to make a living. This section of the Thai population does various jobs such as civil servants in semi-government authorities (electricity, telephone and postal company), self-employed small business owners, tradesmen, technicians and white collar works in private companies and they value education, social respectability, self-improvement, security and the environment that they are living in (ibid., pp.171-176). The different sectors that city-based Thais

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[1] Cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).

[2] ("พระราชบัญญัติ ระเบียบบริหารราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร พ.ศ.๒๕๒๘ [Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act Year 1985]," n.d.)

work in indicate how candidates of Bangkok gubernatorial election would formulate policy to propose in Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

There are differences in political views on democracy among Thais living in rural and urban areas too. Anek (1996) analyses that middle-class Thais perceive themselves as people who can critically evaluate candidates' policies based on the impact that they will have on the country as a whole, and their voting preferences are likely to be based on candidates who are 'honest and capable persons to serve as lawmakers and political executives', which is different from how rural people vote for candidates that voters could gain 'parochial and personal benefits' from (p.221). Furthermore, LoGerfo (1996) surveyed the different attitudes that Bangkokian and rural Northern Thais have toward democracy and found that Bangkok respondents were more critical of the government performance at that time, in comparison to Northern Thais, who give importance to tangible benefits that they could gain from candidates (p.918).

With a more updated analysis Thai people's political views, Suchit (2009) analyses that in the context of Thailand's 2007 constitution, urban middle-class Thais are still concerned with corruption among politicians and government officials as urban middle-class Thais want a democracy with 'transparency, efficiency and quality' (p.93), while rural voters prefer to vote based on the policies that they could benefit from. But in a more recent analysis, Anyarat (2010) claims that in the 2005 general election, it is too simplistic to generalise that rural Thais are still associated with the patronage system and that they are money-oriented, while urban Thais are not. Furthermore Stithorn (2012) concludes that political attitudes for rural and urban Thais have changed over the last decade as the level of education and social-economic status did not have a direct influence on Thai people's interest and engagement in political issues, which means that Thais who are less educated were not necessary less interested in Thai political issues. Such knowledge gives further indications that in Bangkok gubernatorial election, Bangkokians are likely to be critical about the dishonesty of candidates and the policies that candidates propose although voters might seek for the benefits that they could gain from the policies or the potential governor. The issues that candidates raised in during election campaign could therefore be associated with voters' voting behaviour and the social problems that they face.

Bangkok faces various social problems such as living conditions, economic issues, the informal economy, pollution, transportation, communication technology, education, healthcare, and security. The 'boom' of the Thai economy in the second half of the 19th century had attracted a few million villagers to move to Bangkok, which has changed the culture of the city (Pasuk and Baker, 1998, p.180). The capital has provided many employment opportunities for commuters to work in Bangkok

as the city offers jobs and higher income (Daradirek and Rosechongporn, 2004). In addition to the various employment opportunities in the city, villagers earn a living in Bangkok by setting up as food vendors selling local Thai food (Eckardt, 1999, p.69-76), which is part of what Askew (2002) refers as the 'informal economy' (p.75).

Skyscrapers can be seen throughout the city centre and the building of condominiums has brought a change to Bangkokians' lifestyle. However, there are working-class Thais who moved from villages and live in slums or 'crowded communities' in Bangkok as they settle down informally (Askew, 2002, p.79). Slum dwellers aim to have a sufficient income to survive (ibid., pp.141-143). Problems associated with such communities include water and sanitation, drugs, poor health care and low standards of living, and residents of slums are at risk of homelessness (Eckardt, 1999, p.118).

The use of public transportation is also common for locals and tourists to get around in the capital. The Bangkok Transit System (BTS) sky-train reaches central, southern and northern Bangkok as well as Thon Buri, while the Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT) underground train currently has three interchange stations with the BTS sky-train, and covers central and northern Bangkok. Other public transportation such as buses is accessible throughout the capital while taxis and *tuk-tuk* are available for travel to areas which public transportation does not serve. Motorbike-taxis are another solution to moving around in Bangkok during peak hours, but people use such services at their risk (Eckardt, 1999, pp.95-100).

Flooding is a severe seasonal problem. Many districts of the capital were submerged when the Great Flood hit the capital in 2011 (Montira, 2013). Political conflict occurred between the Bangkok Governor and the central government including the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives concerning flood management (Suchart, 2012). The social media Twitter became a significant platform for disseminating emergency and disaster information during the 2011 flood (Alisa, Choochart, Jaruwat, and Sarawoot, 2012).

The development and allocation of resources in the capital are dependent on the person who holds the power to govern the capital. The stated responsibilities of the Bangkok governor and the existing social problems in Bangkok suggest that a candidate in the Bangkok gubernatorial election would propose policies reflecting their ability to tackle problems in Bangkok to fulfil these responsibilities. The suitability of a candidate could be determined by the political party that nominated them, the candidate's biography, previous work experience, personality, problem-solving skills, decision-making competence and the ability to work and deal with political elites at the national level. The

Bangkok gubernatorial election is, therefore, an important election at a local and national level as the result of the election determines the person who will undertake the roles to coordinate work in Bangkok, solve social problems, and work with other political elites in Thailand to improve the standard of living in Bangkok.

Background knowledge on the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign

After Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra (M.R. Sukhumbhand) resigned as the 15th Bangkok governor on 9 January 2013, the Election Commission was required to hold the next Bangkok gubernatorial election within 60 days.[3] 25 candidates registered for the election. A series of opinion polls predicted that Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen (Pongsapat), one of the main rivals from the Pheu Thai Party was likely to win the election, but the actual result was that M.R. Sukhumbhand from the Democrat Party won. In a neck-and-neck competition, M.R. Sukhumbhand won 46.26 % of the vote and Pongsapat 39.69 % (Appendix 1).

The voter turnout for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election was 63.98% (Saksith, 2013), the highest voter turnout in a Bangkok gubernatorial election.[4] Since the implementation of compulsory voting in Thailand in 1997, voting has been made a duty for eligible voters ("Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand 1997"). This law can arguably improve democratic quality and avoid political abuse (Birch, 2009), which is also a signal of political reformation, improving the qualities of parliamentarians and the management of the nation (Murray, 1998). Before mandatory voting laws were passed, voter turnout for Bangkok elections was about 40 percent as Bangkokians who did not turnout for elections did not trust or had no hope for politics and politicians as they see no improvements (Suchit, 1996, p.195). As a result of this law, it could be said that the Bangkok gubernatorial election has become an even more important election, making the election campaign an important period for Bangkokians to know more about the candidates.

The 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was another competitive election that managed to draw significant attention from both the media and voters. As the media and voters sought to know the candidates' approach to the campaign, new candidates for the election were persuading voters for a change in the Bangkok governor and administration of Bangkok. The controversial scandals that

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[3] Cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).
[4] Cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).

M.R. Sukhumbhand faced in the management of 2011 'Great Flood' in Bangkok (Thitinan, n.d.) and the delay in completing the construction of a futsal stadium in 2012 raised awareness of the need for the Bangkok governor to handle crises efficiently and coordinate work with the Thai government (S.Bangkunprom, 2012). Thus, there were doubts about the suitability of the Democrat Party's nomination of M.R. Sukhumbhand to take up the role of Bangkok governor for another term.

Out of the ten Bangkok gubernatorial elections held between 1975 and 2013, candidates from the Democrat Party won five times while the remaining elections were won by candidates from other political parties or independent candidates.[5] Apirak Kosayodhin's resignation in his second term as Bangkok Governor in 2008 led to a gubernatorial election in early 2009, won by M.R. Sukhumbhand, who was re-elected in 2013, thus making a trend of the Democrat Party winning in four consecutive Bangkok gubernatorial elections. Such voting pattern indicates Bangkokians' political culture of being associated with the Democrat Party.

The fundamental question in the 2013 election was whether the winning trend of the Democrat Party in Bangkok gubernatorial elections since 2004 would be broken or whether the candidate nominated by the Democrat Party would be allowed to hold the position as Bangkok governor for another term. The high level of competitiveness during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was reflected in the different approaches and policies used by candidates. As a veteran of elections, M.R. Sukhumbhand saw the importance of continuing to develop and implement policies which he had supported since the 2009 election, while Pongsapat characterised his campaign and policies under the slogan of 'to work with government seamlessly' and campaigned on uniting the administration of the capital with the central government. Although Pongsapat had a police background that was not a familiar image in Bangkok gubernatorial elections, the Pheu Thai Party still strived to compete in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election after Democrat Party had dominated Bangkok for the past decade. With the policies proposed in Pongsapat's campaign, there was a clear difference on how the two core candidates attempted to build relationships with voters to gain their support. Independent candidates tried to persuade voters about the benefits of freeing Bangkok from political party-based issues.

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[5] Cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).

The use of social networking sites (SNSs) in election campaigns in Thailand was first seen during the 2008 Bangkok gubernatorial election, where Apirak Kosayodhin campaigned for a second term as Bangkok Governor and saw the potential in using Hi5 as part of his campaign to reach out to voters in the online community at nearly no expense, even though SNSs were 'new' in Thailand and the number of citizens are online at the time of the election campaign was limited (cited in Russell, 2011). The increase in popularity in Thailand of other SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter led to the significant use of both of these platforms by both contenders in the 2011 general election, the Pheu Thai Party and Democrat Party. 12 out of 40 political parties in Thailand had Facebook pages during the 2011 general election campaign (Isriya, 2012). In the most recent Bangkok gubernatorial election on 3 March 2013, candidates made substantial use of SNSs in the election campaign; this research found that 16 out of 25 candidates had a Facebook account. According to *Zocial inc*, in 2013 there were 18 million Thai users of Facebook, which is the SNS with the highest number of users in comparison to other SNSs (cited in Millward, 2013) and in 2015, this figure was almost doubled (cited in Monlamai, 2015).

Digital divide in Thailand means there is a barrier of entry for the majority of Thais to access political communication. Thus, online content on the internet is not consumed by all of the Thai population as not all Thais have access to the internet. The most recent Household Survey on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) conducted by National Statistical Office (NSO) revealed that Thai people's use of computers, the internet and mobile phones has gradually increased from 2008 to 2012, with Bangkok having the highest percentage access to ICT compared to other regions in Thailand ("Executive Summary," 2013). Inequality in accessing online technology is what Van Dijk (2006) refers as the 'digital divide.' Van Dijk's suggestions on the causes of the digital divide include the lack of motivation to use online technology, lack of financial resources to buy a computer and internet access, lack of operational skills, information skills or strategic skills and lack of opportunity, obligation, time or effort to use digital technology (pp.179-183). An empirical study of internet cafes in Bangkok, conducted by Hirata (2013), acknowledges that for people who live in Bangkok and cannot afford to buy computers or do not have operation skills and information skills to use computers or the internet, the availability of internet cafes offers services and assists customers to communicate on ICT, which reduces the digital divide (pp.287-289). The widespread availability of digital cafes means that the digital divide is partly overcome.

There were 8.6 million Facebook users in Bangkok in the year before the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, which made the capital had the highest number of Facebook users in the world in 2012, followed by Jakarta and Istanbul ("Bangkok ranked top highest numbers of Facebook users

in the world," n.d., "Top 10 Biggest Facebook Cities," 2012). It must be noted here that the Facebook penetration rate in Bangkok is higher than the underestimated population in Bangkok (5.6 million) because this figure is recorded according to the internet protocol address (IP address), which in Thailand, the IP addresses of users are not clearly identified in different provinces. Thus, no matter which province some Thai Facebook user is active in, the user would be identified as using Facebook in Bangkok ("กรุงเทพเป็นเมืองที่มีผู้ใช้ Facebook มากเป็นอันดับ 1 ของโลก [Bangkok is the city that has the highest Facebook users in the world]," n.d.). Nevertheless, such record of Facebook penetration rate still increases the significance and interest of studying the use of SNSs during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, which draws the attention on the way in which candidates of the election would manage their Facebook page to enhance their campaign reach to different Bangkokian Facebook users during the election campaign.

In 2015, slightly over half of Bangkok population has access to computer and internet, which is higher compared to other regions in Thailand (บทสรุปสำหรับผู้บริหาร การมีการใช้เทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศและการสื่อสารในครัวเรือน พ.ศ. *2558* [Summary for manager: the use of information and communications technology in the household year 2015], n.d.). Most Thais who use Facebook are educated, city-based and ranged from middle to upper classes (Macan-Markar, 2010), indicating the digital divide in Thailand. Although it was noted that the rural and lower-class Red Shirt protesters using community radio and internet radio (Ubonrat Siryuvasuk cited in Macan-Markar, 2010), Red Shirt protest leaders, politicians of Thai Rak Thai and Phue Thai Party, and political activists of the pro-Thaksin have been active on SNSs as additional channel of political communication, which made political content on SNSs pages in Thailand reflect critical political opinion from users of different political ideologies.

Candidates' use of SNSs in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was a development in how Thai candidates communicated their policies to voters, constructed their images and interacted with voters. M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat had Facebook, Twitter, Instagram accounts and YouTube channels as their platforms of communication to publish campaign information and to reach out to voters with preferences for different social networks. Even television channels such as *The Nation Channel* took an interest in candidates' use of social media in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, by organising and facilitating a discussion about candidates' experiences of using social media on 16 February 2013.[6] The traditional print media, such as election billboards and

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[6] The author attended the social media forum organised by *The Nation Channel* on 16 February 2013

brochures, included SNS logos and candidates' usernames as part of their identity, to raise awareness among voters about the candidates' use of SNSs and also encourage more voters who were SNS users on different networks to connect with the candidates' campaigns on SNSs.

Followers connecting to candidates' social networks are diversified and not all followers are necessarily eligible voters. According to Teerada and Combs (2014), the number of followers connected to candidate's SNS page and the level of interaction on SNSs cannot predict the number of votes for each candidate (p.168) – particularly as people may 'like' candidates they do not support so they can criticise them. Swing voters have been another element in Bangkok's political culture. The discrepancy between the results of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and predictions of polls conducted during the election campaign caused confusion among the public. Boonlert (2015b) explained that the main element of the election was voters who had not decided who to vote at the early stage of the election campaign. The percentage of these voters declined based on overall trends revealed by the results of the polls conducted by the Bangkok University and National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) polls (ibid.). Consequently, Boonlert comments that undecided voters remain the main challenge in maximising the accuracy of poll results, and the results of polls published by the media throughout the election campaign can have an impact on voters' final decision.

Each candidate's campaign required management of human resources and campaign content so that candidates could clearly communicate their campaign message to voters and tailor their campaign content to Bangkokians' voting behaviour, and demonstrate that the candidate has the potential to take the role of Bangkok governor. The limited amount of time available to accomplish the candidate's goals entailed an efficient campaign operation to allow candidates to construct their image and establish a relationship with voters. How each candidate campaigned and what media each candidate used could also determine the image that they created with voters, the relationship established between the candidate and citizens, and the ability of the candidate's campaign to reach voters.

Factors of political communication and election campaigning in Thailand

Before the emergence of SNSs, political communication and election campaigning in Thailand used different media and channels of communication to allow Thai political figures to construct their image and establish a relationship with voters. Surin and McCargo (1997) outline the different tactics that candidates use in a Thai election campaign, which include the issuing of name cards or calendars that

contain the candidate's photograph, brochures that contain the candidate's policies and slogans, billboards showing the candidate, distribution of cassette tape recordings of campaign speeches and door-to-door campaigning (p.137). Oranong and Rosechongporn (2009) conclude that the factors that determine local Thai politicians' choice of communication channel, a few of these factors include politicians' budget, politicians' intention in communication, features of the media platform, and target audience (p.42).

Image construction is a fundamental element in Thai election. Sombat (1993) compares the idea of image construction to 'play-acting' (เล่นละคร), whereby vote-canvassers mobilise voters to campaign speech sites, prepare garlands for voters to give to candidates and organise voters to put up posters to show their support (p.99). Establishing a candidate's image is part of winning an election as a candidate's image helps voters to recognise the candidate and her/his campaign, and recall the candidate when they cast their vote (Surapongse, 2002). Also, Nanthana (2006) proposes that candidates in an election campaign are 'public figures' and people often know them by the 'image' they establish in public, instead of who they are (p.94).

Sombat (1993) mentions that background information on the candidate, such as the education institution presented in the candidate's literature, is intended to target voters who are connected to the same institution as well as to confer prestige on the candidate (p.95). Candidates can construct an image by showing their speaking skills in delivering entertaining and engaging campaign speeches, and relating problems in a particular community to the candidate's policy, as this shows the candidate have an amicable and approachable personality (ibid., pp.98-110). Visiting commercial and business areas to meet voters allows candidates to have conversations with voters, when candidates might be able to gain support from swing voters (ibid., p.103). Also, according to Surapongse (2002), face-to-face communication and door-to-door home visits allow candidates to interact with voters, giving an opportunity for candidates to show that they are determined in competing in the election and for voters to know more about the candidates (pp.171-172).

Thai political figures tend to establish *'phi nong'* (พี่น้อง) relationships with voters during election campaigns. The literal meaning of *phi nong* is elder and younger sibling respectively. However, *phi nong* is also used to address people who are not siblings, but are somehow closely related and respected by the individual. As a result, it is common that during Thai election campaigns, political figures attempt to construct a 'close' relationship between politicians and voters and establish a positive rapport with voters, reflecting their supposedly friendly relationship (Sanit, 1994, pp.169-170).

Different tactics have been used in billboards as candidates aim to make their image distinct during the election campaigns. Veera (2003) comments that in the 1985 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, Chamlong Srimuang's campaign was uniquely identifiable as he used low-cost bamboo material in his campaign advertisements while his competitors spent large sums of money on huge billboards (pp.282-285). In a study of the 1992 general election campaign in Thailand, Sombat (1993) suggests that the size and quality of billboards matter as this reflects upon a candidate's intention in competing in the election (pp.91-97). Also, the content varies according to the different phases of election campaigns. As the election campaign proceeds, candidates design their posters and name cards with an emphasis on the candidate's number to ensure that voters recognise their candidate's number on the day of the election, indicating the significance of candidate numbers in Thai elections (ibid., pp.91-97). The result of polls conducted during the election campaign and the news reports about it can determine the actions that candidates might want to take in the final phase of an election (ibid., p.107).

The selection of photographs and information presented on candidate's billboards also matters. Gingthong (2003) proposes that the use of photographs and information on the candidate's family background, education and work experience on billboards in the 2000 Bangkok Senate election reflected the candidates' suitability for the position. Another eye-catching design of billboards was the 'Vote No' campaign (see Appendix 2) which launched an attack to candidates and political parties who self-portrayed their image during in the 2011 general election in Thailand. Jones (2014) analysed the campaign for its use of animal caricatures and metaphorical language to symbolise Thai politicians as lacking a basic understanding of Buddhist Dharma. As a result of years of political instability, the 'Vote No' campaign used billboards during the 2011 general election in Thailand and conveyed the message, 'Don't Let the Animals enter Parliament'; the images of monkeys, buffalos and dogs was striking. The design and information placed on these billboards was part of a traditional campaign medium (the billboard) but it reflected a new feeling among Yellow Shirts against allegedly corrupt politicians, and appeared in the form of a meme. With the rise of SNS as a new way of campaigning, citizens who are exposed to political advertisements would be motivated to use news media and social networks more effectively including memes (Cho, 2008, p.443), which means there could be an intensified relationship between campaigning on new media and old media.

In short, the literature has noted that the image construction of Thai political candidates is based on a visual image, the information that they present about themselves and the medium that they use to communicate with voters. This enables voters to recognise candidate's appearance, personality, and the relationship between the candidate voters. As a result, each channel of communication requires

careful selection of medium to construct their image and selection of content to be sent to citizens to fulfil the politicians' intention in communicating.

Political economy of Thai media and changes in media consumption in Thailand

With the rise of the internet, there has been a major transformation in how Thai politicians, citizens and journalists disseminate political information or express their political views. As for young people in different regions in Thailand, Pimonpan and Pirongrong (2013) concluded that young people in Thailand use the internet to access political information as additional source of information when mainstream media such as television does not meet young people's requirement, while Smith and Shuo (2014) found that more than half of the respondents, who are university students in Bangkok, receive news from social media (p.202). In terms of interacting about political issues, most university students talk about politics with friends and family offline more than doing it online (ibid), perhaps reflecting caution. Even so, for those with access to digital technology, the internet has been another platform for Thais to express their political thoughts, co-existing with traditional media. This section gives an overview of the political news consumption in Thailand and discusses briefly how new media are challenging political communication. Firstly, this part looks at the issues of political communication and the political economy in the old media or mainstream media in Thailand. Then, this part moves on to review how the decentralisation of political communication on new media, particularly SNSs, have been impacting on the way Thai people consume and discuss about political issues.

In the past, both political organisations and citizens have had to rely on the mass media as the means of political communication. The lack of personal meeting between politicians and citizens allowed the media to act as the mediator of messages between both parties to inform about any significant political issues that occur on each side (Sathiian, 2008). McNair (2011) outlines the roles of the media in the democratic process as: 1. media must '*inform*' citizens on issues around them; 2. media must '*educate*' citizens by explaining and highlighting 'facts'; 3. media must provide a space for public political discourse, facilitate 'the formation of public opinion' and let the public know about the public opinions formulated; 4. media's role is to give publicity to government and political parties; 5. media provide a space for the 'advocacy of political viewpoints' (pp.18-20). The roles of media in Thailand have been limited in fulfilling these roles due to regulation, political ties and ownership in different channels. However, the increase in choice to access different channels of political communication in Thailand, through both new media and old media, has spread the avenues of

political communication and raises the question on who owns the media in Thailand, how the media are regulated and to what extent the media in Thailand are free.

Based on the question on who owns the media in Thailand, this depends on which type of media or channel one is asking about. The mainstream media consumption in Thailand includes television, radio and newspaper, where ownership is distributed among the state, military and private sector, which means that political messages used to be mainly dominated by the these elites that centralised the distribution of political news (Kavi, 2002). Political information on television are the main source of political communication in Thailand (Nalinee and Brown, 2006; Pimonpan and Pirongrong, 2013). The main channels of television in Thailand is owned by four government bodies which are the Public Relations Department, the Thai Public Broadcasting Service, Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT) and the Thai Royal Army ("Thailand: Freedom of the press 2013," n.d.). There are over 700 radio stations in Thailand registered with National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) (established in 2010) and they are owned by the government and military (ibid). According to Ubonrat Siriyuvasak, radio stations in Thailand are funded by local entrepreneurs, local businesses, community donations and the military (cited in "BBG Indonesia and Thailand Strategic Review: Expert Panel Notes," 2011). Newspapers in Thailand are privately owned and usually are family business, with political ties use to influence journalists on how to frame certain political issues (McCargo, 2003). The profits of mainstream media such as Thairath newspapers, are mainly from advertisements rather than the sales of the newspaper copies (McCargo, 2012, p.205). Satellite TV, such as ASTV channel, owned by one of the core Yellow Shirt protest leaders, Sondhi Limthongkul, have also been alternative channel of political communication for Thais to receive political news. Satellite TV are normally free from government interference, which means that protesters, leaders and interest groups have their own platform of communication to broadcast their movement, political opinions, amplifying their own extreme political views and criticism of politicians that they are against (Isriya, 2012; McCargo, 2009; Pravit & Jiranan, 2010).

According to the website 'Freedom House', the overall press status in Thai media had not been free since 2013 due to a harder enforcement of lèse-majesté law in the country on both new media and old media, regardless on how the media were 'partly free' during the expansion of media coverage during the 2011 general election ("Thailand: Freedom of the press 2012," n.d., "Thailand: Freedom of the press 2013," n.d.). The limitation of press freedom is due to the broadcasting and telecommunication industries being regulated by the NBTC, whereby the commissioners include a high-ranking police officer and top military officials, raising concerns on the limited independence of media content in the two industries (ibid).

News production on television in Thailand has been changing from straight reportage to discussion, with some news anchors telling the audience how different newspapers in Thailand published about the top stories, saving time and effort for millions of Thais to get a copy and read the newspaper (McCargo, 2012, p.205). With the digital terrestrial television aiming to provide more quality and variety of news and entertainments programmes for television audiences since 2014 (Boonlert, 2015a), Thais have more channels to receive political news. But recently content with regards to local and national politics have been particularly sensitive due to the contemporary political division. Although the website 'Thai Journalists Association' states that the journalists' associations in Thailand such as Thai Journalists Association (TJA) was established to promote press freedom in Thailand and support the members of the press, researchers have acknowledged that Thai journalists tend to face political interference, pressure and attacks, particularly on media companies which were politicians or demonstrators (Carthew, 2010; McCargo, 2009, 2003; Ockey, 2007; Ubonrat, 2013). Hathaichanok (2011) argues that Thai journalists on television channels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and Thai TV and cable TV channels have been careful about what they report and have paid attention to the language that they select for their reports in order to avoid any risk of being attacked verbally or physically (p.243). But the different approaches that Thai media have taken to set the agenda and frame the same news indicates that journalistic bias can occur, and the interests of the television stations have to be protected (ibid).

The media and the Thai government have also been critical of each other's work over the last one to two decades. During the political instability of the 1990s, the media, including television journalists, critically examined and monitored political issues by interviewing politicians in front of Government House for the interest of Thai urban residents (Pasuk and Baker, 1998, pp.249-250). Print media in Thailand have shown attempts to report political crises to achieve political change in the 1992 mass protests in Thailand (McCargo, 2003, p.23). Another interesting finding is that the majority of the Bangkok respondent agreed that the newspapers have the right to publish criticism on the government (LoGerfo, 1996).

Political power matters in political news production. It seems common for individual Thai politicians to try to approach newspaper editors and columnists as politicians rely heavily on the media and compete among themselves to get media attention (McCargo, 2003). Some commentators have argued that elements of the media, especially state and government dependent media, shifted from being 'watchdogs' (สุนัขเฝ้าบ้าน) to 'lapdogs' (สุนัขว่านอนสอนง่าย) during the Thaksin government (Thepchai, 2005, p.193). Thepchai argues that the purpose of government regulation of the media is to prevent society from knowing the true information (p.199). Therefore, there are doubts about the reliability of

political news in the mainstream media as Thaksin tried to intervene in news production, preventing the media from being critical of Thai politicians' image and performance. (ibid., 2005, p.201). Such issues have led to pressure and dismissals of editors and reporters who have been critical of the Thaksin government (Ubonrat, 2013). Critics have asserted that Thaksin showed an unwillingness to tolerate criticism (Ockey, 2007). Also, there is an information gap between rural and urban area in Thailand as Jäger (2012) analyses that the urban middle-class Thais did not have positive impression on Thaksin Government due to negative news reports made about Thaksin, which these reports were less accessible on television in rural areas. Such differences mean that Thai people who live in different location experience different level of political intervention on media. Also, during military coups, Thais experience greater media control.

Communication between Thai prime minister and Thais begun to be 'direct' when Thaksin was the prime minister in 2001. His weekly radio programme enabled him to directly and personally communicate with Thais based on the actions that his government was taking to implement policies, demanding for trust to stay in power and constructing an approachable image of the prime minister casually speaking to the citizens (McCargo and Ukrist, 2005). When Abhisit was the prime ministers, his weekly radio programme was persuading Thais to be confident with his government dealing with political conciliation during the Red Shirt social movement in 2010, attempting to establish a closer relationship between the prime minister and Thais (Nattawee and Patchanee, 2011). However, with the rise of the internet, political figures own their own SNSs page. Such direct political communication occurred between the prime minister and Thais, who are connected to the prime minister SNSs network, in an interactive way, allowing the prime minister to gain questions and feedback, which is a development of political communication in Thailand.

Political communication online can also develop deliberative democracy. Pitch (2002) claims that online debates and discussions, which might be seen as a source of deliberative democracy, are not representative of all Thais, because online discussions involved only urban middle-class Thais who have access to the internet (p.164). John Rawls (1999), cited in Crocker (2008, p.309), proposes that deliberative democracy is 'the idea of deliberation itself. When citizens deliberate, they exchange views and debate their supporting reasons concerning public political questions. They suppose that their political opinions are not simply a fixed outcome of their existing private or nonpolitical interests. It is at this point that public reason is crucial, for it characterizes such citizens' reasoning concerning constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice.' Crocker proposes that the overall idea of deliberative democracy aims to solve '*concrete* problems' or to have plans for to solve particular issues, and the deliberation aims for people to have a 'fair way' to negotiate and agree on decisions.

Crocker adds that being fair means that people are treated with respect by other members and they express their opinions and contribute to the agreement (pp.310-311).

Thai politicians have been using SNSs to communicate directly with citizens (Unyarat, 2011; Isriya, 2012), which led to the decentralisation of political communication, making the production, distribution and consumption of political content on new media different from mainstream media in Thailand. Contemporary political crises in Thailand have also motivated Thai internet users to gain rapid updates on political situations from the internet, particularly SNSs (Nuchada and Vikanda, 2012; Carthew, 2010). By having their own channel of communication through SNSs, top Thai politicians such as Abhisit Vejjajiva, Thaksin Shinawatra and Korn Chatikavanij and political social movement groups such as the Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts have used SNSs to clearly present their political ideas, policies and ideologies, and mobilise supporters (Unyarat, 2011). Individual SNSs users regulate their own SNSs page and control the information on the particular SNSs page. However, as Thais used the internet to express their political views, there are critical political views posted online as a result of political division (Aksarapaak, 2013; Sripan, 2009).

But like the mainstream media, the government has tried to regulate online media. Thousands of websites have been blocked and internet users have been arrested as regulating online media is done with the enforcement of the *Computer Crime Act 2007* (cited in Chalisa, 2012; Isriya, 2012), as will be further described in Chapter 2. Online regulation also occur among individual SNS users as they can moderate the comments and their network by deleting the content or people connecting to their networks (Kent, 2010). For one reason, this might be done to compile with the *Computer Crime Act 2007*. For another reason, filtering comments might be done for individual interest such as image management and preventing the spread of misleading information. Thus, the regulation of new media is done by both authority and the individual users in order to control the dissemination of content and moderate individual networks.

Political communication on new media is not a stand-alone platform as the agenda on SNSs is related to mainstream media in Thailand (Isriya, 2012; Nuchada and Vikanda, 2012; Supreeya, 2009). Mainstream media used political figures' Facebook page as their source of information, while political figures also used news agenda on mainstream media to initiate interaction on their own SNSs page. Mainstream media in Thailand also have their own SNSs page, allowing each channel to continuously publish news on SNSs, which SNSs users can receive and discuss about the news regardless of time and location.

As political communication on SNSs is decentralised, each SNSs user regulates content and moderate their network of connection, leading to greater availability of political information. Thus, what McCargo (2000) defines as 'news' ('a literal descriptions of actual events, plus the statements of people involved' p.33), are less credible on new media than when is broadcast or published in old media. Maetavee (2011) did a comparison study on the credibility of news on Twitter and mainstream media in Thailand and found that news on Twitter has low credibility because users race to post messages as quickly as they can. In addition, Sakulsri (2012) claims that Thai journalists still have to evaluate the news and information on SNSs to avoid reporting wrong information. This point is further backed up by the experience of Noppatjak Attanond, a TV host of *The Nation Channel*, who admitted reporters have to be careful as information online is not always right (cited in Aree, 2013). In other words, there is no formal gate-keeping process involved in publishing content on individual SNS page and SNS users hold the independence to communicate on their SNS page, which news posted on SNS might not be as trustworthy as what is on mainstream media. Thus, communication on SNSs is more rapid, direct and interactive, which individual SNSs users should choose how to interpret the news and which news to share.

To conclude, with the entry of new social media, and shifts in the political economy of ownership, there has been an increased in variety of source to consume political news in Thailand, which makes it more difficult for the Thai government to control what political information Thai people consume and interact with, putting Thai government and other politicians' image at risk if negative ideas circulate in SNSs. Media ownership matters in political communication as it determines the content of message sent to citizens. Political news consumption in Thailand have begun to be more interactive on both mainstream media and SNSs but as for political news consumed from SNSs, particularly the Thai politicians' SNSs page, had initiated a new digital way of direct and interactive political communication between the politician and citizens. As a result, content on new media is regulated under the *Computer Crime Act 2007* and the old media have been broadly regulated and threatened by the Thai government, suggesting that political communication on both types of media, are not free. As for old media in particular, what is published and broadcast are likely to impact on Thai people's perception on the government and opposition party. Thus, the shift in media consumption occurred as Thai politicians, citizens and journalists used SNSs individually to disseminate information, alongside with the existence of mainstream media, which leaves political figures seeking the most efficient way to manage the operation of their SNSs page for political communication and election campaign purposes. It is usual for Thai government to regulate the mainstream media to increase the reliability of news, enabling positive image on policies implementation to be constructed and limiting critique of

the government broadcast to the majority of the Thai population. Now image management has become more decentralised.

Gap in research field

Besides Teerada and Combs' (2014) conference proceeding on *Thai citizen's utilization of social media communications devices during the Bangkok Governor campaign in 2013*, there is hardly any in-depth study on the use of SNSs for election campaign in Thailand or for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign in particular. Although traditional ways of campaigning were still used in recent election campaigns in Thailand, research done in this area has recently become outdated as it has focused on traditional ways of communication, ignoring SNSs. Also, research in this area lack a detailed understanding of the operation and problems of political communication on SNSs. For example, Aksarapaak (2013) research explores how Thais citizens and Thai political activists use SNS for political communication. She studies the use of Facebook for political purposes during the Yingluck government (2011-2013), arguing that 'Thai use Facebook for political purpose to express political views namely publicizing, propaganda, attacking the opponents, and mobilization of people' (p.42). As Thai politicians' image has been challenged by the way Thai Facebook users express their political views in different political sites, this research examines political figures' views on such issue and the actions that they take to balance off their image with the individual ownership and freedom that Facebook users have for political communication on Facebook. Aksarapaak randomly studied the Facebook pages of pro and anti Yingluck government, and conceded that her research lacked a specific focus on content analysis as there were too many political Facebook pages that she could possibly have studied and there were too many issues discussed. Also, her convenient sampling of 30 interviews were diverse in age, occupation and background, and did not include political elites' point of view on using SNSs to send political messages and policies to Thai SNSs users. Thus, a more specific focus on interview samples and Facebook pages for content analysis is needed to conduct an in-depth study on the way in which SNSs impact political communication in Thailand. This is an important area of study.

When political elites such as national politicians or candidates from the government party or opposition party use Facebook, they are using Facebook to mass communicate with thousands and perhaps millions of followers. The message has the possibility of influencing greater numbers than ordinary person's use of Facebook. The limits of Aksarapaak's research indicates the importance of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the management of content and indeed, of the human resources who play a role in Thai political figures' SNS networks and the strategy they used

to influence citizens. How did those controlling politicians' Facebook adapt to the decentralisation of political communication? How did they cope with the fact that the platform allows interactive and direct transmission of message to occur between the political elites and citizens? How did they response to managing this opportunity and challenge? These are exciting questions that have not been studied in the context of Thailand. As SNSs started to emerge in Thailand, it became increasingly difficult to ignore political public relations on SNSs in the Thai context as a development of political communication and election campaigning, requiring an in-depth study of this new phenomenon.

Research objectives and framework

This research sets out to explore political public relations operations on SNSs in Thailand, with a particular focus on Facebook as the SNSs platform with the highest usage in Thailand, and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign as the context of study. This research discusses how political public relations work on SNSs in Thailand can establish and develop 'digital vote-canvassing networks' based on the media affordance provided by Facebook and how the building of relationships among Facebook users can spread campaign content to more Facebook users. The analysis in this research is from the perspective of candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and the campaign staff or public relations personnel involved in operating SNSs page for candidates during the election. The analysis in the later of this thesis takes into account on the views of Thai politicians and staff who assist Thai politicians in using SNSs for political communication in general.

The themes of analysing political public relations on SNSs subsume:

1. Candidates' image management on their Facebook pages;

2. The dissemination of candidates' campaign information on their Facebook pages;

3. Internal communications and the operation of candidates' SNS pages;

4. The management of the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel, and between candidates and followers;

5. The challenges of using SNSs for political purposes.

The above fives themes are derived from both features of SNSs and the concept of 'political public relations.' Baym's (2010, pp.6-12) proposes seven features of digital media (interactivity, temporal structure, social cues, storage, replication, reach and mobility) that are used as structural dimensions and orienting affordances in the analysis within this research (the seven features are further explained in Subsection 2.1.1. below). The theoretical dimension of this research is based on the concept of

'political public relations' used in understanding the operation of Thai political figures' SNS accounts, analysing the management of people, relationship and challenges associated with the production and dissemination of content posted on candidates' SNS accounts in for public figures to establish a positive image on their SNS pages, as well as on Thai political imagery and archetypes.

McNair (2011) defines 'political public relations' from a political communication perspective as 'the means and methods, by which political parties, at times of the election and in the intervals between them, with the help of their political consultants, seek to manage the media in such ways as to maximise favourable coverage and to minimise that which is damaging to the organisations' interest' (p.122) and the four activities include media management, image management, internal communications and information management. On the other hand, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) integrate the elements of public relations such as reputation management and relationship cultivation and use to manage relationships as core elements and define political public relations as 'the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals' (p.8). Strömbäck and Kiousis comment that their definition of 'political public relations' can be integrated with different research fields as political campaigning. As will further be reviewed in Chapter 2, this research integrated these two definitions of political public relations to analyse the use of Facebook for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, exploring on the transmission of messages on Facebook for political purposes, the strategic planning and management of content and relationship for political figures to achieve a particular goal.

Communication on the internet is viewed as a globalised platform of communication in enhancing connectivity. However, analysis of communication on the internet should not be considered as a global culture. Even though Thai politicians, journalists, and citizens have been adopting the use of SNSs as a source of political information, the network and content of communications on SNSs are still associated with the traditional form of Thai election campaigning and political culture. The mediation of content on SNSs as a globalised platform of communication is determined by the local political context and the interrelated political issues. Thus, one should also take into consideration local cultures. Soraj (1999) argues that 'Thai cultural attitudes do affect computer-mediated communication in a meaningful way' (p.232), meaning that Thai culture influences internet usage alongside Western ideas. This point suggests that in studying the use of SNSs for political communication and election campaigns in Thailand, knowing the local political culture of among Thais, particularly Bangkokians, would be useful.

Political culture has been a developing concept in understanding citizens' and politicians' behaviour in a particular society. The examination of political culture cannot occur in isolation, but political culture looks at what people share in common within a particular group. Almond (1956) first defines political culture as the 'particular pattern of orientations to political action' (p.396), and Chilton (1988) further develops Almond's definition and defines political culture as the way in which people are related in similar way with a group (p.431). Looking at political culture from a Thai perspective, Askew (2008) claims that political culture is able to provide coherence and justification to people as they act in the world, how one relates to another and the identification of themselves. This research takes into account of the relationship between Thai political figures, the image of Thai political figures, and signs associated with Thai election campaigns. In this, the political culture background will serve as a basis for this this research to demonstrate in what aspects political communication and election campaigning on SNSs evolves within the Thai political culture and what political figures take into consideration when they communicate about politics on SNSs.

In analysing the ritual, public monuments and semantic changes in Thailand, Rhum (1996) defines the term 'tradition' as 'the handing down of practice, and those practices are legitimate *because* they are handed down' (p.327), while the term 'modernity' is 'the improved way to do things' (p.328). This research uses Rhum's definition of 'tradition' and 'modernity' to examine the way election campaigning and political communication have been done in Thailand and the way in which SNSs bring improvements as well as new challenges for political figures, journalists and citizens accessing information from political figures' SNS pages.

This research takes a critical constructivist approach to determine the approach and challenge that encompass the operation of Thai political figure's SNSs page. The critical constructivist approach takes into account the interest, biases, worldviews and agendas of individual who construct the images for media audience to consume (Louw, 2010). Louw gives the example of the angle in which the cameraman points at, who is the boss of cameraman and journalists, and the journalists' bias towards reporting a particular issue (pp.3-7). Taking a critical constructivist approach to study the operation of political public relations on SNSs would mean that this research appreciates that the way political figures communicate with followers on SNSs would be based on the interest of the political figure and followers who supports and are keen to know more about the political figure. However, at the same time, the analysis in this research cogitates about other SNSs users who are connected to political figure's SNSs page in one way or another, as such group of SNSs users might be implicitly receiving a message from political figure's SNSs network. Taking a critical constructivist approach would,

therefore, guide this research towards critical as well as functional and organisational conclusions about its area of study.

Research contributions

SNSs have the potential to attract and motivate Thai political figures to use SNSs in the future as an additional channel of communication. Determining the task and issues associated with the use of SNSs by political figures, the expansion of their SNS networks and the extent to which followers who are voters in the election can rely on messages that they receive from a political figure's SNSs page are significant questions. This research provides an understanding of the development of election campaigns and political communication in Thailand on SNSs, aiming to contribute knowledge from the Thai perspective on political public relations on SNSs in the following areas:

1. This research will serve as a base for future study to examine the selection of candidates' visual image and the proposal of candidates' policy-related posts on their Facebook pages in order to determine how candidates portray their images and persuade followers based on their policies throughout the election campaign;

2. This research aims to enhance our understanding of the roles of public relations personnel and the management of relationships among individuals connected to the political use of SNSs, the establishment and development of digital vote-canvassing networks, and visualising the 'spreadability' of messages through interaction among SNS users (Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2013);

3. Findings in this research add to a growing body of literature on the challenges of regulating SNS communication for the purpose of political public relations in Thailand in response to the features of SNSs;

4. The triangulation research methodologies of multimodal analysis, interviews and coding procedures used in this research can be applied to other research studying SNSs and political public relations in other contexts.

Thesis outline

The rest of this thesis is divided into seven chapters. The exploration of political public relations on SNSs during election campaigns within the context of Thai political culture involves a background

understanding of the features and functions of SNSs in enhancing communication between candidates and voters. The facilitation and strategic planning of election campaign resources and campaign messages are essential to persuade voters about a candidate's campaign. **Chapter 2** defines and conceptualises the features and functions of SNSs in relation to the ability of SNSs to allow political figures to construct their image, personalise, disseminate information, interact with voters and spread messages on SNSs. Chapter 2 further clarifies the definition of political public relations and discusses the strategies that Thai political figures might take to manage their SNSs accounts. The conclusion of Chapter 2 develops a framework for exploring political public relations on Thai political figures' SNS accounts.

As the study of political public relations is a new area of study in the Thai context, an exploratory approach is taken to collect and analyse data. **Chapter 3** outlines the research question and justifies the research methodologies used in this research by describing the relevant procedures and acknowledges the pilot study done in this research. The research methodologies utilised in this research include a multimodal analysis of the official Facebook pages of the two main contenders in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election (Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen), as well as interviews with Thai political figures and their SNS staff. Data analysis of this research contains four chapters, organised in the following way.

The basic dimension of political public relations on Facebook is fundamental in understanding a candidate's approach to campaigning on SNSs. **Chapter 4** lays out the basic dimension of political public relations based on the introduction of the candidates' campaign on Facebook by assessing the candidates' basic information published on Facebook in relation to the typical image of the Bangkok governor. Chapter 4 also examines candidates' core identities and core visual images used as the candidates' profile pictures and used as a cover page, determining the different visual perception that candidates were portraying on their Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

Having almost two months to campaign involved the management of content and the relationship between the candidates and their followers in order to gain the support of their followers on the day of the election. **Chapter 5** examines the management of election campaign content on the candidates' Facebook pages in engaging their followers on SNSs and maintaining followers' support throughout the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, by looking particularly at the framing of candidates' campaign slogans, the distribution of policy-related post published on Facebook and the

ways that candidate adopted to facilitate followers to interpret about candidate's campaign on Facebook.

The idea of a vote-canvassing network was significant in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on SNSs. **Chapter 6** analyses the management of human resources and the operation of candidates' SNS accounts. Chapter 6 determines the way in which SNS users are connected to candidates' SNS accounts and the way in which campaign messages are spread on SNSs during the election campaign, which has led to the establishment of 'digital vote-canvassing networks' on SNSs. The first part of Chapter 6 reviews the responsibilities, professionalism and autonomy that public relations personnel have as 'core vote-canvassers' to coordinate communication with candidates' followers. The second half of Chapter 6 develops a prototype to visualise how features of interaction on Facebook, can implicitly and explicitly link different Facebook users together to be part of a digital vote-canvassing network as SNS users are exposed to the same messages disseminated from a candidates' SNS account. This research will use the term 'public relations personnel' and 'personnel' interchangeably to refer to the campaign staff, who manage and personalise candidates' SNS accounts.

As the use of SNSs for political purpose is still emerging and developing deliberative democracy in Thailand, **Chapter 7** identifies the way in which the functions of SNSs challenge election campaign regulation and highlight the threats that political figures face in achieving their goals to communicate on SNSs. Chapter 7 discusses how decentralisation of election campaigning and political communication on SNSs is transforming the democratic values of voters enabling them to be more involved in expressing their opinions and disseminating messages on SNSs. The chapter points out the possible issues for which public relations personnel could be responsible for in comparison to a self-managed SNS account.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter of this thesis, which summarise the research findings, analysis developed in this thesis and the contribution of this study. The chapter identifies the limitations of this research, outlines suggestions for future study and presents the research argument.

This thesis argues that the political public relations work carried out via Facebook during the 2013 election campaign consisted of a new and complex process of managing the coordination and dissemination of campaign content and visual images on Facebook, managing human resources and relationship. The management of campaign information and visual images on Facebook is fundamental in communicating via Facebook, engaging with voters and manipulating voters. The establishment and development of the relationship among people on the digital vote-canvassing

network can increase the spreadability of election campaigning on SNSs. As election campaigns and political communication on SNSs in Thailand are still developing, it can be anticipated that there will be problems and challenges for Thai political figures in enhancing their communication on SNSs.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

Introduction

Political communication has always been developing in parallel with the evolution of communication technology, increasing the competitiveness of politics and increasing citizens' interest in participating in political communication. As clearly outlined by Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), the first age of political communication was mainly dominated by political parties. As television became a significant medium in the second age, political parties started to adapt their methods of political communication by increasing professionalisation of election campaigns or communication in press conferences or media interviews. The third age of political communication started to see the emergence of the internet in circulating political news and information, raising the need to heighten the level of professionalism in dealing with challenges and complexities (pp.211-213).

Mediation, by definition, is the transmission of a message through media to influence all aspect of politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999, p.249; Strömbäck, 2008, p.231). The third age of political communication encompasses a range of social media and SNSs emerging in today's political landscape, impacting the way politics is mediated. A widely known pioneer example of a candidate using SNSs effectively for election campaigning is Barak Obama's campaign in the 2008 Presidential election in the United States. According to Louw (2010), Obama was synthesising different approaches in the election campaign, including both online and offline media as well as door-to-door campaigning, realising the importance of the internet and traditional ways election campaigning (pp.97-101). In terms of social movements, Castells (2012) comments that the mobilisation of protesters in the Arab Spring through digital technology 'created deep communication ties and organizational capacity in groups of activists before the major protests took place' (p.105). These two widely known examples have shown and raised awareness on the strengths of using SNSs for institutional and grassroots political movements.

As SNSs are a new and developing channel of communication in Thailand, there is limited research on SNSs and election campaigning and political communication in Thailand. The main objective of this chapter is to develop a foundation for understanding the operation of Thai politicians' SNS accounts for political public relations in Thailand in general and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign in particular. This chapter reveals the relevant concepts and issues for this research to take into consideration.

Divided into three sections, this chapter starts off by conceptualising the basis of political public relations on SNSs, and reviews the roles of political public relations in engaging with voters during an election campaign. The chapter then moves on to integrate typical images of Thai political figures within a framework of visual images that are likely to be seen during election campaigns. This provides criteria for analysing candidates' images during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on SNSs. Lastly, this chapter problematises how interaction on SNSs can be both beneficial and challenging to political public relations with regards to image management and the spreadability of content on SNSs, by conceptualising interaction with the concept of a two-step flow and traditional vote-canvassing systems.

2.1. Using social networking sites for political purposes

The aim of this section is to conceptualise the basis of political public relations on SNSs. To gain a basic understanding of how SNSs function, this section starts off by defining 'social networking sites' (SNSs) and explains the functions of SNSs where users disseminate and receive messages to and from each other. Secondly, this section clarifies the definition of 'political public relations.' Finally, this section identifies plausible ways in which public relations personnel of political figures would use SNSs to engage with voters during election campaigns.

2.1.1. Features and functions of social networking sites

boyd and Ellison (2008)define social networking sites as 'web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site' (p.211). Examples of SNSs include Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, Flickr, YouTube, and MySpace. Though these sites might have different characteristics, they are still categorised as SNSs.

There are differences between the term 'social media' and 'social networking sites' even though several researchers use these terms interchangeably to refer to the same platforms of communication. SNSs are one of the many types of social media. Page (2012) points out that social media refer to 'the Internet-based applications that promote social interaction between participants' (p.5), e.g. discussion forum websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, social network sites, video sharing and microblogging, where interaction on these platforms leads to the production of feedback between message senders and receivers on the same network. Social networking sites are therefore a subset of social media, which may be why researchers use these terms interchangeably.

Baym (2010, pp.6-12) proposes seven key concepts in analysing different media platforms and forms of communication: interactivity, temporal structure, social cues, storage, replication, reach, and mobility. Firstly, *interactivity* allows users to respond to each other, meet new people and also become close to each other (Section 2.3 analyses more on interactivity). Secondly, the *temporal structure* looks at the way in which media enable synchronous or asynchronous communication. Face to face, phone calls and instant messages are a synchronous form of communication. Voicemail and email are asynchronous communication media as there is a time delay between sending and receiving messages. Thirdly, *social cues* look at the further information provided in context, the explanation of the message or the identities of people communicating in the message. Digital media provide fewer social cues as there might be a lack of shared physical context. Next, digital media may be *stored* and *replicated* on a device, which allows users to access historical content at later dates (Carnevale and Probst, 1997; Cherny, 1999; Culnan and Markus, 1987; Walther, 1996 cited in Baym, 2010). Media are also different in their ability to make a message *reach* a number of audiences. Messages on digital media can reach thousands of people in just one click. Finally, *mobility* varies from medium to medium, and digital media enable people to communicate with each other regardless of where they are.

In terms of the relationships between SNSs users, Miller (2011) states that SNSs allow users to communicate and stay in touch with one another in a faster and more direct form of communication. Users can share their experience and opinions with one another via status updates. They can also leave 'comments', such as through the 'Like' tab or 'Share' tab and through sending short text messages to other users. Baym (2010) notes that there is no clear definition of who are friends on SNSs, since friends on SNSs can consist of 'strangers, admirers, confidants, co-workers, family and a host of other relationship types.' (p.145). Offline friends can also be friends on SNSs. Moreover, depending on the culture and user's personality and choice, communicating online can both enhance and weaken relationships among users as the comfort level varies from one user to another (ibid., pp.130-45).

Algorithms, or what Potter (2012) defines as 'a set of mental codes that people use both consciously and unconsciously to make sense of media messages', are the core element to clarify how people encounter and process media messages (pp.26-7). A Facebook algorithm is about how Facebook attempts to relate users to each other through biographical information and users' interests in interaction (section 2.3 will further analyse about interaction.) Facebook is able to figure out how users are related to each other e.g. having a feature called 'People You May Know (PYMK)' to help users to find friends and flagging people whom users may be interested in adding to the network of people who are from same family or education institution (Van Dijck, 2013, p.47, p.156). This quality

is what Van Dijck refers to '*connectedness*' as Facebook guides users to share information with other users through 'purposeful designed interfaces' (pp.46-7). With reference to Granovetter's (1973) analysis of *strong ties and weak ties*, it could be said that PYMK can be acquaintances and when Facebook users connect to PYMK, the connection might be a 'weak tie.' As Facebook friends are related differently to the Facebook user, the status updates of Facebook users is communication with multiple weak ties (Baym, 2010, p.135). Whereas 'strong tie' relationships are established when Facebook users connected to their close friends (or when weak ties become converted to strong ties through interaction). Consequently, using SNSs enables users in various relationships to connect with one another through status updates, interaction, and instant messages.

Dubrofsky (2011, pp.120-1) describes a user's Facebook home page as 'a moving, changeable space infused with particular digital tracks of a user's data movements', where Facebook makes announcements and acknowledgments of the interactions and status that the user just posted. Facebook's algorithm determines which post comes as the top news feed on a user's Facebook page. If a post is interesting and manages to gain a high level of interaction, it is likely that the post will be circulated on Facebook. Thus, the core idea of Facebook is to influence its users by continuously uploading data for other users to pay attention to (by commenting on it, clicking the 'like' tab or sharing the content).

Van Dijck (2013) mentions that the literal meaning of the 'like' tab on Facebook is a reflection of people's preferences for things or the particular interest that they have as the amount of 'likes' that a piece of data receives can determine the level of interest (p.158). When other users see what their friends 'like' on Facebook, it is possible for the content to have an impact on the user as they would be interested in relating themselves to the content that is of interest to their friends on Facebook (ibid.). As a result of the high level of interaction, Dubrofsky comments that a Facebook user's page can be completely 'transformed' overnight in response to the amount of interaction that a piece of content gets. New actions taken by a user's friends are shown on the page, moving notices about previous actions down the page even though users can retrieve old actions (Dubrofsky, 2011, p.120-1).

Based on consumption of information, SNSs allow personalisation of content according to users' interests. Papacharissi (2010) defines 'personalisation' from a consumption perspective as 'the ability to organize information based on a subjective order of importance determined by the self, presents an operative feature of online media like the Internet' (p.144). An example is the way social media and SNSs support the feature of personalisation of consumption with the use of the '#' (hashtag) symbol in front of a phrase or topic, which symbol can group content related to a particular topic, facilitating

and directing users to consume content related to the topic within one click (Alisa, Choochart, Jaruwat, and Sarawoot, 2012, p.2228).

Similarly to political communication, a Facebook user who clicks 'like' to follow a political page is choosing to be subscribed to posts or updates relating to the page. This is a way to establish links between Facebook users and political figures on Facebook, encouraging users to get involved in the political figure's news feeds (Edgerly, Bode, Kim, and Shah, 2013). As one of the research questions in this research seeks to find the connection and relationship between political figures and their followers, this research takes into consideration Van Dijck's concept of 'connectedness' and Potter's definition of 'algorithm' to analyse the connection between SNS users. This research will use Baym's (2010) seven features of media as the framework to analyse the use of SNSs for political purposes in Thailand.

2.1.2. Political public relations

There are several definitions of political public relations. Before clarifying these definitions, this subsection starts off by reviewing the basic definition of political communication, in order to find the relationship between the two concepts when used to analyse election campaigns on SNSs.

Looking from the American perspective of political communication, Denton and Woodward (1990) define political communication as 'public discussion about the allocation of *public resources* (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and *official sanctions* (what the state rewards or punishes)' (p.14). This definition was formed after Denton and Woodward analysed the failure of political communication in two cases: first, the public relations disaster of Gerald Ford, where the President of United States struggled to manage and control inflation problems on America national TV, where he was bombarding people with too many ideas on the issues; and second, the case of Delaware Senator Joseph Biden, who was running for the United States presidential campaign in 1987, and found guilty of academic plagiarism when he was in university (ibid., pp.6-8). Denton and Woodward's view of the failure of political communication in both cases as the lack of effective public negotiation on the issues. As a result, this makes the image of election candidate and politician at risk. Political communication was not effectively planned and prepared for the intended outcome to occur. One of the ways to handle political communication effectively is for politicians and political parties to seek ways to manage free media and the information they provide to the free media and this leads to McNair's (2011) definition of 'political public relations.'

McNair (2011) defines political public relations from a political communication perspective, having mainstream media as the link between political organisations and citizens. This definition of political public relations associates it with the management of political organisations and dissemination of a political message and construction of political images through 'free media', which McNair defines as 'those spaces and outlets in which political actors may gain exposure and coverage, without having to pay media organisations for the privilege.' When politicians appear on free media, the control over coverage is by the media itself, which can make politicians' image look 'less manufactured' and increase the 'believability' (ibid., p.119). At the same time politicians also try to have some control over the coverage of their image on free media, and McNair further proposes that this is when it becomes necessary to have public relations advisers who have professional skills to give suggestions to politicians and political parties on managing the relationship with free media.

McNair (2011) identifies four activities that are subsumed under the term political public relations: media management, image management, internal communications and information management. Firstly, media management aims to maintain a 'positive politician-media relationship' (p.123) in order for politicians to maximise their access to free media. Secondly, image management consists of the construction of a personal image of an individual politician or political organisation to suit organisational goals. Examples of this can vary from the logo used to symbolise a political party to the type of language that a politician uses in political interviews or manifestos. Thirdly, internal communication looks at the channels of communication in which information is transmitted internally, the management and organisation of activities and the management of feedback. Finally, information management is the selection of information to disseminate (ibid., pp.118-150). Thus, political public relations becomes a process of managing different elements on the political organisation's or politician's side, which is the initiating party in political communication, and the attempt to manage communication and the relationship between politicians and the media to have a positive coverage of politicians.

It must be noted here that political public relations is different from political advertising. Political advertising refers to 'the purchase and use of advertising space, paid for at commercial rates, in order to transmit political messages to a mass audience' (McNair, 2011, p.87), which means that political parties have full control on the content and image that they want to establish in political advertisements. From the same perspective, Craig (2004) comments that political advertising has become 'one of the most powerful forms of political communication' (p.131). However, in political public relations, free media have control on the content, but there are management processes involving political organisations and their public relations advisers to maximise positive coverage

about them. Free media is still the more effective channel of political communication for political actors because what is communicated through free media has been subject to 'scrutiny', but political figures take a risk on how free media reports them, and political figures deal with such risk by managing the information that they give to free media (ibid,. p.134).

SNSs are free platforms of communication in that users do not have to pay to register for an SNS account. However, users would need to have digital technology such as a computer, internet access, operational skills, information skills, strategic skills and opportunity, time and effort to use digital technology (Van Dijk, 2006, pp.179-183) . With such access and skills, users can publish content on their SNS account free of charge. However, political parties or political figures who use SNSs for political communication and election campaigns might pay to employ political public relations personnel to advise them or manage their SNS pages on their behalf. Thus, SNSs can be considered as an advertising platform in such way. In applying McNair's definition of political public relations to SNSs, it could be said that political public relations on SNSs is the way in which an individual political figure or political party seeks to manage SNS pages to maximise favourable coverage and to minimise that which is damaging to their interests during an election campaign or in political communication in general.

On the other hand, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) define political public relations to reflect contemporary understanding of public relations, as 'the management process by which an organisation or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals' (p.8). Strömbäck and Kiousis further comment that their definition is an adaptation to politics and political communication, highlighting 'the communication of politics and the purposeful nature of communication for political purposes' (p.9). Also, the definition can be integrated with theories and research in other fields such as political campaigning, political communication, political marketing, propaganda and persuasion, political science, public affairs, public relations and political management. The elements of public relations e.g. reputation management and relationship cultivation are also integrated in Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition. As a result, it could be said that management of relationships is a core element in Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition of political public relations.

With reference to Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition of political public relations, Sweetser (2011) coins the term 'digital political public relations' and proposes that 'the understanding that relationships are central to successfully maintaining reputation, support, and a level of influence is

perhaps better realized through digital political public relations than other embodiments of the practice' (p.308). When politicians communicate on social media with their followers, it is like politicians are communicating with their friends. Politicians can connect to a large number of voters on social media and at the same time, they are able to personalise their content, making their content less formal, which establishes a personal 'relationship' between politicians and their key publics (ibid.). The relationship between politicians and their key publics can have an impact on maintaining their image, the support that they gain from their followers and the level of influence that their communication on social media can have on the followers.

Building from Strömbäck and Kiousis's definition of political public relations, Baines (2011) provides another definition of political public relations in election campaigns as 'winning electoral support by influencing public opinion and voting behavior, partly by outlining one's own parties' policies and leadership team and partly by damaging the credibility of the opponents' policy platform and leadership aspirations' (p.116). Baines explains that the political public relations communication cycle is the act of giving and proposing promises on policies that the candidate has for voters in exchange for the votes that candidate will get on the day of the election. The definition also makes reference to competitors in the election. To be more precise, Bauer, Huber and Herrmann (1996 cited in Baines 2011, pp.116-8) clarify that political parties communicate about policy and the way in which they would govern the country if they win an election. Political parties explain how they are suitable to govern and amplify their credible commitments in the past with negative references to the candidate's rivals.

Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition perceives political public relations as a management process of a wide range of tasks and activities that are related to political communication and managing relationships with the intention of achieving a particular goal, whereas McNair's definition of political public relations has been very specifically conceptualised based on the different activities (i.e. media management, image management, internal communications, and information management) that are related to the management of the relationship between politicians and the media in consideration of how the media and public view politicians. Even though the two definitions of political public relations have different perspectives, when applying both definitions to SNSs, it could be said that McNair's definition is a subset of Strömbäck and Kiousis' in that specific activities of political public relations identified by McNair are associated with the management process of public relations of politicians or political organisation with the public, while Baines' definition of political public relations has applied Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition to the context of election campaigns and

Sweetser's definition of political public relations has applied Strömbäck and Kiousis' definition to the context of digital technology.

It could be said that the concept of 'political public relations' is a development of the general concept of 'public relations', where both concepts have interrelated elements. With a wide variety of definitions of public relations, Harlow (1976) tries to combine hundreds of these definitions, and gives the following definition of public relations as a working definition:

> Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools.

> (Harlow, 1976, p.36)

Harlow's definition of public relations involves different aspects of management and communication between the organisation and the publics, attempting to keep them informed for the public interest. Harlow's definition gives some indication of managing the image of an organisation, especially when the image might be at risk. The activities of public relations therefore involve specialisation of knowledge, skills and methods in managing communication, problems and the image of organisations. (ibid., p.36).

The communication element of public relations involves selecting media to keep the relevant people informed, and one of the communication platforms used might be the free media to reach the public. Public relations personnel of an organisation also need to seek ways to manage the relationship between the organisation and the media and also manage the information that they provide to the media. On the other hand, an organisation might have its own channel of communication with the public, which might be SNSs.

In another framework, Hutton (1999) draws upon the dimensions and domain of public relations, and defines public relations as 'managing strategic relationships'. Hutton explains: "'Managing' implies planning, control, feedback and performance measurement. 'Strategic' implies planning, prioritization, action orientation and a focus on relationships most relevant to client-organization goals. Finally, 'relationships' implies effective communication, mutual adaptation, mutual dependency, shared values, trust and commitment" (p.209). Although Hutton acknowledges that a relationship is not something that can be 'managed' and his definition of public relations is not a direct way of

promoting efforts in communication, defining public relations as 'managing strategic relationships' leads to a hierarchy of public relations primary roles, functions and tactics, where part of these elements encompass public relations acting as persuader, reputation manager, constructor of images and communicator with the publics in different ways. Thus, viewing political public relations as a more specific component of public relations would indicate that managing relationships is significant, which is the element that could lead to the support that an organisation can get from the public. This research will examine how the management of relationships is strategically undertaken by political figures communicating on SNSs.

There has not been a definition of 'political public relations' specifically in the context of SNSs. But using McNair's and Strömbäck and Kiousis' definitions of political public relations and the functions and features of SNSs outlined in subsection 2.1.1, political public relations on SNSs encompass the management of communication involved in influencing voting decisions, which can comprise the management of the relationship between the message sender and message receiver, the coordination and dissemination of information and visual images on SNSs, and the dealing with complexities involved in political communication and election campaigning on SNSs. It also incorporates the management of relationships between political figures and their public relations personnel and the management of relationships between political figures and their followers are essential for political public relations on SNSs. The relationship between the political figure and their public relations personnel can be established and developed by public relations personnel getting to know the political figure's background, personality and political views in order to be able to manage her/his SNS account. The relationship between political figures and their followers can be established and developed based on the types of messages and images that political figures or their public relations personnel post on the political figures' SNS account on a regular basis and the level of interaction that the political figures have with their followers on SNS.

Taking into consideration the globalised platform of SNS communication, it is plausible for political figures and public relations personnel to face challenges on the decentralisation of communication on SNSs from their side and from their followers' side, challenging them to 'maximise favourable coverage' of the political figures within a specific context of study. The notion of 'media management' on SNSs is associated with the relationship between the agenda of a political figure's SNS account and the agenda of the mainstream media, where mainstream media might use content from a political figure's SNS page as their source of information (Subsection 2.1.3. will elaborate more on such relationships).

2.1.3. Role of public relations personnel in engaging with followers on SNSs

Public relations personnel or public relations practitioners have played and continue to play an important role in organisational communication in Thailand. In surveying 130 public relations practitioners in Bangkok, Daradirek and Rosechongporn (2004) found that the top five duties of public relations personnel are press release writing, media relations, organisational publications production, public relations planning and special events. New communication technology has had an impact on public relations practice in Thailand, with a seminar on 'PR Strategies via New Technology' suggesting that it is an economical way to communicate online with internal staff and the public in order to 'reach' a larger target audience at a lower cost (cited in Daradirek and Rosechongporn, 2004).

Research on the use of the internet and SNSs for election campaigns in other democratic countries has revealed the roles of campaign staff in assisting the candidate to communicate and manage the candidate's SNS accounts on behalf of the candidate (Karlsen, 2010; Levenshus, 2010). Karlsen (2010) examined the use of campaign professionals and online technology in Norwegian elections and found that Norwegian political parties have different levels of trust given to internal and external campaign professionals during the election campaign while political parties still have autonomy to coordinate the election campaign. In the context of the 2002 Florida gubernatorial campaign, Trammell and Williams (2004) comment that campaign staff played a role in personalising campaign messages with the use of words such as 'you' to address readers directly through email, and Sweetser (2011) comments that such personalisation has made readers feel that candidate was the person writing the email even though it was the campaign staff. Linking the gap of political relations online in Thailand to this research on political public relations on SNSs, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between public relations personnel and political organisations is essential in knowing the operation of SNSs for political purpose. The use of campaign staff on SNSs questions the extent of the involvement of political figures in communicating on SNSs with their followers and the backdoor operation of SNS communication for political purposes in order to assess the reliability of message received by followers.

There are various ways in which political figures and public relations personnel can engage voters and SNSs followers during election campaigns and political communication. In political communication and election campaigning in Thailand, the engagement of politicians with voters is important in establishing and building a relationship between the two parties. Sanit (1994) points out that Thai political figures attempt to establish a close relationship with voters through the use of language such as '*phi nong*' (พี่น้อง). The literal meaning of *phi nong* is elder and younger sibling. *Phi nong* is used

with individuals who are not relatives, but are respected. Thai political figures use *phi nong* to establish a close relationship with voters*,* and to show their attempt to respect and consider the voters as their relatives and vice versa. Consequently, this allows voters to be optimistic about the politician's ability in solving problems, and politicians can gain support from voters through such a relationship (p.169-170). Arguably, it is part of Thai political culture to establish such relationship as part of candidate's image construction. There is no evidence to show that such relationship has impact on the result of an election. But this indicates that when Thai political figures use SNSs for political communication and election campaigning, *phi nong* would be used to address followers in order to establish a positive rapport with voters, reflecting upon the fraternal relationship between the politicians and the voters.

On SNSs, campaign messages can be composed and framed in different ways to gain ongoing attention and support from candidates' followers. In addition to the role that public relations personnel play in personalising a candidate's campaign messages to make voters feel that the candidate was the person writing the message (Sweetser, 2011; Trammell and Williams, 2004), Zittel (2009) remarks that individual candidates in the German federal elections of 2005 used their websites to personalise their campaign, decentralising campaign communication as candidates had independent campaign material on their websites. Looking from Norwegian politicians' perspective of personalisation, Enli and Skogerbø (2013) claim that social media provide space for Norwegian politicians to express their opinions, through defending, supporting or arguing about news stories broadcast or published by mainstream media. Also, social media give opportunities for Norwegian politicians to maintain a constant connection and interaction with the voters. This method of personalisation is associated with citizens having private exposure to the agenda posted by politicians on the internet.

Bimber (2014) conceptualises personalisation of communication in relation to data analytics, whereby microtargeting of campaign messages was a fundamental element in Obama's campaign to persuade undecided voters and to increase voter turnout in the 2012 U.S presidential election. Microtargeting enables campaign staff to acquire more specific data about voters, which was beneficial to framing the candidate's campaign according to voters' voting behaviour and to engage specific groups of voters during the election campaign. Stokes-Brown (2012) and Edgerly et al. (2013) agree that the concept of microtargeting has to be taken into consideration to personalise online politics, looking into online users' background information e.g. age group, gender, location, occupation and political interests. Edgerly et al. (2013) point out that microtargeting allows the campaign to target certain voters with specific information while Stokes-Brown (2012) proposes that microtargeting is a technique that makes use of large-scale commercial poll data, which enables the campaign to preserve scarce

resources and maximise its campaign impact. Thus, another perspective of personalisation is associated with the way in which the candidate designs the campaign to suit a particular group of voters. There is little evidence of this kind of strategy being used in Thailand yet, but given its increasing centrality to campaigning in the US, it is likely it will spread globally as resources permit.

Communicating on the internet has also allowed crowdsourcing. According to Brabham (2008), Jeff Howe and Mark Robinson proposed the term 'crowdsourcing' in the June 2006 issue of *Wired* magazine. Howe (2006), as cited in Brabham (2008, p.76), defines the term 'crowdsourcing' as 'a new web-based business model that harnesses the creative solutions of a distributed network of individuals through what amounts to an open call for proposals.' With this definition, Howe says that crowdsourcing enables people to collaborate and generate peer-production based on a particular project or problem that needs to be solved. The idea of crowdsourcing on the internet was further examined by Brabham (2009) based on public involvement for urban planners and the research found that the internet was an appropriate technology to 'harness collective intellect' compared to face-to-face meetings as the internet can generate creative participation, and users can quickly exchange ideas with each other under the same network (p.242). Thus, it is possible for candidates to use crowdsourcing as another way to engage with followers, increasing their involvement in the candidate's campaign by contributing visual images and textual content. Crowdsourcing can enhance the spreadability (Jenkins et al., 2013) of media content on SNSs (Section 2.3 will further analyse spreadability).

The concepts of 'agenda setting' and 'framing theory' are further core elements in studying election campaigns. Maxwell McCombs and Don Shaw examine news reports in relation to voting behaviour in the 1968 US presidential election, which leads them to conceptualise agenda setting as the daily selection and presentation of news done by editors and news directors in attracting media audiences' attention and how they influence media audiences' perception of 'what are the most important issues of the day' (McCombs, 2004, p.1). McCombs explains that because there are only a few things that matter to media audiences during the election campaign, the media plays a role in judging what is significant for media audiences to know and what they should think about, which have implications for personal behaviour. Dainton and Zelley (2005) note that as politics has many issues, news media assist media audience in what should be thinking. These guidelines could be achieved through setting the agenda, and selecting and presenting news which is relevant to the audience. In other words, agenda setting looks at what agenda has been set or what is being talked about in the media. Ridout and Mellen (2007) propose a possible coding category for election campaigns during the 2002 sub-

presidential race, which was done according to issues such as taxes, defence, social security, health care, minimum wage, education, terrorism, and welfare.

Extending from McCombs and Shaw (1972) statement on the importance of agenda setting in news media, the concept of framing takes a further step in examining how selected news is talked about in news media. Entman (1993) summarises the concept of framing as 'to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (p.52 cited in Hamdy and Gomaa, 2012, p.197). Schudson (2011) defines framing as 'the principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters.' (p.28). De Vreese (2005) distinguishes agenda setting from framing theory by stressing that agenda setting looks at the importance of issues, while framing gives attention to the way issues are presented or talked about (p.53). Thus, the purpose of framing is to influence or have an impact upon the way the media audience reacts to news (Dainton and Zelley, 2005; Nelson, Clawson and Ocley, 1997; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). The framing of news can depend on the interests of the media audience (Yang, 2003) as well as the ownership or who takes control of the media platform (Hamdy and Gomaa, 2012).

Turning now to the Thai context, Sombat (2006) proposes that Thai media should assist in agenda setting and framing news with regard to debates in Parliament to facilitate how the media audience should think about them. The media are responsible for helping the audience make a judgment on political issues discussed by politicians in Parliament. As Thai politicians attempt to avoid replying to critical questions during debates, this means that the media audience of voters will not know 'the truth' from the politicians (ibid., pp.298-300). Therefore, the media play a significant role in agenda setting and framing news with regards to political issues discussed in Parliament.

Savitri (2004) comments that political communication in the Thai Parliament consists of formality as well as entertainment in the sense that politicians retain the attention of audiences of various backgrounds watching the debates on television (p.100). The formal element that Savitri discusses is the 'ritual beginning' of a speech, whereby the politician introduces himself at the beginning of his speech, which is part of the parliamentary code of conduct that politicians have to obey (p.104). The introduction constitutes of the politician mentioning her/his full name, the constituency that the politician represents and the political party that the politician belongs to. The pronoun used by Thai

male politicians in the 'ritual beginning' of a speech would either be '*kraphom*' or '*phom*', both pronouns meaning 'I' or 'me' (ibid.), but '*kraphom*' is more formal.

During election campaigns in Thailand, media bias is also associated with agenda setting and framing of issues by mainstream media. Rattana (1998) found that the hosts of television debates set the agenda of campaign topics by playing a role in facilitating election campaign forums in Thailand; unequal opportunities were given to politicians to talk and interact with audiences about their policies. Another research concluded that Thai newspapers imposed gender stereotypes when it comes to framing the image of male and female candidates in the 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (Rattima, Kusakabe and Rosechongporn, 2006).

In terms of news production, spokesmen are considered as 'primary definers' as they are the source of the news, while journalists and the media play a significant role in reproducing news, enabling them to be considered as 'secondary definers' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, and Robers, 1978, pp.58-9). Thus, as for political communication and election campaigning on SNSs, it could be said that SNSs can strengthen the relationship between the primary definers and secondary definers in a way that primary definers can use political figures' SNSs page as their own platform of communication to the public and also to communicate with secondary definers. Moreover, political figures can also use their own SNSs page to express their opinion or clarify political news published by the secondary definers, which makes established the connection between the new media and old media.

In the case of political communication on SNSs in Thailand, there has been a complex relationship between the agenda in mainstream media and in SNSs. Even though research on the 2004 presidential election in the United States shows that there is a limited relationship between news coverage on mainstream media and blog discussions (Wallsten, 2007, p.579), Supreeya (2009) found that political content on the *OKnation* blog reflects the mainstream media interest in agenda-setting. Moreover, Nuchada and Vikanda (2012) state that mainstream media in Thailand use SNSs to guide media audiences to seek for further detail on certain issues (p.96). Isriya (2012) points out that both Thai politicians' SNS accounts and the mainstream media use each other's content as part of their agenda in political communication (p.38). As new candidates in elections in Thailand tend to create recognition for themselves by referencing mainstream media reports about their campaigns (Sombat, 1993, p.107), it is very likely that status posts on a Thai candidate's Facebook page are related to mainstream media coverage about her/him, which is a way to increase the credibility of topics for

followers to interact on, integrating political communication in mainstream media and SNSs and motivating Thai SNS users to seek information from mainstream media and vice versa.

The increasing interest in using SNSs for political communication in Thailand has heightened the need to understand Thai politicians' management of SNS accounts and the roles of public relations personnel operating these to engage followers. Previous research has looked at how the agenda on SNSs is related to mainstream media and how candidates use mainstream media to give credit to their SNS posts (Isriya, 2012; Nuchada and Vikanda, 2012; Supreeya, 2009; Wallsten, 2007). Little attention has been given to political public relations in association with the dissemination of content, the selection of visual image and strategic planning of election campaigns in connection with each phase of the election campaign, which this research attempts to explore in.

It is conceivable that in integrating the features of SNSs into political public relations, the temporal structure and mobility of SNSs would allow candidates to manage his/her status according to the candidate's interest, management and instant publication of campaign messages for candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign to engage particularly with followers on candidates' SNS accounts. Campaign messages are stored on candidates' SNS accounts. The existence of swing voters (Boonlert, 2015b) and the time restriction for election campaigning set by the Election Commission suggest that management of the type and quantity of campaign content is likely to be related to different phases of the election campaign and the agenda on mainstream media, to establish and build momentum. As Bangkokians are pessimistic about the ability of elected politicians to solve problems (Suchit, 1996, p.195), it is plausible that public relations personnel would attempt to disseminate campaign messages on SNSs in such a way as to make Bangkokians optimistic about candidates' ability. Candidate and public relations personnel would communicate on SNSs continuously challenge Bangkokians' political culture of negative views of elected politicians. This is also to retain followers' interest and make followers sense that messages posted have come directly from the candidate throughout the election campaign.

Notwithstanding the Thai political culture of *phi nong* relationships between Thai political figures and their followers, the relationship between the political figures and their followers on SNSs would be individualistic relationships as political figures communicate more independently on SNSs in comparison to political communication in press conferences. Through the media affordance of SNSs, messages sent from political figures' SNS accounts directly reach and appear on followers' news feeds, which can enable their relationship to be closer as political figures send regular updates to followers.

2.2. Types of visual image of candidates

The image of candidates is also a core element in political public relations, where candidates give prominence to the way they appear in public. The visual image that political figures construct can have various meanings for the public, which can impact upon the way public perceives the candidates. Thai political culture codes can also be used to interpret a candidate's visual image and background. The objective of this section is to identify the different types and meanings of visual image that are likely to be seen during election campaigns and political communication. The first half of this section outlines the various frames based on how political figures tend to appear in public, while the second half analyses candidates' images through a Thai political culture perspective.

2.2.1. Frames of visual images during election campaigns

The definition of 'visual image' has been examined by different scholars, providing an interrelated definition of what constitutes a visual image. In the context of journalism, Coleman (2010) defines 'visual' to mean 'media content that is processed by the eye alone' which can be a photograph or moving image that contains elements such as facial expressions, body posture and gestures of the subjects within the image, while verbal content is written and spoken words (p.236) Nimmo (1974) defines 'image' as 'a human construct imposed upon an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event or person' (cited in Newman, 1994, p.92). According to Craig (2004), as a significant part of political figures' political communication, their weight, type of hairstyle and clothing, and verbal communication and the general management of political figures' images are seen when they appear in the media (pp.119-120). For example, the typical image of former President John Kennedy was always formal dress with a well-tailored suit and monogrammed shirt, with no other accessories other than a watch and a PT-109 tie clasp, a symbol of his World War II heroism (Giglio, 1991, p.272). Hence, the visual image of political figures is what viewers see. Visual images can be shaped or tailored so that the subject has a particular kind of appearance.

Lacey (2009) points out that the frame of a visual image is 'the position from which the image is perceived', which is 'the border between the space we are allowed to see, and what is out of our sight' (p.13). Thus, the visual image of a political figure can be a photograph or moving images which journalists or citizens see of political figures. Grabe and Bucy (2009) stress that the study of visual images in news coverage during an election campaign should include attention to the 'specific and nuanced character frame building dimension', meaning that analysis of visual images abolishes the simplistic division of coding images as 'positive versus negative' index measures (p.101). As a result, Grabe and Bucy offer three types of visual image from news coverage of presidential elections 1992-

2004: 1 ideal candidate; 2 populist campaigners; 3 sure losers. (Appendix 3 shows the full coding scheme)

1. The **ideal candidate** image is associated with the quality of the candidate, which consists of two themes: statesmanship and compassion. An image of statesmanship project 'authority, power, and control' (p.213). This image could include the juxtaposition of the candidate to flags and intellectual peers endorsing candidate. A compassionate image portrays sympathy or kindness to children or family. Examples of compassionate images include candidates' holding or kissing babies.

2. The **populist campaigner** image frames candidates as an 'ordinary people,' and consists of two themes: Mass appeal and ordinariness. Mass appeal reflect candidate being popular by having large crowds supporting the candidate while ordinariness theme is displayed by the candidate wearing casual clothes and getting involved in informal activities.

3. The **sure loser** image shows a candidate not confident of winning the election. Sure loser images can be coded from candidates' facial expressions, photographs of small crowds or having voters showing negative messages about candidates within the picture.

(Grabe and Bucy, 2013)

Grabe and Bucy's framework specifically reflects different aspects of the candidate during the election campaign, which tells voters different messages about the candidate. When applying a visual framework analysis to a candidate's campaign on SNSs, Goodnow (2013) states that the 'ideal candidate' and 'populist campaigner' frames were relevant as candidates attempted to portray different positive images to win the election, but candidates would not select the 'sure loser' frame to post on their SNS accounts, preventing any weak image from having a negative impact on their campaign.

Scholars analysing political images have also proposed 'celebrity politician' as another visual image frame, where politicians associate their image with the entertainment industry or popular culture; the celebrity politician image is also related to mass appeal. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, star of Hollywood blockbusters like *Terminator*, used the techniques of popular culture to become the Governor of California in 2003 (Street, 2004) while Barack Obama, 'whose campaign speeches were set to a hip hop beat, under the auspices of will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas' (Street, 2012), also used Hollywood and music celebrities to enhance his image (Barron, 2015) during the 2008 and 2012 U.S presidential campaigns. Politicians who use celebrities from the entertainment industry to support

their image are 'borrowing' the relationship of trust and admiration to associate with their image (Street, 2001, cited in Barron, 2015). Barron further noted that the visibility of celebrities in politics can draw media attention.

This research is similar to Goodnow's (2013) study in the way that both study candidates' selection of visual images to post on their SNS accounts during election campaigns, and will use Grabe and Bucy's visual image framework of the 'ideal candidate' and 'populist campaigner' frames in relation to 'celebrity politician.' Thus, in addition to the statement in Section 2.1 that candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election would be expected to use SNSs to disseminate campaign information to reflect their potential of fulfilling the role of Bangkok governor, it is also likely that political public relations on SNSs will be associated with the management process of selecting and publishing distinctive visual images of the candidate. The visual image reflects how candidates establish and build a positive rapport with voters, leaving an impression for followers to recall the candidate in a particular way. It is conceivable that candidates and public relations personnel in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election would frame various images (e.g. profile picture, cover page and photographs posted during the election campaign) on their Facebook pages to portray the different aspects of their image.

2.2.2. Image in Thai political culture

Visual images of candidates outlined in the previous subsection are commonly seen during election campaigns as candidates attempt to construct different images to gain support from voters, which also enables voters to recognise candidates in a particular way on news media. Coming from another point of view, an image does not know always have to be 'visual' or based on how politicians appear or communicate in public. The social background, personality and hobbies or other interests of a politician are also part of his image. Craig (2004) mentions that the former British Prime Minister John Major had the image of 'ordinariness' and 'real person' based on his 'modest' social background, 'reserved' and polite personality, and his interest in cricket (p.113). In Thai political culture, there is a basic distinction in Thai discourse between *nakleng* (นักเลง) and *phudi* (ผู้ดี) images. The first half of

this subsection defines and gives examples of *nakleng* images in relation to the notion of *phakphuak* or 'informal group', while the second half of this subsection characterises the *phudi* image.

Nakleng and *phakphuak*

Askew (2008) identifies *nakleng* as someone who has a self-confident personality, has the courage of being tough and would bravely carry weapons around and share certain kinds of behaviour with local people. Atcharaphon (1994) characterises a *nakleng* as someone who is 'มีจิตใจกล้าหาญอดทน นิยมการต่อสู้แบบเผชิญหน้าและตัดสินด้วยกำลัง ชอบทำอะไรท้าทาย และรักษาสัจจะ'(p.229), which can be translated as 'brave, unyielding, prefers to fight face-to-face, uses force to make decisions, likes challenges and keeps promises.' Callahan and McCargo (1996) claim that *nakleng* politicians buy their way into politics as a way to take advantage of the financial opportunities, which indicates dishonesty among *nakleng* politicians contesting democratic power.

Among Thai politicians, Samak Sundaravej was identified as a *nakleng* politician. Surapongse (2002) proposes that Samak had the image of a politician with an 'old' style of managing problems, while another research study by Rattima et al. (2006), found that Thai newspapers portrayed Samak's image during the 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, 'an old, dogmatic, and quick-tempered' candidate but experienced in politics (p.164). However, Samak had previous experience in politics and had held various position in politics, including being the leader of Thai Citizen's Party, Member of Parliament, Minister of Interior, Minister in Transport and he was the 25th Prime Minister of Thailand for eight months in 2008 ("นายกรัฐมนตรีคนที่ 25 นายสมัคร สุนทรเวช [25th Prime Minister Mr. Samak Sundaravej]," n.d.). Thus, Samak's previous political experience and skills could be an advantage to him in formulating and implementing policies for Bangkok Metropolis and also in coordinating work with the Thai government. His leadership of the Thai Citizen's Party at the time of election could strengthen his leadership image, which could be additional political experience for his profile and image. As a result, Surapongse argues that as Samak had been in politics for a long period, his image was 'clear' and well-recognised among Bangkokians during the election campaign (p.203), regardless of his *nakleng* image.

Examples of the other *nakleng* Thai politicians are Banharn Silpa-archa and Thaksin Shinawatra. Ockey (2004) describes the Banharn government as 'plagued with allegations of corruption' (p.17). As Banharn was not originally from Bangkok, his image was known as lower-class, having a provincial origin based on the way he spoke and behaved (ibid.). On the other hand, Thaksin was able to portray himself as a decisive leader in a *nakleng* manner by integrating a 'middle-class' success story and his reputation as an effective CEO in his image (ibid., p.19), illustrating a slightly different subset of the *nakleng* archetype. Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai party had rapid and significant work

performance with the use of political marketing concept (Kalan, 2005; Nanthana, 2006; Nichapa, 2004; Surapongse, 2002), which placed the focus of their campaign on their target market (voters), and had a clear idea on the political, economic and social problems that Thai people were facing. With reference to Newman's (1994) concept of political marketing, Thai Rak Thai Party used the candidate and the party policy as a product to sell in the election, in exchange for votes. Nanthana (2006) argues that Thai Rak Thai Party policies were relevant, easy to understand, easy to put in practice, were directly related to people/voters. The party understood their target group and the party was able to make their campaign messages reach the target group efficiently. As a result, the party was able to have clear work performance and was able to communicate well with Thai citizens on their progress. According to Kalan (2005), the party showed that they can quickly turn the proposed policies into practice.

Ockey (2004) notes that a *nakleng* can also be perceived as a 'criminal' or dangerous person in society, but they are respected, admired and necessary in rural life. In the context of the *patronage* system, Atcharaphon (1994) describes a *nakleng* leader or '*luuk phi*' (ลูกพี่) in Thai as one who protects the '*luuk nong*' (ลูกน้อง), who are henchmen. It must be noted here that the literal meaning of *luuk nong* in Thai is employee or servant working for a boss or leader, who might or might not have a *nakleng* personality or image. The relationship between henchmen and a *nakleng* leader relates to the way henchmen obey and respect the *nakleng* leader. The result of this relationship is the formation of *phakphuak*, which Chai (1994) proposes can be viewed from different perspectives. Firstly, *phakphuak* are people having a certain relationship established within a group, whether the same family, occupation or political party. Secondly, in Thai spoken language, the meaning of *phakphuak* refers to close friends, and can also be used as to address close friends. Thirdly, in practice, the *phakphuak* system contains elements of prejudice, considering the advantage to people in the same group and intending to take advantage of others. This system overlooks the rules, and this could lead to attacks on 'other' *phakphuak* (Chai, 1994, pp.172-173). Thus, *nakleng* can be viewed as in both an individual and group-based image, while *phakphuak* is a group-based image containing *nakleng* elements.

Applying *phakphuak* to politics, Nelson (2001 cited Askew, 2008, p.24) defines this term as 'informal local political groups', 'local political groups' or 'cliques'. According to Askew (2008), *phakphuak* are employed in political activities to build networks and express their loyalty during vote-canvassing in election campaigns. Thus, the notion of *phakphuak* in Thai political culture implies informal and small political groups with the same interests gathering together to achieve a particular objective for

their own benefit. This benefit can be money or power. If a political group has more *phakphuak* support in comparison to their rivals, they are very likely to win or achieve their objective.

It is also worth noting here that during the Yellow Shirt political social movement in the year 2008, the *nakleng* image of Thaksin and Samak were highly disapproved of by the Yellow Shirt protesters or the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) (McCargo, 2009). However, the Red Shirt protesters or the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), who were mainly people from the northern and northeastern provinces of Thailand, were later mobilised to bring Thaksin back to power (Naruemon and McCargo (2011). The contrast in support indicates differences in Thai political culture of political image perception among people of different regions in Thailand and shows how the notion of *phakphuak* is implemented in the political social movements to show support for a particular candidate or political party.

Phudi

The character of a *phudi* is the opposite of that of a *nakleng*. According to the dictionary definition (พจนานุกรมฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน, 1982), cited in Khwandee (1994), *phudi* are individuals born into good family backgrounds with a positive family lineage, which makes the individuals well-mannered and courteous. But individuals not born into families with pedigrees can also be characterised as *phudi* if they behave and speak like *phudi* (Kosal Dusamraan, cited in Khwandee, 1994). Ockey (2004) proposes that the term *phudi* in Thai was used to describe members of the aristocracy who are in a higher social class and are wealthy in money and power. *Phudi* are literally the 'good people' in society, who have moral goodness and are 'well-mannered' (p.6).

In Thai politics, politicians of the Democrat Party such as M.R. Sukhumbhand Paripatra, Apirak Kosayodhin, Chuan Leekpai and Abhisit Vejjajiva can be viewed as having a *phudi* image. M.R. Sukhumbhand's title (Mom Rajawongse) indicates that he is the great-grandchild of a Thai sovereign. M.R. Sukhumbhand is a great-grandson of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V).[7] M.R. Sukhumbhand was educated overseas, worked in academia and had political experience as Member of Parliament under the Democrat Party. Apirak had various experience working in the private sector. His experience before competing for the 2004 Bangkok gubernatorial election included Governor of the Stock Exchange of Thailand and President of the Marketing Association of Thailand ("อภิรักษ์ โกษะโยธิน

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[7] Cited from Fry, Nieminen and Smith (2013)

[Apirak Kosayodhin]," 2009). Chuan was widely believed to be relatively free of corruption (Ockey, 1996) and also had the image of being committed and willing to work in politics with a sense of morality and honesty as a politician (Kalan, 2005, pp.50-53), while Abhisit's image reflected 'an ideal brand politician' (แบรนด์ในฝัน) and 'good class politician' (นักการเมืองฉันดี) (Kalan, 2005, p.49).

To conclude this section, in addition to the message that political figures disseminate to build relationships with their followers on SNSs, it could be said that the visual image that political figures post on their SNSs page is another significant activity of political public relations on SNSs. Visual images are more conspicuous and spreadable than textual messages. By viewing visual images, followers can see political figures' appearance and any non-verbal communication feature framed within the visual image. For election campaigning on Facebook in particular, the selection and management of visual images and the placement of signs on candidates' profile pictures, cover pages and timeline photographs would be fundamental for followers' perception of the candidates' campaign and for followers to identify and recognise it. This research will use Grabe and Bucy's visual image framework of the 'ideal candidate' and 'populist campaigner' and the notion of 'celebrity politician' to study the visual images of candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on Facebook. As Grabe and Bucy's framework was designed to study moving images on television of candidates in the United States Presidential election, this research attempts to also determine if they would be any other cultural signs significant in designing and selecting visual images published on the candidates' Facebook pages. Based on the candidates' background and personality, this research will take into consideration Thai political culture of image perception as well as Grabe and Bucy's framework. As candidates have different career backgrounds, it is also plausible that candidates would have professional images based on their skills and specialist knowledge, which they might use to formulate their policies during the election campaign.

2.3. Interaction and spreadability of content

Research done on online media and election campaigning in democratic countries suggest that it is challenging to determine that the use of the internet for political communication and election campaign has an effect on voting behaviour (Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2014; Strandberg, 2013). The definition of McQuail (2005) of 'media effect' is 'the consequences or outcomes of the working of, or exposure to, mass media whether or not intended' (p.554), which Potter (2011) added that media effect is the change in outcome that can occur within a person or social entity as a result of exposure to a mass media message (p.903). Thus, when studying election campaigns online, it can be problematic to determine the effect of campaigning online on the result of the election and the effect

on voting behaviour, as various variables are associated with voters' media consumption. However, some of the effects of campaigning on SNSs can be assessed based on the interaction and sharing of information posted on SNSs.

The interaction feature of SNSs enable campaign messages to reach a wider group of SNS users. Interacting with respect to campaign messages enables the spreading or interchanging of campaign messages to other users, which this activity can be stored on SNSs. These features have been viewed as both advantages and disadvantages in political public relations. To gain a better understanding of the complication that the interaction feature has brought to political public relations on SNSs, this section starts off by defining the meaning of 'interaction'. This section then conceptualises interaction and spreadability of media content on SNSs in relation to political public relations by using a traditional network of communication of two-step flow and vote-canvassing systems as the theoretical basis. Lastly, this section problematises how interaction on SNSs can challenge political public relations on SNSs.

2.3.1. Defining 'interaction'

Before looking into the interactive feature of SNSs, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by 'interaction.' In the field of communication studies, various definitions of interaction are found. On the other hand, Fuery (2009) proposes that interaction concerns what information is exchanged and the way it is exchanged by different media users through technology (p.33). This refers to the message content exchanged during communication and the technology in which the exchange occurs.

Downes and McMillan (2000) identify the process of the level of interactivity in the respect of *message-based* dimension and *participant-based* dimension. With regards to the *message-based* dimension, the level of interactivity increases as there is two-way communication for participants to communicate 'actively' with each other, there is no time restriction in communication and the communication environment is suitable to interact. In terms of the *participant-based* dimension, interactivity increases when participants perceive that they are regulating communication environment, participants can get feedback from the communication, and participants have an objective of exchanging information (p.173).

Van Dijk (2006) proposes that a general definition of 'interaction' is 'a sequence of action and reaction' (p.8), which can occur at four different levels. Firstly, the elementary level of interaction looks at the *space* dimension of interaction, whereby interaction offers the possibility to establish two-sided or multilateral communication. The second level of interaction is *time* dimension or the degree

of synchronicity, which looks at the time available to reply to the person that one is communicating with. The third level of interaction looks into the *behavioural* dimension or the extent of control exercised by the interacting parties. As a result, this will influence their intervention in communication. The last and highest level of interaction looks at the way interactors act and react with each other, which is a *mental* dimension for full interaction to exist (pp.8-9).

All the above definitions of interaction are related in a way that interaction concerns the response given, which means that in interactive communication, messages are not communicated by one-way, but rather two-way communication, allowing the receiver to give feedback to the message sent by the sender. In other words, the relationship between the sender and the receiver of the message is further established through the response to the message being exchanged, which allows the receiver to participate in the communication. Looking specifically at Van Dijk's definition, the identification of different levels of interaction shows that it is too simplistic to generalise at once if interaction occurs in a conversation. This means that one must look into the *space* dimension, *time* dimension, *behavioural* dimension and *mental* dimension of the conversation to make a judgment on the level of interaction which exists.

Applying Van Dijk's definition of the different level of interaction to Facebook, we see that Facebook allows interactive communication to occur as there is space provided for other users to respond to messages. This interaction can be achieved by leaving comments, clicking the 'Like' tab or sharing the message with the user's network. In terms of the time dimension, the interaction could be synchronous, immediately uploaded and updated on Facebook once the respondent clicks on the 'like' or 'share' tab, or asynchronous, when occurring later. With regards to the behavioural dimension, Facebook users are in control their interaction without others intervening in what they communicate. Finally, Facebook offer two-way communication for interactors to act and react with each other. As the four dimensions of interaction proposed by Van Dijk outline the different elements that constitute interactive communication, this research will use Van Dijk's proposed levels of interaction to examine political public relations through the interactive feature of SNSs.

It must be acknowledged here that researchers have criticised politicians for being reluctant to interact with their followers on their SNS accounts as interaction on SNSs occurs only among followers, without further responses from the politicians, while followers have used the interaction feature to express their political thoughts. Bailard (2012) studied the internet's effect in the Tanzanian general election in 2010 and found that the internet encouraged citizens to evaluate and be critical of inefficient governments which can motivate citizens to act and organise themselves and could lead to

political change in the country. In examining political parties' use of social media in Switzerland, Klinger (2013) found that Swiss political parties mainly use social media as an another channel of political communication to spread information and electoral propaganda, without two-way communication between politicians and voters. Another research finding (Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, and Neuberger, 2013) also supports Klinger's (2013) analysis; during the 2011 parliamentary election campaign period in Germany, politicians were not interactive on Twitter but only made use of social media to publicise their messages.

In the context of local government use of social media in the United States, survey research conducted by Graham and Avery (2013) reports that social media were underutilised by local government officials, with the further comment that the use of social media by government officials in the context studied was more towards one-way communication, with government officials making announcements or advertisements (pp.13-15). Graham and Avery (2013) state that digital media can allow a disengaged public to participate in public debates and decision-making, making democracy its 'richest' (p.13), but only when this usage is promoted or supported. In the 2007 and 2012 French presidential campaigns, online campaigning on websites was more associated with candidates providing information instead of interacting or having debates (Koc-Michalska, Gibson, and Vedel, 2014, p.228). According to Hopkins (2014), when the Malaysia Prime minister Najib Razak faced a variety of questions on his social media account, he chose to answer questions which were less sophisticated or problematic (p.18).

Thus, it could be said that interacting on SNSs is a choice, where users can choose the amount of interaction that they want to participate. The interaction feature provided on SNSs is another way for SNS users to participate in politics through the space given to them to interpret political content without mainstream media interference. For various reasons, one could expect a limited level of interaction between politicians or government officials and their followers. However, as SNSs emerged as another channel of political communication and election campaigning in many democratic countries, it might be the only way for citizens to express opinions on politicians with the expectation of receiving a specific response. Direct responses from politicians to citizens on SNSs seem to be limited and politicians can also anticipate that followers will criticise politicians for not interacting with them on SNSs.

2.3.2. Interaction and spreadable content: traditional two-step flow of communication and vote-canvassing systems

Interacting on a Facebook post brings the possibility for the content to be spread to other SNSs users. In the context of election campaigns, the spreading of content can be associated with the theory of two-step flow and the notion of traditional vote-canvassing systems in Thai political culture. This subsection explains how interaction on a Facebook post has the potential to enable more Facebook users to be exposed to a campaign message posted on a candidate's Facebook page and how this feature of Facebook is a development from the traditional vote-canvassing system.

According to the definition provided by Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013), the terms 'spread', 'spreadable', or 'spreadability', are used to describe 'the increasingly pervasive forms of media circulation' (p.3). To be specific, 'spreadability' refers to the 'potential -- both technical and cultural --for audiences to share content for their own purposes, sometimes with the permission of rights holders, some--times against their wishes' (ibid., p.3), which means that once people have the content, they can spread it. There are different possible reasons why social media users spread media content, which Jenkins et al. outline. Social media users might take into consideration of the merit of engaging with the content and the merit of sharing the content with others, the interest that other people would have in the content and if spreading the media content would reflect upon the person spreading it and the platform that is appropriate to spread the content (ibid., p.13).

On SNSs like Facebook, content can be spread by users intentionally and unintentionally. For example, after a Facebook friend posted a picture, the 'share' tab underneath the photograph allows users to 'share' publicly and privately (Miller, 2011, p.75). The sharing of content and the notion of '*connectedness*' of Facebook that Van Dijck (2013) mentions, enables shared content to appear as a news feed on a third person's Facebook page, allowing the third person to view and also to further 'share' the content. The person who initially posted the content would *not* be notified about the spreading of content on Facebook regardless of whether the initial person grants the permission for the content to be further spread on Facebook or not. As a result, sharing of content on Facebook spreads the content to other users, who get to view the content, interact with the content and have the choice to share further the content on Facebook. This is an example to show the content was purposefully shared by the initial person to his Facebook friends, but it is also possible for the content to be further spread on Facebook without the first person knowing, indicating both intentional and unintentional spreading of content.

Another example of spreading content on Facebook is associated with users clicking the 'Like' tab or leaving a comment on the post. Depending on the Facebook algorithm, there is a possibility that information about either of these actions will appear on the user's friend's timeline showing that the user had interacted and how the user interacted. Andrejevic (2006) as cited in Humphreys (2011, p.577) states that the user can act as 'literal surveillance' to monitor the friend's interaction on his/her Facebook timeline. This can occur if Facebook does not notify the user's news feed of the friend's interaction.

The interaction Facebook feature of clicking the 'Like' tab or commenting can explicitly spread the content to other Facebook users, and the initial user might or might not know about this. In other words, the spreading of content and the users interacting with the content is one of the social media features that Kent (2010) outlines, mentioning that users can construct and develop a network of anonymous 'friends' by sharing information on their network (p.647). This means that communicating on SNSs has the potential for one message to reach and be spread to people who are connected directly or indirectly to the individual who makes the initial post.

The spreadability of content from one Facebook user to another is linked to the concept of two-step flow, based on the relationship and personal influence from opinion leaders and the people who are connected to the opinion leaders. Katz and Lazarsfel (1955) state the underlying idea of two-step flow is that 'ideas often seem to flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population' (p.32). Based on the way people are related, there are possibilities of distributing influential information from opinion leaders to less active population groups. One-step flow of information is described by Norris and Curtice (2008) as the idea of political messages on mainstream media are broadcast directly to a mass audience.

In the state election in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany in 2010, Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) discuss that the idea of 'two-step flow of campaign message' occur in a way that what candidate expect journalists to access the information that candidates published on Web sites and use it to communicate with voters who receive campaign information from traditional news media. Marcinkowski and Metag state that candidates of the election were not motivated to use social media to win votes, but such idea of 'two-step flow of campaign message' has more potential for them to win votes and traditional news media are perceived to be more influential (pp.161-162). Moreover, Copeland and Römmele (2014) discuss that people who receive campaign posts on social media acted as opinion leaders during the 2009 German Federal Election campaign as they were the intermediaries between the political party and the larger group of voters, for them to discuss political ideas with.

Thai political figures' use SNSs account as their own channel of communication can be source of information for both followers and mainstream media. Facebook users or followers of Thai political figures' SNSs accounts, who share or interact with the political content on a Facebook page, can be referred to as 'opinion leaders' in a two-step flow network, while friends of such followers who do not follow candidates' SNSs accounts are considered as 'less active'. As a result, for followers who interact with candidates' campaign content on SNSs, there is the possibility for the content to appear on the followers' friends SNSs accounts as the content has been spread in 'two-step', allowing the followers' friends at the third level of the network to be exposed to the content. Consequently, when a Facebook user spreads content on her/his Facebook network, her/his friends who might or might not be following any politically related Facebook page, would be exposed to the content without actually seeking the political information. The spreading of content on Facebook therefore reflects upon the concept of two-step flow of content from one Facebook user to another.

A few researchers have commented that the spreading of political content online and offline have created possibilities of gaining attention from less active voters as they get exposed to political content from people who they are related to. In the research that Norris and Curtice (2008) undertook about the flow of political messages on the internet during the 2005 British general election, they found that the more sources of political information that someone used to search about the election, the more likely that person would talk about the election to someone who might not use the internet to the acquire information themselves. In another study on the effect of social media on political participation and candidate's image evaluation in the 2012 Iowa caucuses, Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) noted that when citizens compose and post political messages on the internet, this can lead to the possibilities to affect political outcomes as social media are able to influence citizens' perception of the candidates. This implies that even though nothing has been found in relation to the direct influence of spreading political content on voting decisions, the internet is an additional source of political information for opinion leaders, who are very likely to disseminate political information to friends and family members around them. Such friends and family members might rely on these opinion leaders to give them information about the election.

From the perspective of Thai political culture, the traditional vote-canvassing system, the commitment of incumbents and the *patron-client network* have been fundamental in rural areas elections. The spreading of content on Facebook in part mirrors the traditional 'vote-canvassing system' (ระบบ หัวคะแนน) in terms of the importance of networks. Both the network on Facebook and traditional 'vote-canvassing system' involve the idea of network expansion, influential communication and

development of relationships between people connected on the network. Ockey (2004) defines the literal meaning of 'vote-canvassing system' as 'vote-chief system' (p.27). Callahan and McCargo (1996) state the literal meaning of vote-canvassers or *hua khanaen* as 'head vote' and they act practically as canvassers, vote gatherers and vote banks. The electoral ties of vote-canvassers lie under the notion of the vote-canvasser distributing money or gifts to ensure that voters vote for the particular candidate that the vote-canvasser is working for, and the vote-canvasser can somehow determine the number of votes that the candidate will get in the election (ibid.). Callahan and McCargo give an example of vote-buying that prevents voters from betraying vote-canvassers: the vote-canvasser buys the vote and 'hires' the voter's identification card, which agents of the vote-canvasser can use to pretend that they are voters (p.387).

Sombat (1993) characterises vote-canvassers as people who are respectable, responsible and related to the candidate in one way or other and are well-known in the community (p.119). Anek (1996) identifies vote-canvassers in rural areas as village heads, landlords, shopkeepers, and school teachers, who are personal supporters of the candidate. These people act as village representative of political figures, and political figures have vote-canvassers to assist them in elections and keep in touch with voters (p.206). Selecting the 'wrong' canvassers can cause the candidate to lose elections (Surin and McCargo, 1997, p.138).

Campaigning in a traditional vote-canvassing system consists of a multiple-layer of relationships in offline communication, introducing a candidate to more voters and exposing more voters to the candidate's campaign. Based on a study of the campaign of a candidate (Kom) in suburban Bangkok in 2005, Anyarat (2010) found that there were three layers of vote-canvassers shown in Figure 2.1.: Core vote-canvassers, intermediate vote-canvasser, and cell vote-canvassers. The intermediate vote-canvassers are progressively more familiar with the local electorate than core vote-canvassers. Cell vote-canvassers are members of a village or community who are responsible for distributing cash to voters face-to-face and ensuring that voters turn up for the election. Regardless of the roles of the different types of vote-canvasser, the networked relationships between the candidate, vote-canvassers and voters are significant in engaging and spreading information about the candidate from one vote-canvasser to another.
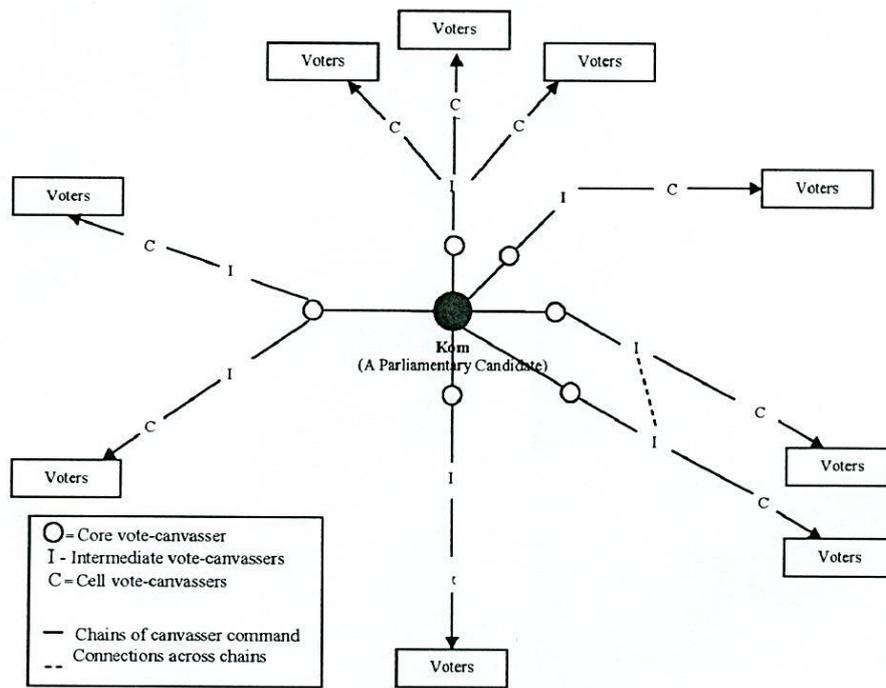
Figure 2.1: Kom's vote-canvassing network in the 2005 general election, compiled by Anyarat (2010).

Also, the traditional vote-canvassing system in Thai political culture occurs through a *patron-client* network and relationships, whereby politicians (patrons) who win elections can meet the financial needs of the rural people (clients) (Anek, 1996, p.202). In judging the value and the suitability of Thai politicians, the idea *phonngan* (achievements) is as important too. Callahan and McCargo (1996) claim that incumbents or former MPs in Thailand's Northeast tend to campaign based on their work performance during their time as MPs and their contribution to local communities. In a more recent analysis of politicians' performance, Walker (2008) also found that local politicians' sacrifice and commitment to projects in the local community and involvement in village events still matter locally (pp.91-92).

Anek's (1996) analysis of the division between political culture among rural and urban is outdated as more recent papers have provided conflicting analysis (Anyarat, 2010; Stithorn, 2012). Anyarat (2010) concludes that traditional vote-canvassing systems occurred together with a political marketing approach in the 2005 general election campaign. What can be taken away from the traditional Thai political culture of campaigning and relationships between politicians and voters is that firstly, political public relations on SNSs should take into consideration of how candidates use other tactics for campaigning. Secondly, a candidate's relationship with voters matters in voters deciding who to vote for. Thus, adding to the proposal of Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) and Sweetser (2011) that the relationship between politicians and their key publics is a core value in political public relations and

can have an impact on the support that they gain from the public, the literature on Thai political culture also suggests that the electoral tie between political figures or political parties and voters is also fundamental for voters in voting. How such electoral tie or relationship is established or managed done on SNSs will be further examined in this thesis. However, it is plausible that the establishment of a relationship between candidates and voters on SNSs might be more demanding due to the diverse background of followers connected to candidates' SNS pages.

In short, developing from two-step flows and traditional vote-canvassing systems in election campaigns, it could be said that SNS features of interaction, interchangeability, and spreadability of content are part of information management in political public relations on SNSs. These features have potential benefits for expanding candidates' SNS networks and getting direct access to followers' feedback, enabling candidates to know followers' thoughts based on the political issues that they have posted. It is likely that public relations personnel would take into consideration the features of interactivity, interchangeability, and spreadability to post campaign messages and visual images on candidates' SNS accounts in a way to increase the spreadability of content on SNSs. Also, crowdsourcing can be related to the spreadability of content on SNSs, with possibilities for public relations personnel to initiate and encourage crowdsourcing of content in relation to candidates' campaigns, as a way for followers to show their support and engage with a particular candidate's campaign. However, as the relationship among Facebook users and friends varies, users who receive content spread on Facebook might or might not be voters in a particular election.

2.3.3. Regulation and interaction as a challenge to image management

Internet regulation is another important issue when studying online communication in Thailand. As discussed by Pirongrong (2001), the evolution of the internet in Thailand has led to children using the internet inappropriately or accessing inappropriate content. Different actors in Thailand, parents, schools, Internet Service Providers and the police, have taken their own actions with different levels of involvement in regulating the internet in Thailand. A similarly diffused responsibility exists for regulating political public relations on SNSs during election campaign in Thailand. To gain a better understanding of how interaction on SNSs has affected the image of politicians, this subsection reviews the way followers have used SNSs to challenge politicians' images and the possible ways in which politicians deal with such challenges. This will identify the issues of interaction and storage that this research should take into consideration when analysing political public relations on SNSs in the Thai context.

In the rise of online political communication, the officials of Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) are responsible for regulating and censoring content on the internet in Thailand (Isriya, 2012, p.25). However, there have been changes in the framework of regulating and censoring content on the internet in Thailand. Before the September 2006, the Thai government censored websites without a legal framework. From September 2006 to July 2007, the Thai government censored websites using the Order Number 5 of *Council of National Security (CNS)*. After July 2007 until now, the Thai government censored websites using the *Computer Crime Act* 2007 (cited from Chalisa, 2012; Isriya, 2012). *Computer Crime Act* 2007 Section 14 and Section 15 state:

> **Section 14.** If any person commits any offence of the following acts shall be subject to imprisonment for not more than five years or a fine of not more than one hundred thousand baht or both:
> (1) that involves import to a computer system of forged computer data, either in whole or in part, or false computer data, in a manner that is likely to cause damage to that third party or the public;
> (2) that involves import to a computer system of false computer data in a manner that is likely to damage the country's security or cause a public panic;
> (3) that involves import to a computer system of any computer data related with an offence against the Kingdom's security under the Criminal Code;
> (4) that involves import to a computer system of any computer data of a pornographic nature that is publicly accessible;
> (5) that involves the dissemination or forwarding of computer data already known to be computer data under (1) (2) (3) or (4);
>
> **Section 15.** Any service provider intentionally supporting or consenting to an offence under Section 14 within a computer system under their control shall be subject to the same penalty as that imposed upon a person committing an offence under Section 14.

Source: ("Computer Crime Act B.E 2550 (2007)")

As part of Section 14 of *Computer Crime Act* 2007, it is a crime to import or disseminate false computer data which is likely to cause damage to third party or the public, national security or create a public panic. According to Section 15 *Computer Crime Act* 2007, service provider shall be subject to the same penalty if they 'intentionally supporting or consenting to an offence under Section 14 within a computer system under their control.' Thai authorities have been playing an active role in monitoring online content. According to the website 'Freedom House', there were nearly 21,000 URLs blocked by Thai courts in 2012 and this figure includes thousands of URLs related to anti-royal content ("Thailand: Freedom of the press 2013," n.d.). Isriya (2012) identifies that websites in Thailand that have been blocked in the past tend to be the ones which are associated with pornography,

criticism of the Thai Royal Institution, 'political enemies by citing the lèse-majesté law[8] or national security', gambling websites, religion websites that contain inappropriate Buddha's images, terrorists and separatists associated with the violence in the Southern of Thailand, online gaming leads to high addiction from parent networks, proxy and anonymity software, and unknown or accidental websites (pp.26-27).

There is a wide spectrum of political opinions among Thai internet users. As political communication on the internet started to emerge in Thailand, Pitch (2002) claims that systems of moderation emerged, including web masters blocking the internet protocol address of certain users (p.157). After the 1992 political instability in Thailand, the political discussion via internet message board constitutes of issues that are 'the politics of personality', 'the politics of development' and 'the politics of memory' where the discussion would consist of disagreement, lack of mutual understanding and lack of solution to various issues (ibid., pp.158-162). As for social media, Kent (2010) identifies that moderation as one of the characteristics of social media, where Facebook and LinkedIn require users to grant permission to others to join their networks, controlling access to the content that is posted on users' SNSs accounts (p.645). Moderation enables users to select the people to become part of their network to communicate with each other. The storage capability and temporal structure of SNSs allow the public to know the 'identity' of people who interact, how they interact and the time they interact, which the identity of SNSs users used as their username might be pseudonyms. Thus, as for political communication on SNSs, it is plausible that political figures and their public relations personnel would regulate content at individual level based on content which is inappropriate in Thailand and based what they perceive in be inappropriate on their SNSs network.

Thais who anonymously use SNSs to challenge Thai politicians' images are known as 'nakleng keyboard', which can be translated as 'keyboard warrior.' The notion of 'nakleng keyboard' in Thailand was initiated from a pop song entitled 'Nakleng Keyboard' (นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด) by Stamp Apiwat Ueathawonsuk, about the behaviour of young lovers relying heavily on keyboards to communicate anonymously with someone they admire (lyrics and translation attached in Appendix 4). 'Nakleng' is used ironically in this song because it refers to someone who hides their identity when communicating online. The notion of nakleng keyboard in this song indicates that the nakleng does not have the courage to communicate verbally or face-to-face; but using keyboards, 'nakleng' are able to

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[8] Stated in Section 112 of Thai Criminal Code 'Whoever, defames, insults or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.' ("Criminal Code")

communicate more confidently. In other words, communication via a keyboard is totally different from face-to-face communication.[9] This usage obviously differs from conventional usage when the term *nakleng* is used to describe certain politicians, as analysed in Section 2.2.2, or where the term *nakleng* literally means gangsters (or tough guys), who are brave in action, decision-making and speaking. While the term '*nakleng* keyboard' can be viewed pejoratively, as a kind of cowardice, it should be appreciated that by not revealing their identity online, SNSs users can sometimes express their opinion more honestly. As it is challenging to be *nakleng* face-to-face, especially in the face of important politicians, the implications of anonymising interaction can increase the ability and self-assurance of SNS users to communicate critically.

Based on the requirement of operational skills and information skills to handle with digital technology that Van Dijk (2006) outlines, the barrier for citizens to enter political communication on the internet is low, especially for citizens whose occupation and age motivate them to use the internet. As a result, there have been cases where citizens took the advantage of the low barrier to enter political communication on the internet to challenge or support political figures. On Obama's 'MyBO' campaign website, Harfoush (2009) raises the concern that people would create accounts using fake email addresses to post negative comments on the website. The intention of the 'MyBO' campaign website was to make it as quick and easy as possible for people get connected to the campaign so that there was no requirement for people to confirm their email address. Another study by Gueorguieva (2007) found that YouTube and MySpace challenged election campaign strategies on the ability to deliver a clear and consistent message that reflected candidates' images due to the reduced control that candidates have over their image and message. Candidates were not able to control the content that supporters and opponents posted. This shows that the ability to access SNSs has created obstacles for candidates in maintaining their image.

In the Malaysian context, online technology has been used by citizens to challenge the image of the government, developing the democratic value of online political communication. George (2005) states that there are daily updates on online media about political issues in Malaysia that challenge the ideological hold of local mainstream media. As a result of the strict control of media ownership in Malaysia, Lim (2013) claims that many youths choose to express their political views and criticism through video blogging. Moreover, Chinnasamy and Griffiths (2013) argue that as the internet democratises political communication, it is likely to encourage 'new forms of democratic participation'

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[9] However, the term '*nakleng* keyboard' can also be used to describe those who write aggressive comments, without hiding their identity.

(p.59). As a result of the low barrier to enter communication on SNSs, political communication becomes decentralised.

Similar to other in the context of the United States and Thailand, citizens participating in online communication might or might not reveal their real identity when communicating on the internet. In the context of Malaysia, Rosyidah (2015) claims that the Malaysian government employs cyber troopers to respond to online political attacks on them in order to narrow the political spectrum and to manage images from a particular political side (p.286). Thus, online political communication strengthened democratic values and at the same time, challenged the government's image, which the Malaysian government seems find ways to balance off the wide political views online. As followers interact to give feedback, evaluate and criticise political figures on SNSs, making it is difficult for them to control how followers comment about them. Negative comments also imply that the spreadability of content on SNSs might not enhance the image of political figures' on SNSs.

Turning to the Thai context, Thai politicians have a few strategies when dealing with interactive political communication in parliamentary debates, which gives clues on the way they would deal questions or debates in election campaign on SNSs. According to Sombat (2006), 'silence is golden' when Thai politicians face critical questions in parliament, as they choose to ignore questions that other politicians ask them. Sombat also found that there are Thai politicians who may also deny or admit charges about them and attack the questioners in return. Nevertheless, the most frequent way for Thai politicians to respond is the non-reply or no-answer responses (ibid., p.[47]). Sombat's research shows the methods that Thai politicians could manage their image and defuse difficult situations by delaying responses to criticism.

So far, there has been little discussion about how Thai people's access to interaction features on SNSs can be a drawback for a candidate's image during an election campaign and political communication on SNSs. How citizens participate in political communication on the candidates' SNSs is not under their control. The moderation feature of Facebook that Kent (2010) identifies would allow political public relations on SNSs to occur in a way that Thai political figures and their public relations personnel would regulate and manage comments. Thus, as interaction on SNSs is stored and is visible to the public online, it is possible that Thai political figures and their public relations personnel would manage critical comments and deal with followers who use fake identities to set up accounts on SNSs and interact critically or 'inappropriately' on the political figures' SNS accounts. The regulation might be done on individual basis. At the same time, it is also possible for Thai politicians to use the 'silence is golden' strategy (Sombat, 2006) to deal with interaction on SNSs in order to manage their image.

As interaction on SNSs is a choice (Dang-Xuan et al., 2013; Klinger, 2013), it is unlikely that there would be ongoing two-way communication between Thai political figures and individual follower.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to develop a framework for understanding the operation of political public relations on Thai political figures' SNS accounts. Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter and background knowledge of this research in Chapter 1, the following framework is formulated.

Political public relations in the third age of political communication on the internet constitute a few interrelated management elements such as information, image, relationship and challenges. Applying political public relations to SNS election campaigns, as a specific period of time where candidates communicate with voters to convince voters, the basis of political public relations is associated with the management of the relationships between candidates and their followers, and between personnel and candidate. The management of the relationship between personnel and candidate is essential in the internal communication and operation of the candidates' SNSs for political purposes, where candidates are likely to rely on the professional skills of public relations personnel to operate their SNS pages, make strategic plans and maximise positive coverage of the candidates' campaigns based on written texts and visual images framed and posted throughout the election campaign. Prior to the election campaign or at the beginning of the election campaign, public relations personnel would have sufficient background knowledge about the candidate to be able to personalise the SNS accounts that they are responsible for.

Communicating on Facebook is beyond one-way communication of political communication or political advertising on billboards or brochures. The relationship between the candidate and her/his followers can be developed based on what the candidate communicates on Facebook on a regular basis, the way in which the candidate and her/his public relations personnel disseminate campaign information and the candidate's image constructed in order to engage with followers during the election campaign. The interaction feature of Facebook can establish a 'digital vote-canvassing system' (a concept which will be developed throughout this thesis) as the functionality of Facebook can increase the number of Facebook users exposed to the candidate's Facebook messages. Based on the algorithms of Facebook, the various ways in which followers interact on Facebook can spread the content from the candidates' Facebook networks to their followers' networks. Candidates intend to gain votes through the development of such relationships.

However, considering the wide political spectrum of Facebook users, candidates could also encounter difficulties in enhancing their image on SNSs, as unidentified followers interact to challenge this image. The decentralisation of communication on SNSs as an emerging platform of communication in Thailand can also bring complications in terminating interaction, which can be problematic during the election campaign as there are rules that candidates have to obey. As a result, it is likely that the operation of SNSs for political purposes is also associated with the management of interaction in transmitting content related to election campaign on candidate's Facebook network. The management of such challenges would be based on knowledge and skills that public relations personnel have and their relationship with the candidate. The management of the spreadability of the content on SNSs is done with the intention to minimise drawbacks to the candidate's image and campaign. The analytical framework formulated in this chapter leads to Chapter 3 to define the research questions and research methods chosen for data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 3 : Data Collection and Research Methods

Introduction

The study of political public relations on SNSs aims to explore the management process and issues involved in operating communication on SNSs for political purposes. Annette Markham (2011) proposes 'The internet is a social phenomenon, a tool, and also a field for qualitative research' (p.111), which can be studied in the following ways: 1. using the internet to collect, store and analyse data; 2. mediation of the internet and people's experience of using the internet; and 3. capabilities and features of the internet (p.112). This research employs these three ways to approach the study of political public relations on SNSs by collecting and studying candidates' Facebook posts and exploring the way in which followers of Thai political figures are mediated by campaign messages and how the affordance features and functions of SNSs establish and develop a network, enabling SNSs users to interact continuously and spread messages across networks during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The following are the research questions.

1. *What features of visual image management were found on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?*

The first research question seeks to examine the type of core visual images of candidates portrayed on candidates' Facebook pages during the election campaign. This question also looks at the management and selection of their visual images and takes into consideration images that candidates used in other media.

2. *What features of multimodal image and information management were found on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?*

The second research question examines the core aspects of the way in which candidates' publish and communicate campaign information, particularly their policy-related content. This research question seeks to determine how candidates draw followers' attention to their campaign on Facebook, how candidates facilitate followers in interpreting about their campaign and how candidates provide a broader aspect of their campaign.

3. *What was the relationship among the individuals who were part of the candidates' networks on social networking sites during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign? i.e. public relations personnel and followers.*

The objective of the third research question is to determine the way in which candidates attempted to relate to followers and the relationship between people who were connected with candidates' SNS pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. This research question examines the roles of public relations personnel in order to visualise the candidates' networks based on the operation of the election campaign on SNSs and the plausibility for the SNS networks to interchange through the relationship among SNS users and their interaction on SNSs.

4. *How did the features of social networking sites challenge political public relations during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and political communication in Thailand?*

The final research question aims to identify and discuss the challenges that Thai political figures encounter when using SNSs for election campaigns and political communication in Thailand, taking into consideration features of SNSs in storing and decentralising communication. This question seeks also to identify the regulation of political SNS accounts.

The study of communication on the internet in this study is complex and involves a combination of a number of research methods to approach the exploratory challenge in this research field. Patton (2002) mentions that there is no single source of information that are reliable as a single source of information provide limited perspective while Gillham (2005) explains that having more than one research methodology allows research to give confirmation 'more precisely and accurately' (p.164). Furthermore, there is no core methodological approach or theoretical guidelines in studying the internet (Markham, 2011). Thus, this research uses a qualitative research method to approach the challenge of such research where no definite design or technique is available to collect and analyse data.

Silverman (2011) says that a qualitative research method involves a range of different and conflicting activities, but can be characterised as research that attempts to study phenomena arising through observation of material with the aim of giving an explanation in the wider context in which the phenomenon arises (p.17). There is no one single way to analyse qualitative data and basic numerical analysis can be used to give an overview of the data in qualitative research (ibid., p.5). The study of political public relations on SNSs in this research is a new area of qualitative research, which still

lacks a specific research method or procedures to explore political public relations on SNSs. Therefore, this research employs two sets of research methods, a multimodal analysis and elite interviews, to answer the research questions.

This chapter reviews research methods undertaken in this research to respond to the research question. As data collection and data analysis for this research constituted various challenges, this chapter also acknowledges the difficulties encountered. This chapter is structured as follows. Section 3.1 reviews the details of multimodal analysis, which constitutes of basic content analysis, framing analysis and semiotic analysis to determine the ways of disseminating campaign information that M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used to distinguish their campaigns on their Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Without prior knowledge and expectation of the ambiguity of dealing with data, a pilot study was done for content analysis as part of the multimodal analysis. Section 3.2 justifies why elite interviews was another primary method in this research used to explore the experience and decision-making of Thai politicians and their public relations personnel in using SNSs for political purposes. This research employed 14 interviews in total with Thai politicians and candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and their SNS public relations personnel. The interviews were conducted between January and November 2013, which included the campaign period of 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. The small number of interviews carried out was because of the difficulty in obtaining interviewees' consent. Three observation studies were done to explore further the operation of SNSs and experience the atmosphere of the field campaign during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election.

3.1. Multimodal analysis

A multimodal analysis was used to study the Facebook pages of candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) define 'multimodal texts' as 'any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code' (p.177). Jewitt (2009) says that the approach of multimodality to understanding communication and representation beyond the language used in communication takes into consideration other communicational forms that people use, such as image, gesture, and posture (p.14). The multimodal analysis adopted in this research consists of basic content analysis, framing analysis and semiotic analysis taking into account traditional features of visual and linguistic communication as well as the multimodal elements of Facebook as an internet artefact and social networking site. The following is the framework and ethical issues that this research has taken into consideration in multimodal analysis.

- **Content analysis** aims to quantify and determine patterns and features of policy-related posts on candidates' Facebook posts during the election campaign.

- **Basic textual framing analysis** identifies any aspects of candidate's slogan that candidates intend to make more salient or which are associated with Thai political culture.

- **Basic semiotic analysis** of the candidates' Facebook profile pictures and cover pages, encompassing both connotation and denotation of the visual images determining how signs are represented on candidates' core photographs posted on their Facebook page.

- **Intersubjectivity profile analysis** looks at candidates' core background information such as family, education, career and hobbies. Intersubjectivity refers to both subjective and objective interpretation of experience, behaviour, actions and meanings, which occur between two or more separate subjects (Schwandt, 2015, p.169). The analysis of candidates' profiles will review basic information that candidates revealed about themselves, and interpret how such information is associated with the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election.

- **Comments analysis** seeks to examine the types of comments which are shown on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's profile picture and cover page on Facebook. Interviewees in this research have characterised 'nakleng keyboard' or 'keyboard warrior', who have shown intention to destroy Thai political figure's image.

- **Research ethics:** The ethical issues related to internet research are not well defined and are debatable (Markham, 2011, pp.122-123). This research is aware of the ethical and confidentiality issues of social science research and internet research. The research ethics of this research has been approved by the University of Nottingham Research Ethics Committee. The multimodal analysis involves the collection of data from M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages that have been set for public access. As for the small number of comments posted by candidates' followers that this research also examines in Chapter 7, followers have joined the interaction with the candidate's campaign, knowing that their identity would be shown as part of the interaction. However, the followers' comments in this research have been kept to minimal and have also been translated from Thai to English.

The following subsections outline how this research used this method and explains its relevance.

3.1.1. Content analysis

With a large amount of status posted on political figure's SNSs page, this research developed an approach from Klinger's (2013) study of Swiss parties' Facebook and Twitter updates during the 2011 national election, by using content analysis as part of the qualitative approach to examine the overall content posted on candidates' Facebook pages. Content analysis allows a large number of

communication materials to be analysed in a precise and systematic way, enabling researchers to make an objective judgement (quantitative content analysis) and subjective judgement (qualitative content analysis) on the communication text (Burnham, Gilland, Grant, and Layton-Henry, 2004). The strength of content analysis is that it provides a numerical overview of the results (Grbich, 2013). In research on internet content in particular, content analysis enabled researchers studying the Polish parliamentary election of 2011 to examine how features of internet and the content that candidates and political parties posted on the internet were used to engage with voters during election campaign (Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, Surowiec, and Baranowski, 2014, p.192).

This research used Nvivo 10 software to capture and download M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages, which include the texts of the posts, photographs and videos that candidates posted, followers' comment and user's information about followers. Nvivo 10 was chosen as the software is not only able to navigate and organise both qualitative and quantitative data, but was able to capture SNSs content for research purposes.

Actual study: Sample size for actual data collected

In terms of the sample size in the analysis of candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, out of the twenty-five candidates, this research focused on the Facebook pages of the two 'frontrunner' candidates, ranked by the number of votes they gained in the election; these were Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen, as shown in Table 3.1:

Summary of Data Collected

Name/Sample	Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra	Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen
Period of data collected:	14 January – 4 March 2013	
No. of Facebook photographs/images studied:	460	348
No. of Facebook posts analysed:	469	404

Table 3.1: Summary of data sample size.

As M.R. Sukhumbhand used Facebook for a few years before the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election while Pongsapat only started using Facebook about one week before the official election campaign started, this research studies the Facebook text and visual images that M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat posted from 14 January to 4 March 2013, which was from one week before the official election campaign started and to day after the election. Data was analysed by looking at the different phases of the election campaign as defined below:

Phase 1: 14 – 25 January 2013

Phase 2: 26 January – 6 February 2013

Phase 3: 7 – 18 February 2013

Phase 4: 19 February – 2 March 2013

3 March 2013: 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election

Pilot study for content analysis

According to Treadwell (2011), a pilot study is 'a small study conducted prior to a full-scale study to ensure that the full-scale study will work successfully' (p.213). Wimmer and Dominick (2006) propose that the purpose of a pilot study is to improve the research design and data collection process as pilot study can allow researchers to take note unexpected issues. Therefore, a pilot study of Facebook content analysis was conducted to test the coding scheme and to gain a basic understanding of any patterns in data which candidates posted during the election campaign as well as to alter any unforeseen difficulties in dealing with Facebook posts on Nvivo 10.

The pilot study of this research was done on Pongsapat's Facebook posts. A total of 150 posts on Pongsapat's Facebook were used as the sample for the pilot study. The results of the pilot study on Pongsapat's Facebook posts suggest the following:

1. **Inductive coding**: The initial coding scheme (Appendix 5) for this research was generated inductively according to the themes emerges as the researcher explored into Pongsapat's Facebook posts. What was found using this coding scheme was that there was a lack of description of each code and groups of codes, which led to difficulty in deciding the appropriate code for a particular post. Also, there were new 'codes' and ideas generated

throughout the sample used in the pilot study, which makes the researcher uncertain in deciding the post should be coded into which theme.

2. **Policy-related and non-policy-related posts**: In the pilot study, Pongsapat's Facebook posts were categorised into policy-related and non-policy-related posts. The pilot study found that there were two types of policy-related posts. The first type contains a clear statement and identification of what the candidate was proposing as a policy. This was done in a numbered sequence, which led readers to expect further posts related to what was posted earlier. In other words, this type of posts gives a sense of 'sequence' to gain complete information of the whole set of policies.

The second kind of policy-related post was a repetition of the first kind, but structured in a less formal way. In this kind, the candidate explains further or analyses officially proposed policies or reminded followers about a policy to get the campaign on Facebook going.

3. **Double coding**: Throughout the pilot study, it was found that some posts contain more than one code, which means that one post made by the candidate could be referring to multiple issues. This made the number of codings greater than the number of sources (posts) studied.

4. **Keyword search versus manual coding**: Nvivo 10 allows researchers to do 'keyword searches.' Keywords such as 'ขอบคุณ (thank you)', 'นโยบาย (policy)' and 'พรรค (party)' were used to auto code Pongsapat's Facebook posts. Nvivo 10 coded all posts containing the keyword, which assisted the initial stage of data coding. However, some posts which were auto coded were not relevant to what this research was looking for, which meant that the context of the posts needed further examination in order to make a judgment if a particular post should be coded that way. The entire dataset was also coded manually. It was found that even though manual coding was time-consuming, the researcher was able to become familiar with the entire dataset and gain a deeper understanding of the keywords used in a particular post and the context that the candidate was referring to. Moreover, manual coding allows notes to be taken on any unforeseen issues for further content analysis.

5. **Generating results and reports from Nvivo 10:** The initial stage of the pilot study started with printing three pages of the dataset and coding them manually on A3 paper. Due to the large number of notes taken and codes generated, the dataset was too large to manage on

paper. Nvivo 10 was then used to organise the different posts into different codes. However, a few types of reports could not be produced using Nvivo. For example, after each post was categorised into policy-related and non-policy-related, Nvivo was not able to produce a report on the number of policy-related and non-policy-related posts per day. This analysis could only be done manually.

Based on what was found during the pilot study, the coding procedure was further developed to increase the flexibility of content analysis with the use of both keyword search and manual coding to cross-check results.

Actual study: The coding scheme and coding procedure

Based on the results of the pilot study, the coding scheme and coding procedures were redefined for the actual study, with detailed descriptions and grouping of codes. The actual study started off by numbering every Facebook post studied in this research on a Microsoft Excel spread sheet. The date of the post on Facebook was recorded for future reference. The electronic copy was saved while a hard copy was printed one-sided on A3 paper.

To find the distribution of policy and non-policy-related posts that M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat posted on their Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, two steps were taken. Firstly, a keyword search on the sample was done to find those posts containing the word 'นโยบาย (policy)'. All posts containing this keyword were coded as policy-related. Then, the researcher read through the hard copy of each candidate's posts and manually coded as policy-related the posts related to the candidate's policy which did not contain the word 'policy'. Lastly, the number of policy-related posts was deducted from the total sample number to get the number of non-policy-related posts for each candidate (results presented in subsection 5.2.1).

To review the daily number of policy-related posts that candidates made on their Facebook pages, a Gantt chart was produced via the following steps. Firstly, posts were condensed so that only policy-related posts remained for examination in this part, so that non-policy-related posts with the keyword would not be detected. Secondly, to set a baseline of the standard policies that candidates were proposing in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, policy keywords of used in the candidates' brochures were extracted and used as the keywords to search for candidates' policy-related posts (Appendix 6). Finally, each keyword related to a particular policy was searched. A spread sheet was used to record the number of times a particular keyword appeared in each post. This

enables the identification of the Facebook posts (by the number used to characterise the post) which contain keywords on a particular policy (results presented in subsections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3)

The different districts in Bangkok have different features. A few districts have been developed for tourism and commercial purposes, and some have been retained as government or residential areas. This research also examined the extent to which candidates associated their policies to specific districts in Bangkok to judge which district each campaign intended to target. To do this, a keyword search of district names on policy-related posts of both candidates noted the percentage of policy-related posts containing the name of a particular district in Bangkok (results presented in subsection 5.3.3).

The results of the content analysis show the number of posts that contain a particular code, not the number of times a particular code was detected. The percentage of posts containing a particular code was calculated. This research used a deductive approach in combination with an inductive approach to allow flexibility in generating new codes and to ensure that content analysis followed the research framework. Both soft and hard copies of the dataset were used in the content analysis and multimodality analysis.

3.1.2. Semiotics analysis

The study of the visual images in this research seeks to find frames which candidates use in their profile pictures and cover pages of their Facebook pages to construct their image and distinguish themselves, also taking into consideration other visual images that they have posted on their Facebook pages during the election campaign. This research takes the basic approach of semiotic analysis to study visual images. Silverman (2011) defines 'semiotics' as the science of 'signs', which expresses how signs are related to one another to construct particular meanings (p.329). Another definition of semiotics provided by Chandler (2002) is 'the study of signs' or the way in which reality is represented through signs e.g. words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects (pp.1-2). To understand the meaning of signs, codes are used to provide a framework. 'Codes' link the producer and interpreters of signs together, which can help to simplify phenomena and make the transmission of the message easier (ibid., p.157). For example, social codes vary from culture to culture, and social codes can be used to identify social identities, which is reflected in our images (ibid., p.153).

Visual images studied in this research were coded according to the basic notions of denotation and connotation. Machin (2007) defines 'denotation' as the literal or basic meaning of an image, which involves the selection of what have been included in the image (p.24), while 'connotation' is defined

as the representation of ideas and values that are transmitted through the image (p.25). The semiotician Roland Barthes (1977) refers to these ideas as the 'informational level' and 'symbolic level' respectively. These terms are also related to what Lacey (2009) refers to 'technical coding' and 'symbolic coding'. Technical coding includes formal aspects of decoding conventional meanings based on the angle of the image taken, distance, composition, depth of field, lens type, mobile frame, and lighting, while symbolic coding interprets the visual image according to non-verbal communication and looks at the nature of society as a whole (ibid., pp.20-32). In additional, Lacey also proposes that coding of visual images can take into consideration written text related to the visual images (p.32). Thus, this research codes visual images technically and symbolically and also codes the written text to gain both the literal meaning and the political values of the visual image transmitted through the photograph studied.

In terms of a coding scheme, the visual images studied in this research were coded according to the scheme of Grabe and Bucy (2013): 1. the Ideal Candidate; and 2. the Populist (as shown in Appendix 3). This research does not use the Sure Loser image as candidates are unlikely to post a negative image on their SNS pages (Goodnow, 2013). The semiotic analysis also takes into consideration of signs of election campaign such as candidate's election campaign used as part of their identity during the election campaign, the colours that they used to edit their visual images, SNSs sign and candidate's SNSs username. This is done in order to determine how candidates construct their image in relation to other signs associated to their campaign.

To sum up, the multimodal analysis was adopted to explore the textual and visual content of candidates' Facebook pages in relation to the way in which candidates set their agenda-related policies over the period of the election campaign and the specific frames which candidates adopted to promote a particular image and aspect of their campaigns. Results of the multimodal analysis provide an overview of the campaign messages that candidates communicated and the images that they constructed and developed. What is still lacking is the justification for the operation of candidates' SNS pages; interviews and observation studies were used for this.

3.2. Elite interviews

Previous research on the use of social media for political communication and election campaigning in other contexts has used interviews with politicians, campaign managers and SNS public relations personnel, with a more focused sample (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; Karlsen, 2010; Leong, 2014; Levenshus, 2010) in comparison to Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) use mail-out/mail back paper-and-pencil questionnaire, sent out to 679 candidates in the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia,

Germany in 2010. This research also conducted interviews with such groups to gain a deeper understanding on their use of SNSs. According to Gillham (2000), an 'elite' is someone who is in a privileged position in terms of knowledge and expertise (p.81). Burnham et al. (2004) propose that elite interviews will enable researchers to gain new ideas, distinctive viewpoints and interpretations related to the central research question and research framework (p.29). The exploratory approach taken by this research used interviews to identify the rationales of these groups and their decision-making processes on problems and strategies for communicating on SNSs. Interviewing elite players also aimed at identifying what they consider to be challenging for themselves and their image when using SNSs.

The interview questions were open-ended, allowing interviewees to express their opinions fully. Due to the different experience and professional background of the interviewees, semi-structured interviews were used. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), a semi-structured interview is one where the researcher has prepared a list of questions based on the research scope, but interviewees are allowed to raise issues that the researcher has not anticipated. This type of interview allows other matters to emerge in the interview, enabling the research to capture the range of participants' responses. Burnham et al. (2004) propose that semi-structured interviews are the most efficient way to obtain information about decision-making processes. Therefore, as this research aims to analyse the different experience of interviewees using SNSs in the election campaigns, semi-structured interviews allowed a range of individual issues to be examined in detail.

3.2.1. Interview sample

Access to interviewees can be the main problem when studying elites (Hertz and Imber, 1995 cited in Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.147). Contacting interviewees might not be too challenging if the researcher has initial contacts with them through previous work experience in the same field as mentioned in Phansasiri's (2013) research. Due to very limited initial contacts the researcher had with Thai politicians, candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and their public relations personnel, the researcher tried different ways to contact people to gain access to these elites by using purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

Patton (2002) defines purposive sampling as a way to select data cases (participants, texts) on the basis that they will be able to provide detail and rich information for the researcher to analyse (p.45-46). While in snowball sampling, Burnham et al. (2004) explain that the researcher starts out with a few participants, then asks them to suggest other key individuals who they perceive to be able to give useful information to the research (p.207). The use of elite interviews takes advantage of establishing

contact networks and access to other people in the profession (Richards, 1996 cited in Harrison, 2001). Therefore, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were chosen to allow this research to gain access to the network of individuals who use SNSs for election campaigning and political communication in Thailand

Since the start of data collection in January 2013, the researcher followed Thai politicians from the government and the opposition party who used Facebook for political communication, candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election who used Facebook in the election campaign and Thai journalists who used Facebook professionally. This accessed public information about where these three groups were going and if there were any possibilities of contacting them in person. The researcher was also able to communicate with a few of the independent candidates by telephone after the researcher got their phone numbers from their Facebook pages. The researcher met others during their campaigns, at public forums and debates that they attended.

As a Ph.D. student trying to get in touch with Thai political figures in the Bangkok gubernatorial election, the researcher could not estimate how many would be available for interview. As most of these political figures made substantial use of SNSs for the election campaign and political communication, the researcher was able to make use of Facebook to keep track of where they were going. This tracked them in real-time, which involved much waiting on standby. By using Facebook as a way to get in touch with political figures, the researcher realised that planning about where the political figures were going was published only day-to-day. Though the researcher might know some of the places that the candidates were going, by the time they got there, the researcher might not be able to find them, or they might have left. With the use of snowball and purposive sampling, the researcher was able to conduct 14 interviews.

3.2.2. Interview procedure

All interviewees were told about the research objectives, research ethics, interview procedures and any changes during the research. Any sensitive questions developed during the semi-structured interviews were handled carefully, minimising harm to interviewees. Data collected in this research was anonymous, and interviewees were allowed to withdraw from the research at any time.

After each interviewee had given permission to be interviewed, the researcher asked for their email address to send to the interviewees an electronic copy of research information (Appendix 7), basic interview questions (Appendix 8), research ethics forms and participant consent forms (Appendix 9) before conducting the interview. The research ethics form was translated into Thai.

Before the start of the interview, the interviewee and the researcher both signed participant consent forms. The interviewee and the researcher kept one copy each. For telephone interviews, having turned on the recorder, all the research ethics points were explained to interviewees on the phone, making them aware that the research ethics were according to the university rules. After that, the researcher asked for verbal approval to record the interview.

The researcher then asked interviewees if they would prefer answering the interview questions in English or Thai. Where interviewees were capable and comfortable expressing their opinions in English, the interviews were conducted in English. Otherwise, the interviews were conducted in Thai. At the end of each interview, each interviewee had a chance to ask any questions that they might have about the research.

The interviews conducted in Thai language were transcribed into Thai then translated into English. The researcher transcribed every interview conducted in this research. The researcher used 'unfocused transcription', which Gibson and Brown (2009) describes as 'creating a record of what happened within a given recording of speech or action' (p.113), focusing on the 'intended meaning' of the recorded speech and action without attempting to show the detailed contextual or interactional characteristics (ibid., p.116). In other words, interview transcripts were transcribed according to interviewees' responses during the interview. The transcripts were typed into Microsoft Word.

3.2.3. Interview analysis

The coding process for interview transcripts was done in two steps. Firstly, interview transcripts were printed out, and the researcher became familiar with the data by actively and analytically reading through it. Based on the background knowledge the researcher had about each candidate studied in this research, the researcher wrote notes beside interesting answers or comments. By becoming familiar with the data in such way, the researcher was able to think critically about 'what the data mean', which is part of the basic qualitative coding procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013).

Secondly, all interview transcripts were coded 'selectively' on Nvivo 10 software to identify aspects of the data in relation to the research questions. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the aim of selective coding is to determine the data which the research is interested in analysing and this was done to reduce the quantity of data and to focus on identifying anything relevant to this research. Also, 'researcher-derived' (ibid.) codes were also used to identify implicit meaning in the interview transcripts, with the assumption that interviewees might not truly express their challenge in using SNSs during the election campaign.

Like other research methods, data collected from interviews contains weaknesses. Gillham (2005) notes that even though one elite interview can provide in-depth information and further direct and develop the research approach, elite interviews can be 'politically' acute and controlling, based on what the interviewee says and does not say (p.59). Also, Berger (2014) outlines problems with interview material in that interviewees do not always tell the truth, interviewees do not remember things accurately and interviewees do not always have useful information to tell. This means that interviewees might tell the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear, and they might use language in a different way to express their experience (ibid., pp.173-174). Therefore, this research interpreted the interview data with the support observation studies as a research method secondary to elite interviews.

3.2.4. Observation studies

Observation studies were done during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign to allow the research to be able to validate and cross-check findings and to gain an understanding of the practical work of using SNSs and the atmosphere in which candidates interact with voters during the election campaign. Patton (2002) defines observation study as a 'fieldwork description of activities, behaviours, actions, conversations, and interpersonal interactions, organisational or community processes, or any other aspect of observable human experience' (p.4). Plowright (2011) defines observation study as a way of collecting data through using different sensory experiences, and the two main senses of researchers are sight and sound (p.76). Gillham (2005) mentions that interviews in combination with participant observation studies allow the researcher to gain justification based on what they have observed, which can guide the researcher's interpretation (p.166).

This research was able to observe the campaigns of a total of three candidates, both party-based and independent, in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. This enabled the researcher to gain live visual images of candidates campaigning in public and how the reality was transformed into messages and images before posting on candidates' SNS pages. Observation study is an informal way to collect data and can provide rich and detailed field notes, gathering the thoughts, beliefs and rationales of candidates and campaign staff behind what they were attempting in their SNSs. The researcher also attended a social media forum organised by *The Nation Channel* on 16 February 2013, to listen to the opinions of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Suharit Siamwalla, an independent candidate, who both used social media in their election campaigns.

Conclusion

The two main research methods used in this research were chosen to gather different information on candidates' SNS pages for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and political communication in general. The multimodal analysis allows this research to gain raw material in the form of content communicated during the election campaign and to quantify data into different themes. However, the experience of candidates and their personnel in using SNSs for the election campaign and political communication were not known through multimodal analysis. Thus, elite interviews and observation studies were conducted to gain further information on the operation of SNSs and support multimodal analysis. Using more than one research method allows cross-checking of data collected where the strength of one method may compensate for the weakness of another.

In terms of blank spots, it must be acknowledged that the data from Facebook captured for content analysis was not done during the election campaign, it was done retrospectively. After several attempts to find a method and software to capture and extract data from Facebook about six months after the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign that the researcher found the (recently released) *NCapture* tool in Nvivo 10 to extract data from SNSs for analysis. Consequently, some Facebook data may be missing from the content analysis as it is unknown how long Facebook retains user's data posts and photographs, and other content may be missing due to Facebook's internal operations, algorithms and changing privacy settings over time. Also, the researcher was not able to contact all candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election for interview and to conduct observation studies with all the candidates, but believes that the interviews conducted corroborate one another sufficiently to establish clear insight into the issues discussed.

As internet research is a growing area of interest, institutions should provide well-defined research ethics guidelines for qualitative internet research by taking into consideration of the different social media and social networking sites. A better distinction is needed on what information is 'public' and 'private.' This would allow internet research to be conducted in an 'ethical' way that accords with requirements based on the specific platform of communication that researchers are undertaking. Nonetheless, all attempts have been made to protect the privacy not just of all those interviewed, but all those whose comments on candidate's pages were used as objects of study. Even though these comments were made in public form, it is important to protect individuals' 'privacy via obscurity' if they could be harmed in any way by attention being drawn to their comments. The process of translation and judicious selection or paraphrasing of representative comments has hopefully achieved this goal.

The first two chapters of data analysis, Chapters 4 and 5, present and discuss mainly the results of the multimodal analysis of the Facebook pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The final two chapters of data analysis, Chapters 6 and 7, focus on the interviews. Even though the data analysis chapters in this thesis are divided according to research method, the discussion in each chapter integrates different findings that emerge from other research methods. The conclusions of each chapter build upon the findings of previous chapters.

Chapter 4 : Candidates' Core Information and Visual Images on Facebook

Introduction

In the study of the processes of managing political public relations during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, it is essential to know the core information that candidates reveal about themselves to reflect on candidates' skills and knowledge in relation to having the potential to win and fulfil the role of Bangkok governor. A candidate's visual image based on how the candidate looks, what clothes they wear or their facial expression, is constructed to create the image of how they would like voters to perceive them. Core visual images, such as the photographs used on their profile pictures, could create the first impression that voters have of the candidate. Other signs associated with a candidate's campaign can play a significant role in communicating the candidate's campaign.

With the use of Grabe and Bucy's framework for the analysis of candidates' visual images during election campaigns in combination with the Thai political culture of images, this chapter examines political public relations based on the publication of background information on candidates and the framing of candidates' visual images on Facebook in relation to how candidates intend to target and relate to followers and potential followers. This chapter sets out to answer the research question: *'What features of visual image management were found on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?'*

The rest of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section gives an overview of biographical information on M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat introduce themselves on Facebook at the beginning of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The second section uses a semiotic analysis to analyse and relate non-verbal communication signs of candidates' profile pictures uploaded to their Facebook accounts in relation to their biography, also looking particularly at the type of frames used and the symbolism of signs used as their main visual image on Facebook. The chapter then examines the different frames of the visual images used in candidates' Facebook cover pages posted during the election campaign. The final section of this chapter analyses the symbolism of signs such as SNS logos, candidates' usernames, candidate numbers, political party logos and colours used on the candidates' cover pages. (Candidates' campaign slogans will be analysed in Chapter 5)

4.1. Candidates' core information

To establish a basic framework for analysing candidates' images established during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, this section reviews the way M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat introduced themselves on their Facebook page. This section first briefly describes the information that each candidate published under the 'About' tab, which this section will interpret candidates' core information according to Grabe and Bucy's framework and the Thai political culture of political images. This section then moves on to review the first Facebook post of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat at the start of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

4.1.1. 'About' tab

M.R. Sukhumbhand, also known as the 'Number 16' during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, was a veteran politician nominated by the Democrat Party, which was in opposition at the time of the election. Before the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent 15th governor, competing for a second term. According to M.R. Sukhumbhand's official Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/Sukhumbhand.P), M.R. Sukhumbhand was born on 22 September 1952 (aged 60 at the time of 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign), and his hometown is Bangkok. He is married, and his religion is Buddhism. He also included the name of his spouse, his workplace, and his sons' education level and the universities that they are studying at, which gives a broader perspective on M.R. Sukhumbhand's private life and his family biography.

M.R. Sukhumbhand gives information about his education as a graduate from Oxford University (1977) and Rugby School (1970). Apart from being Bangkok Governor (2009-2013), he used to hold different political positions including Member of Parliament for Bangkok under the Democrat Party and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He held an academic position as Associate Professor in the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University. M.R. Sukhumbhand also included contact information by phone, mobile, email, website and links to his other social networking pages such as Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen, also known as the 'Number 9' for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, was the candidate nominated by Pheu Thai Party under the Yingluck Shinawatra administration at the time of the election. According to Pongsapat's official Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/Pongsapatbkk), he was born in Chanthaburi Province on 9 December 1955 (aged 57 years old at the time of 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign). He is married, and his religion is Buddhism. During his childhood, Pongsapat studied in Chanthaburi

Province. His tertiary education was at the Police Cadet Academy, and he was granted a scholarship to study Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University, United States of America, until he finished his Ph.D.

In his career, Pongsapat held various positions in the Royal Thai Police. Based on Pongsapat's biography stated on his Facebook page, Pongsapat did not have any previous relationship with the Pheu Thai Party, but Pongsapat states on his Facebook page 'สร้างอนาคตกรุงเทพฯร่วมกับรัฐบาลอย่างไร้รอยต่อ *Like* พงศพัศ, *Share* อนาคตกรุงเทพฯ', which can be translated into English as 'Build Bangkok's future by working seamlessly with the (national) government. *Like* Pongsapat, *Share* Bangkok's future'. This message establishes Pongsapat's relation with the government party, which nominated him for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. (Pongsapat's slogan will be further analysed in Chapter 5.)

The background information that M.R. Sukhumbhand published about himself consists of *phudi* elements in combination with ordinariness and a professional image in his career. As stated in Chapter 2, M.R. Sukhumbhand's title (Mom Rajawongse) indicates that he is the great-grandchild of a Thai sovereign. M.R. Sukhumbhand is a great-grandson of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). [10] M.R. Sukhumbhand overseas education and previous work in academia in combination with his long-term career in politics enrich his quality of being *phudi*. As a result, M.R. Sukhumbhand's biographical information also portrays his image of having competence and experience in the political field and working with ordinary citizens. This *phudi* image therefore shows that the candidate has elite family lineage. In mentioning his family members' names and the schools they attended, M.R. Sukhumbhand combines his individual *phudi* image and that of his family.

M.R. Sukhumbhand presentation of his political background may be understood as showing he was as experienced as the 13th Bangkok Governor, Samak Sundaravej had previously had various political roles and was the leader of the Thai Citizen's Party before competing for Bangkok Governor in 2000. Samak was also the Thai prime minister almost a year since December 2007. Despite the *nakleng* image of Samak, his long-term experience as a politician was similar to that of M.R. Sukhumbhand, making voters recognise both politicians according to their previous political positions.

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[10] Cited from Fry, Nieminen and Smith (2013)

On the other hand, Pongsapat had a hybrid image, which is a mixture of a few attributes. Pongsapat's education background of his scholarship and Ph.D. reflects on his determination in education and specialised knowledge in the field of criminal justice. His overseas education is the only evidence of Pongsapat having a *phudi* image of being highly educated. As Pongsapat's career was in the Royal Thai Police (similar to Thaksin's background prior to joining politics), Pongsapat's career is associated with working with the public, dealing with lawbreakers in Thailand and having contacts and relationships with Thai people. His work shows an image of arresting drug dealers or enhancing security forces to increase safety for different areas in Thailand.

A review of past governors since 2000 shows there has been none with a police background, except for Chalerm Yubamrung and Police General Seripisut Temiyavet, independent candidates of the 2004 and 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election respectively, who were ranked in fourth and third place respectively in the election.[11] Pongsapat's image is a hybrid type of image in having a *phudi* image of being highly educated, while his career requires courage and skills in decision-making and dealing with lawbreakers, so that his image also has *nakleng* elements. Moreover, a long-term career as a police officer means that Pongsapat did not have experience in the field of politics, but has been working with policemen and sectors associating with such field. Arguably, candidates with such background might be perceived as authoritarian as such image seems to be a challenging image to Bangkokians voters.

Based on the inter-subjective profile analysis of core information that candidates published on their 'About' pages, it could be said that political public relations on the candidates' Facebook pages was associated with the management of core information about the candidates as political figures, selecting and providing background information about the candidates based on what the candidates think is relevant for potential followers to know about them and the candidates' campaigns. Both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat have similar qualities as 'ideal candidates' (Grabe and Bucy, 2013), despite their career differences: M.R. Sukhumbhand has a political background while Pongsapat has a police background.

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[11]. Cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.). and ("เลือกตั้งผู้ว่าฯกทมหานคร 2556 ผลเลือกตั้ง [BKK Election 2013: Election Result]," 2013)

However, there were significant differences. M.R. Sukhumbhand had listed a variety of facts in his biography while Pongsapat focused on the different positions that he had held as a police officer. Also, M.R. Sukhumbhand provided various contact details for the public and journalists to be able to communicate with him during the election campaign, which Pongsapat did not do, indicating a difference in candidates' approach to public communication. Pongsapat did not give any information related to his family members or his hobbies but mentioned that his origin was Chanthaburi Province, which shows that in selecting biographical information he kept his private life away from the public. It could be said that management of information in this way supports the basic idea of using SNSs for microtargeting (Bimber, 2014; Edgerly et al., 2013; Stokes-Brown, 2012), whereby M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used different aspects of their biographies to target various groups of voters, with different political interests, living in different locations, and with different occupations and ages.

Although the information under the 'About' tab does not appear on the news feeds of followers' Facebook pages, the information is stored and remains accessible to the public during the election campaign, in contrast to the information that candidates post on their Facebook timeline, where new posts made by candidates *replace* earlier posts. The information under 'About' tab is significant in establishing the core image of the candidate. As M.R. Sukhumbhand was an incumbent of the election, followers might already have some background information about the candidate, whereas for new candidates like Pongsapat, information on the 'About' tabs can be the first impressions that potential followers have about the candidate and potential followers seek to find a relationship with the candidate. Even though followers might not click on the 'About' tab to read the candidates' biographies, neither candidate, particularly M.R. Sukhumbhand, overlooked the type and amount of information that they provided to the public there. Core information that candidates publish under the 'About' tabs leads to a further examination of how candidates elaborate this core information in visual images and Facebook posts during the election campaign.

4.1.2. First Facebook posts for the election campaign

Previous to the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, M.R. Sukhumbhand was already using his Facebook page but Pongsapat created his Facebook page just for the election campaign. As stated earlier, on 9 January 2013, M.R. Sukhumbhand resigned as the 15th Bangkok Governor[12].

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[12] cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).

However, M.R. Sukhumbhand did not make any Facebook post about resigning. It was only two days after he resigned that he made a Facebook comment showing 'the atmosphere at the opening of the Election Centre.'

Figure 4.1: M.R. Sukhumbhand's first Facebook post mentioning about election, 11 January 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013j).

As shown on Figure 4.1., M.R. Sukhumbhand's first Facebook post in relation to the upcoming election shows the official opening of the Election Centre by the political party that nominated him. Based on the photograph together with the text, M.R. Sukhumbhand's first image was established in relation to politicians of the Democrat Party, Apirak Kosayodhin sitting on M.R. Sukhumbhand's right, and Abhisit Vejjajiva sitting on his left. This indicates his affiliation with these politicians. His first Facebook post showed his relation with the political party, leaving out the individual image of his profile picture or cover page.

พี่น้องประชาชนชาวกรุงเทพมหานครที่เคารพครับ

ในโลกปัจจุบัน facebook และโซเชียลมีเดียต่างๆได้ทำให้เราสามารถติดต่อซึ่งกันและกันได้ง่ายกันมากขึ้นกว่าแต่ก่อน มันไม่เพียงทำให้เราใกล้ชิดกันมากขึ้นเท่านั้น แต่มันยังเพิ่มเสียงของเราให้ดังขึ้นอีกด้วย ไม่ว่าจะเป็นการกด like กด share หรือว่าร่วม comment ในพื้นที่แห่งนี้ สิ่งนี้จะทำให้เรารู้จักกันมากขึ้นเรื่อยๆ

ขอเชิญชวนทุกท่านร่วมกันแชร์ facebook ของผมนี้ให้มีพี่น้องมากด like เยอะๆ เพราะวันนี้เป็นก้าวแรกในการหาเสียงของผมครับ

มาร่วมพูดคุยกันนะครับ

ผมพงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ

ยินดีต้อนรับทุกท่าน

Translation of post:

Respected brothers and sisters in Bangkok,
In the current world, Facebook and various social media have enabled us to communicate with each other more easily than before. This not only brings us closer to each other, but enables our voices to be heard better whether by clicking 'like', or 'share' or participate in 'comment' in this platform. This will make us gradually get to know each other better.
I would like to invite everyone to "share" my Facebook page so that many people will click "like" on my page because today is the first step of my election campaign.
Let's discuss together.
I, Pongsapat Pongcharoen
would like to welcome everyone.

Figure 4.2: Pongsapat's first Facebook post, 15 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013k).

Figure 4.2 shows Pongsapat's first Facebook post on 15 January 2013, after he had published his biography, profile picture and cover page. Referring to Savitri's (2004) research on the 'ritual beginning' and the formality of politicians' speeches political communication in the Thai parliament, whereby politicians introduce their full names, the constituency that the politicians represent and the political party that they belong to, political figures communicating on Facebook were less formal and more personal. Pongsapat begins his first Facebook post by saying 'พี่น้องประชาชนชาวกรุงเทพมหานครที่เคารพครับ' which means 'Respected brothers and sisters in Bangkok.' The literal meaning of 'พี่น้อง' (*phi nong*) in Thai refers to elder and younger siblings of either gender. Sanit (1994) points out that

Thai political figures use *phi nong* to establish a close relationship and to show the respect that they have for voters in order to make voters become optimistic about the politician's ability in solving problems (p.169-170). Pongsapat's use of *phi nong* in his first Facebook post shows the sense of closeness and equality in the relationship that he would like to establish between Bangkokians and himself. In addition, a candidate's use of *phi nong* in an election campaign shows that she/he is considering her/himself as a 'friend' and/or 'family member' of the voters. Pongsapat and the voters might not have had such a relationship before, but with the use of *phi nong*, it somehow indicates that Pongsapat attempted to establish such a relationship to show that there is no division between the voters and the candidate and to show that he considered himself and voters as being in the same family.

The word 'เคารพ' (*khaorop*) means 'respect', which a formula used in formal speech in Thai and it also shows between the writer/speaker and reader/listener. By using *khaorop* to address readers, Pongsapat showed the respect that he had for potential followers and his intention to listen to their opinions. Also, with the polite particle *khrap* shows Pongsapat's sense of politeness and manners in speaking or writing. Throughout Pongsapat's Facebook posts, he would end certain sentences with *khrap*.

As Pongsapat's Facebook page was created for the purpose of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, his first posts introduced himself and established his network on Facebook. Pongsapat encouraged his followers to interact on his first Facebook posts, clicking 'Like', 'Share' or making comments so the post would appear on the users' friends' status page, expanding the candidate's network on Facebook, as will be further analysed in Chapter 6. When more people follow him on Facebook or when his network expands, he can be sure that his campaign message is being broadcast to a mass audience, which include voters and non-voters of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. Interaction also enables candidates to know voters' thoughts on particular posts. Pongsapat's first Facebook post indicates the way Pongsapat relied on Facebook users to expand his network. The fact that he signed his first post using his full name in Thai, without stating that he is a candidate from the Pheu Thai Party indicates an individualistic approach to start the campaign.

While M.R. Sukhumbhand established his image on his first Facebook post by including Democrat Party politicians, Pongsapat invited users to interact on his Facebook page through creating awareness of the importance of using Facebook and other social media to communicate, and wanting a closer relationship with voters. Pongsapat's first Facebook post used his profile picture and SNS logos and links as part of the photograph, which will be analysed in the section 4.2. The way Pongsapat

structured his first Facebook post could be considered appropriate because Pongsapat was new in the political field and did not have an extensive network of voters following him on SNSs. Rather than talking about his biography, problems and policies for Bangkok, his first Facebook post could give people the impression of welcoming them into his network and showing his attempt to know more about people on Facebook. This was done at a conversational and respectful level of communication. Looking from a political marketing perspective, Pongsapat's first Facebook post initiated the use of a political marketing strategy based on *phi nong* and approachability through asking for followers' opinion and wanting to know more about his followers.

4.2. Facebook profile pictures

With the use of semiotic analysis at the informational and symbolic levels, this section analyses the profile pictures of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat on Facebook with reference to the visual image frames of Grabe and Bucy (2013). The analysis in this section takes into consideration the candidates' biographies, facial expressions, gaze, clothing and the portraits used in their billboards and brochures in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, and compares the type of photographs used as candidates' profile picture with other forms of medium. This analysis will provide an understanding of the core visual impression that candidates tried to give to their potential followers in relation to their biographies and personalities.

Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 show the Facebook profile pictures of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Table 4.1 gives an outline of the semiotic analysis of these.

Figure 4.3: M.R. Sukhumbhand's profile picture on Facebook before (left) and during (right) the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, uploaded on 8 August 2012 and 21 January 2013 respectively (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2012, 2013i)

Figure 4.4: Pongsapat's profile picture on Facebook for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, uploaded on 14 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013i).

	Feature of analysis	Denotation / Technical coding/ Informational level of meaning	Connotation/ Symbolic level of coding and meaning
Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen	Type of shot	Medium close-up shot showing candidate's face and the upper half of his body	To emphasise candidate's appearance and facial expression
	Facial expression	Smile, showing upper teeth	Friendly personality
	Candidate posture	Leaning slightly to the right	Informal
	Changes of profile picture	Did not change profile picture for the entire election campaign	Single use of profile picture for Facebook user to recognise candidate's image
Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra	Clothes	White collared shirt	Semi-formal, ordinary
	Clothes in comparison to other medium	Different clothes	Portray different image of the candidate
	Candidate name and number	Shown	Election campaign mode
Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen	Clothes	White collared shirt with a black jacket outside	Semi-formal, ordinary, plainclothes police officer
	Clothes in comparison to other medium	Same clothes	Emphasis on the same image of candidate
	Candidate name and number	Not shown	Ordinary Facebook page

Table 4.1: Semiotic analysis of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook profile pictures.

Both profile pictures were taken in medium close-up, showing the upper part of the subjects' body, enabling viewers to see candidates' facial expression as well as the candidates' chosen clothing. Both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat look directly at the camera at the same level as the camera lens, and their heads are positioned slightly towards their right, not leaning against the backdrop, which is different from how photographs for Thai identification cards or passports are taken. Candidate 'Number 7' in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election used Figure 4.5 as his Facebook profile picture, where he is smiling, wearing his official uniform and is positioned directly in front of the camera. This gives a more formal and authoritarian impression of the candidate, compared to the Facebook profile pictures of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat. Therefore, facial expressions and postures of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat attempt to portray a friendly personality and informality. This could be done to suggest an approachable image of the candidate, which may attract more Facebook users to follow them.

Figure 4.5: Facebook profile picture of candidate 'Number 7' in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, uploaded on 4 February 2013 (ณัฏฐรัตดนัย ภูเบศอรรถวิชญ์ [Natdanai Phubesauthawit], 2013).

Based on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's facial expressions and postures in their profile pictures in combination with their chosen clothing, both candidates' images are associated with what Grabe and Bucy refer to as 'ordinariness', rather than 'statesmanship'. An ordinary image may lessen the gap between citizens and candidates as both candidates showed an attempt to use Facebook to communicate with citizens by omitting any symbols of their careers. Neither candidate's profile picture gives a visual indication of the candidates' origins and educational background, but their overall image and clothing symbolise them as middle-class. As both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat chose to wear casual clothing in their Facebook profile pictures, it could connote that their profile pictures make them look less formal and less official, giving the sense of equality between candidates and voters. Despite M.R. Sukhumbhand being Bangkok Governor (2009-2013), former

Member of Parliament and a former Associate Professor, his plain and simple white collared shirt chosen for his Facebook profile picture does not indicate his background. Pongsapat's black jacket gives some indication about him being a plainclothes police officer, but omits any sign that he is a Thai police in general or a Ph.D. holder.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's chosen profile picture on Facebook before and during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was the same photograph, except that later had '16' printed at the bottom right corner of the picture, giving an indication of the political figure being in election campaign mode. M.R. Sukhumbhand might have intended to highlight the fact that having an election number shows that he is in the election campaign, which could also assure people searching for M.R. Sukhumbhand on Facebook that the page is M.R. Sukhumbhand's official Facebook page. Having the candidate number as part of the profile picture also shows that the candidate is a candidate, so voters can notice the candidate and his election number, as the candidate number is a significant piece of information for voters in recognising the candidate in Thai elections (to be analysed further in subsection 4.4.3). On the contrary, Pongsapat might have thought that the candidate number did not matter as much as his appearance, and, therefore his profile picture on Facebook truly focused on his clothing and facial expression. Whether candidate numbers appear on Facebook profile pictures depends on how the candidate decides to select and design their profile pictures.

Figure 4.6: Facebook profile 'picture' of candidate 'Number 6' in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (สัณหพจน์ สุขศรีเมือง[Sanhaphot Suksrimuang], 2013).

As shown in Figure 4.6, candidate 'Number 6' of the election designed his Facebook profile image with his candidate number, '6'. This image does show that the Facebook page belongs to number 6 in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, but Facebook users will not have any idea about the candidate's appearance. Even though the candidate's number plays a role in representing and identifying him, M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook profile pictures give prominence to

their visual image, their facial expression, gaze and positioning of the candidate in the profile pictures to depict an ordinary image with positive personality to suit the communication platform.

Figure 4.7: Photographs of M.R. Sukhumbhand used in the media during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. (Facebook profile picture from Figure 4.3, other photographs: Author)

Figure 4.8: Photographs of Pongsapat used in different media during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (Facebook profile picture from Figure 4.4, other photographs: Author)

Comparing the Facebook profile photographs of both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat with the photographs on their billboards and brochures as shown in Figures 4.7 and 4.8, M.R. Sukhumbhand used 3 different photographs for his billboards and brochure, all different from his Facebook profile photograph, while Pongsapat used the same photograph as on his Facebook profile except for one billboard (E). A possible reason for this could be that M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent in the election, while Pongsapat was a new candidate. It is appropriate for an incumbent candidate who has been in the political field for an extended period to use different photographs with different clothing in various media to portray both a formal and informal image. The small size Billboard A, Billboard C and brochure suggest a casual image. Billboard A and his brochure, in particular, symbolise the resilient fighting spirit to compete for another term as governor, portrayed through casual clothing and raising his left fist to chest level. M.R. Sukhumbhand chose formal clothing in Billboard B and on his campaign vehicle, portraying himself as a managerial person, with the impression that M.R. Sukhumbhand is able to fulfil the role of Bangkok governor as the head of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, as stated in the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act 1985. Thus, with an early recognition and relationship between M.R. Sukhumbhand and voters, the use of different photographs on his Facebook profile picture, billboards and brochure enable him to portray the different image of himself.

On the other hand, as a new candidate in the Bangkok gubernatorial election and with a lack of experience in the political field, Pongsapat used the same portrait in most media. Pongsapat's Facebook profile picture was used on his campaign vehicle, one of his large size billboard designs (Billboard D) and his brochure. A possible reason for using a single photograph for all media is that he was not as well recognised as M.R. Sukhumbhand. Billboard E shows a Pongsapat in a different posture of raising his hands to about shoulder level, portraying the candidate giving an explanation or demonstration. This allows viewers to visualise what Pongsapat looks like when communicating. Although Billboard E gives a different image of Pongsapat, his clothing is the same as in his Facebook profile picture, which could enable viewers to be familiar with Pongsapat's image. This means that the decision to use the same clothing on his campaign vehicle, billboards and brochure can raise people's awareness of Pongsapat's appearance, which would avoid confusion on whether the portrait *is* Pongsapat. However, as candidates' name and political party slogan are shown in the medium, voters could still recognised the candidate's identity.

The overall image that Pongsapat portrayed in the different media does not significantly differ, which could be considered suitable for a candidate who is new in the political field. Nevertheless, whether it is appropriate to duplicate photographs in different media would depend on how candidates attempt to make voters perceive their image. Voters might be exposed to different media, which means using the same photograph for all media would allow voters to recognise the candidate better, but using a different photograph presents another perspective of the candidate. Another important finding is that both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat do not use body language as part of their Facebook profile pictures, which might be due to their intention to portray clearly their appearance, facial expression and clothing through their Facebook profile pictures. Both candidates' use of gesture on billboards and brochures give a different perspective of the candidates' images.

Based on the semiotic analysis of the Facebook profile pictures of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat in this section, symbolism coding suggests that the profile pictures were framed to reflect what Grabe and Bucy (2009) refer to as 'ordinariness' rather than 'statesmanship' as neither profile pictures give an indication of power, authority or leadership. Both Facebook profile pictures clearly show their appearance with a very limited indication of their social class or leadership style, which might be the way they seek to establish a relationship with potential followers and current followers throughout the election campaign. There were minimal signs on both candidate's Facebook profile pictures that relate to the biographical information published under the 'About' tab (as analysed in the previous section). It was only the candidate's number attached to M.R. Sukhumbhand's profile picture which implies that M.R. Sukhumbhand was campaigning in the election while Pongsapat's outfit gives some sense

of Pongsapat being a plainclothes police officer. This information could only be confirmed through his biography information. Since Facebook is an interactive channel in the election campaign, where candidates can build a network and engage with Facebook users from different backgrounds, the different signs interpreted from M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook profile pictures reveal how the candidates want people to perceive them. M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat projected their visual image as ordinary people with a kind and approachable personality.

The Facebook profile pictures were one core visual identity during the election campaign, which remained unchanged during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, indicating the importance of the profile pictures selected. Surapongse (2002) claims that establishing a candidate's image is part of winning an election as the candidate's image helps voters recognise the candidate. M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's selection and management of their Facebook profile picture reflect that. Not changing their profile pictures during the election campaign also shows that their Facebook pages are the official ones, which is a sign to the public that they are in control of their posts and the campaign messages and information on these pages come directly from the candidate. In particular, Pongsapat's use of the same image on Facebook and other media eliminates confusion over his image enabling viewers to recognise it.

Although neither M.R. Sukhumbhand nor Pongsapat changed their Facebook profile picture during the election campaign, both of them made changes to their Facebook cover pages every 1-3 days throughout the election campaign. The cover page is another significant form of communication by which to interpret a candidate's campaign in relation to the textual message, candidate number and symbolic colours used. The next two sections present multimodal analyses of the cover pages of the Facebook pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat.

4.3. Visual image on Facebook cover pages

Candidates' Facebook cover pages were another core form of communication of candidates' campaigns during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The cover page is displayed at the top of the front page or timeline page of users, inset with the profile picture, enabling the visual image of the cover page to be shown in a larger size than the profile picture. After users search for a candidate's name on Facebook and decide to explore the candidate's Facebook page further, the candidate's cover page is the first image that appears.

The Facebook cover pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat were changed every few days during the election campaign. Using Grabe and Bucy's (2013) framework for visual image analysis,

this section examines the symbolism of signs and visual images on the Facebook cover pages. Grabe and Bucy's (2013) framework for the visual image analysis was used to analyse moving visual images of candidates on the ABC, CBS and NBC broadcast networks for presidential elections in the United States during 1992-2004. This subsection analyses the visual images within the Grabe and Bucy framework, with the objective of determining the relevance of their framework to visual images on the Facebook cover pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat. The analysis in this section considers all Facebook cover pages that both candidates uploaded, selecting a few significant cover pages for presentation in this section.

Statesmanship theme

The statesmanship theme was the primary theme used in both M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook cover pages. This theme consists of features such as the candidates' pictures used in their Facebook profile pictures, billboards and brochures, the candidates delivering speeches on stage, photographs with the leader of their political party or former candidates for the Bangkok gubernatorial election from the same political party.

Figure 4.9: M.R. Sukhumbhand's first cover page on Facebook using a statesmanship theme, uploaded on 14 January 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013b).

The statesmanship theme of M.R. Sukhumbhand's cover page in Figure 4.9 shows M.R. Sukhumbhand wearing formal attire (suit and tie). This dress was different from the one in his Facebook profile picture. The clothing in Figure 4.9 gives a better indication of statesmanship, reflecting managerial skills in decision-making and problem-solving. The visual image chosen for M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook profile picture, portrays M.R. Sukhumbhand as an ideal candidate.

Figure 4.10: Pongsapat's first cover page on Facebook using a statesmanship theme, uploaded on 14 January 2014 (พงศพัต พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013a).

The first official picture used for Pongsapat's Facebook cover page, shown in Figure 4.10, was the same as the one used for his Facebook profile picture, which further emphasises the image that Pongsapat intended to portray there. Although it was argued in Section 4.2 that Pongsapat's Facebook profile picture portrays an image of being ordinary, this visual image when chosen as the first cover page can be categorised as a statesmanship theme because it is in juxtaposition with the candidate's campaign slogan on the left and other SNS signs at the bottom of the cover page, enabling the overall image of the cover page to show the statesmanship of the candidate. Pongsapat's use of the same image for both his profile picture and the first cover page could increase the likelihood of Facebook users to recognise his image and eliminate confusion as he was a new candidate for the election. Arguably, the use of different photographs could give another impression of the candidate as viewers get to see another aspect of the candidate.

Figure 4.11: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand using a statesmanship theme, showing him speaking in public, uploaded on 1 February 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013a).

Figure 4.12: Example of Pongsapat using a statesmanship theme, showing him speaking in public, uploaded on 22 February 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013c).

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 show visual images of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat delivering campaign speeches. Arguably, these two images can be categorised under the statesmanship theme as both images focus on the candidates' hand and body position of delivering a speech even though such an image was not one that the Grabe and Bucy's framework characterises as being a visual image of an ideal candidate. Figures 4.11 and 4.12 show images of the candidates giving delivering campaign speech, their leadership potential, the candidates' confidence in their campaigns and the potential of the candidates to win the election. The text added on the cover page informs SNS users of the schedule of the next campaign speech. The image on the Facebook cover page shows the main theme at the particular time of the election campaign. This can also encourage and mobilise more supporters to campaign to listen to and meet the candidate.

Figure 4.13: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand using a statesmanship theme with politicians of the Democrat Party, uploaded on 4 February 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013h).

Another type of statesmanship image consists of visual images including officials and influential persons. The Facebook cover pages of both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat also associated their

image with other politicians of the same political party. The medium to long shot photograph of Democrat Party leaders shown in Figure 4.13 delivers the message of M.R. Sukhumbhand establishing a strong relationship with politicians of the Democrat Party, delivering a sense of the Democrat Party's power and determination to compete in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. The number of politicians shown in such visual images gives weight to M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign. Overall, the facial expressions and body language of politicians reflect the image of the Democrat Party and the significant support that other politicians gave to M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign.

Figure 4.14: Example of Pongsapat using a statesmanship theme with politicians of the Pheu Thai Party, uploaded on 25 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013f).

Figure 4.14 is a medium shot showing a statesmanship image of Pongsapat in relation to politicians of the Pheu Thai Party. The photograph shows Yingluck Shinawatra, the Prime Minister of Thailand at the time of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, giving a campaign speech for Pongsapat, accompanied by other Pheu Thai Party politicians. This image portrays the positive relationship between Pongsapat and politicians of the Pheu Thai Party. The frame translates into a visual image Pongsapat's campaign slogan, which is to work with the government seamlessly. As Pongsapat was a new representative of the Pheu Thai Party in the election, this image further informs the public of his recognition by and relationship with the Pheu Thai Party. The photograph shows the Pheu Thai Party accompanying Pongsapat in his campaign, and if he was successful in the election, both Pongsapat and the Pheu Thai Party would be able to work with each other efficiently. The continuous projection of Pongsapat's relationship with the Pheu Thai Party on Pongsapat's Facebook cover page is a reminder of Pongsapat's identity in relation to the Pheu Thai party.

Figure 4.15: Example of Pongsapat using a statesmanship theme with politicians of the Pheu Thai Party, with Khunying Sudarat Keyuraphan standing on his left and Paveena Hongsakul on his right, uploaded on 22 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013e).

Figure 4.15, is another Facebook cover page of Pongsapat posted during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, with Khunying Sudarat Keyuraphan standing on his left and Paveena Hongsakul on his right, losing candidates in the Bangkok gubernatorial elections in 2000 and 2004. Khunying Sudarat was a candidate nominated by a newly established Thai Rak Thai Party at the time of the 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, while Paveena was nominated from Chart Pattana Party in the same the same election and was an independent candidate in the 2004 election. In addition to the four woman candidates competing the in 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, women politicians seemed to play a more supporting or secondary role in the election campaign. As the leader of the Pheu Thai Party was Yingluck Shinawatra, her feminine personality and appearance were used as part of the party-based image of Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook. As female candidates had never won any Bangkok gubernatorial elections, this gives some indication that the Bangkok political culture is still associated with having men govern the city.

The statesmanship theme of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat in relation to their political parties shows the support for the candidates from the political parties that nominated them. The appearance of other politicians in both candidates' campaign suggests that both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat borrowed the credibility of their political parties and fellow members. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the image of candidates in Bangkok gubernatorial elections is focused on the candidate while the image of candidates in general elections is constructed according to the political party (Surapongse, 2002, p.43). Also, new candidates such as Mitt Romney had to establish more credibility on Facebook, as opposed to Barak Obama, who was the incumbent in the 2012 Presidential election (Goodnow, 2013, p.1594). Findings in this subsection, so far, show that as party-based candidates, both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat made use of their political party image as part of their Facebook campaigns. A possible reason for this could the highly competitive nature of the election,

the similarity in suitability of both candidates, enabling statesmanship theme to be focused on the candidates' image as well as the image of the political party. However, as the Democrat party had won all 3 Bangkok gubernatorial elections since 2004, the statesmanship image of M.R. Sukhumbhand was different to that of Pongsapat as the image portrays winners and losers in elections. The credibility of the political party image can, therefore, be perceived as the political party who has won the Bangkok gubernatorial election in comparison to the Pheu Thai Party that won the general election in 2011. As a result, perceptions of credibility can increase the spreadability of the candidates' cover pages and campaign on Facebook, which Chapter 6 analyses further.

Compassion theme

Figure 4.16: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand using compassion theme, uploaded on 29 February 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุม พันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013g).

Figure 4.17: Example of Pongsapat using a compassion theme, uploaded on 31 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013h).

The compassion theme is another theme under the 'ideal candidate' frame, in which both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat associated themselves with physically challenged people and children

respectively. This theme as shown in Figures 4.16 and 4.17 portrays the candidate being able to interact with different groups of people, for whom the candidates are formulating and will be implementing policies. The ideal candidate image, therefore, has been constructed in relation to the candidate being able to work with diverse groups of voters. Such images during election campaigns might allow critical voters to think that candidate would do anything to gain votes. The theme of these images overlap with the theme of ordinariness as the images show candidates approaching the lives of voters where they live and/or work. As candidates strive to win the election, there is nothing wrong if they do everything they can to construct such an image and gain votes. Candidates might also gain votes from followers who view these images on the candidates' Facebook pages if the followers believe in the candidates' attempts to construct such images.

Mass appeal theme

Figure 4.18: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand using a mass appeal theme, uploaded on 21 February 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุ ขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013e).

Figure 4.19: Example of Pongsapat using a mass appeal theme, uploaded on 22 February 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013d).

The mass appeal images on the Facebook cover pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat shown in Figures 4.18 and 4.19 did not contain any celebrities from the entertainment industry and this could be due to doubts about the restrictions stated by the Election Commission on the involvement of celebrities in candidates' campaigns (Chapter 7 will analyse this further). Therefore, neither candidate's campaigns on SNSs incorporated the notion of 'celebrity politicians' that Barron (2015) and Street (2004) conceptualised, but both candidates instead portrayed themselves as celebrities through visual images, which seemed to be a significant aspect of their image on SNSs.

The mass appeal theme is related to the notion of celebrity politicians in that such theme consist of the candidate (not necessarily his campaign staff or other politicians from the candidate's political party) surrounded by the public, or gaining attention from the public near him, as shown in on Figures 4.18 and 4.19. This theme intends to highlight the degree of attention that the candidate generates in the audience, and portrays the candidate and politicians next to the candidate as celebrities. The angle of the photograph in Figure 4.18 is from behind the candidate to capture his appearance on the photograph as well as the large audience listening to his campaign speech delivered from the stage. This photograph portrays an image of the candidate as popular and enjoying high recognition and support from the public.

The medium shot celebrity candidates photo in Figure 4.19 in particular highlighted the amount of attention that Yingluck and Pongsapat gained from the public and at the same time the photograph shows the facial expression of Yingluck and Pongsapat in response to this support. Both types of celebrity shots, or what Grabe and Bucy refer to as 'mass appeal' theme, are significant on candidates' Facebook cover pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. As M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent while Pongsapat was a new candidate, celebrity shots used on Facebook cover pages can draw followers' attention to the candidates' campaigns, which can also increase the spreadability of the candidates' campaign on Facebook as the size of crowds confirm the approval of the candidates.

The candidates' non-policy-related posts on Facebook, relating to future campaign schedules, can construct the image of mass appeal. Such messages provided information on the candidates' campaign movements, letting followers know where the candidates planned to go and do next. This type of message is not only a way to engage followers on the Facebook page and to ensure continuous momentum on SNS 'live feed', but it can promote the candidates' campaign schedule, and mobilise supporters to the campaign sites, giving them the chance to meet and interact with the candidates.

Figure 4.20: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand receiving garlands from voters, uploaded on 19 January 2013 (ม.ร. ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013d).

Arguably, the giving of marigold garlands and flowers, shown in Figure 4.20 is a cultural tradition in Thai elections, which can also be a sign and coded as mass appeal frame. Although the origin of marigold garlands in relation to Thai elections is not known, these flowers give a sense of welcome when voters give them to election candidates.[13] No background knowledge was found about the visual image in Figure 4.20. But Sombat (1993) refers to 'การเล่นละคร' which means 'play-acting', and the

observation studies done in this research found that candidates' image frame of mass appeal is constructed as campaign staff give advance notice and distribute flowers and garlands to people around the area, alerting people and gathering them ready for the candidates' arrival. When the party-based candidate arrived at campaign site, a large crowd competed with each other to give flowers and garlands to the candidate and at the same time, the media competed to get mass appeal shots of the candidate. The scene looks *natural* if no one knows that the flowers and garlands which people give to candidate were prepared in advance by campaign staff. Voters might voluntarily want to approach and greet the candidates, but the image of the candidate receiving many flowers and garlands from voters has to be constructed to give the impression that the candidate is a popular public figure. At this point, it could also be said that campaign staff played an enormously important role in setting up these scenes in order for the candidates to look like celebrities on their arrival, which means that the campaign staff had to gather nearby supporters who would like to be involved in the image construction.

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[13] (" 'พวงมาลัยดอกดาวเรือง' วัฒนธรรมโชว์พาว...การเมืองไทย ["Marigold garlands" show proud culture … Thai politics]," 2011)

On one hand, the construction of a mass appeal image is a benefit to a candidate with the financial and human resources, but it is unfair to less well-known candidates in the same election who struggle to gather as many supporters or have limited financial and human resources to construct scenes of 'mass appeal'. This was mentioned publicly by Seripisut Temiyavet, an independent candidate in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, on a Thai PBS debate forum 3 days before the election. Another noteworthy point is that even though mainstream media know that the celebrity candidate's frame is a set up during the election campaign, they still capture these images and obscure the fact that such images were created. However, if celebrity candidates did not set up their image, they might get less attention from mainstream media and if celebrity candidate images were lacking from candidates' SNS pages, it would mean there was a lack of recognition of party-based candidates. Consequently, it is unlikely that they would gain their followers' attention on SNSs.

Ordinariness

Figure 4.21: Example of M.R. Sukhumbhand using an ordinariness theme, uploaded on 16 January 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุ ขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013c).

Figure 4.22: Example of Pongsapat using an ordinariness theme, uploaded on 27 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013g).

The candidate image of ordinariness was not used significantly in visual images on Facebook cover pages. Other than the image of M.R. Sukhumbhand holding a Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS) single ticket and Pongsapat riding a bicycle, shown in Figures 4.21 and 4.22 respectively, the visual image frames were more clearly associated with statesmanship, compassion and mass appeal. Except for the everyday clothing of both candidates, their visual images of ordinariness show their involvement in the activities of ordinary Bangkokians to understand the problems that they face and to propose realistic policies for these problems. Interestingly, the result of content analysis shows that 'ordinary' images are the least number of images uploaded on both candidates' Facebook cover page during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, which might suggest that 'ordinary' images might be not as influential as images associating with statesmanship, compassion and mass appeal elements. Despite this, it could be said that both candidates attempted to construct their image of being 'ordinary', suggesting efforts had made to show that they can be part of everyday life of people, abolishing citizens' belief that potential Bangkok governor for politicians would be arrogant and distant, similarly to how Thai national politicians would be formally portrayed in traditional media such as election campaign posters and brochures during the 2011 general election (Jones, 2014). Thus, when the election campaign is about the contestation of power for governing Bangkok for the next four years, the significance of candidates' image of being 'ordinary' and involved in voter's everyday life activity signify the lack of social or economic gap between the candidates and the citizens, leading to citizens believing that they are approachable and down-to-earth. The image of candidates being 'ordinary' diversifies the type of image that the candidates portray on their Facebook cover page. On the other hand, 'ordinary' images have been taken during the election as the result of the action the candidates' photographers chose to focus on, the angle of the photographers and the distance between the candidate and the photographer. Furthermore, filtering the images to upload as cover pages on candidates' Facebook pages is also about the images that public relations personnel choose to project the candidate at the time of uploading the image and how the public relations personnel want the candidate to be perceived as.

In short, the management and integration of different visual image frames allow both candidates to portray various aspects of their campaign, which diversify their image throughout the election campaign. Both candidates' visual images on the Facebook cover pages posted during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign were related to the statesmanship theme, the compassionate theme, the mass appeal theme and the ordinariness theme. There was no 'sure losers' element found, because the visual images posted on the Facebook pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat were controlled by the candidates and their SNS campaign staff, who would select images to portray the candidate having the potential to win the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election and to perform the role

of Bangkok governor efficiently. Whereas in Grabe and Bucy's (2013) study of news broadcasts in the presidential election campaign, news media framed candidates in different aspects, including 'the sure loser' frame of visual images that have linkages to a small number of audience, disapproval audience or negative facial expression and body language of the candidate. As one would expect, the selection of visual images on Facebook cover pages, being the primary image shown on the candidates' Facebook timelines, is intended to construct positive images to influence their followers' perspective on the candidates, as ideal candidates and populist campaigners during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Flexibility needs to be allowed when using Grabe and Bucy's (2013) framework. Cultural signs or the giving of garlands to candidate could also be coded as part of statesmanship theme and mass appeal theme respectively. Overlapping of themes could also occur within a single image.

4.4. Signs on Facebook cover pages

Developing from section 4.3, there are also other signs that play an integral role in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Candidates used a few core signs to distinguish their campaigns. This section identifies the candidates' chosen campaign colours, SNS information and the candidates' numbers placed on their Facebook cover pages.

4.4.1. Colours

Candidates placed their political party logo and used the colours of their political party on their cover pages, confirming with potential followers that the candidate is nominated by their political party, which is another important identification to distinguish one candidate from another. Both candidates' cover pages used the colours of their political party. The distinctiveness of the design and colours of each political party logo contain a few meanings, depending on which perspective one takes to interpret the colour.

Figure 4.23: Example of the designs of M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook cover page in relation to the Democrat Party logo (Source: M.R. Sukhumbhand's cover page from Figure 4.9, Democrat Party logo from http://www.democrat.or.th/th/about/history/)

In Figure 4.23, the three colours that can be identified are blue, white and green, which accord with the logo of the Democrat Party, which has blue as the core colour, white as the background. M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook posts also contain the phrase 'หัวใจฟ้า', which can be translated as 'blue heart', was used in the context of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Democrat Party assembling supporters to either accumulate the voting bloc or disperse themselves to canvass votes during the election campaign. Blue represents the Democrat Party. Thus, the significant use of blue colour in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign is associated with the overall meaning of 'Democrat', which according to the Democrat Party website, means 'ประชาชนเป็นผู้ทรงไว้ซึ่งอำนาจอธิปไตย' which can be translated as 'the people are the ones who hold sovereign power.' On the Democrat Party website, no information was found particularly on the symbolism of colours used in the Democrat Party's logo,[14] but in 1946, the Democrat Party in Thailand was formed as 'a pro-royalist party grouping' (Pasuk and Baker, 1998, p.223). The royal colours are yellow, pink and blue, with blue associated with the birthday of the Queen of Thailand (McCargo, 2009, p.12). Using blue as the main colours in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign, this clearly relates his campaign to the Democrat Party and his campaign can also be perceived as royalist. 'Blue heart' can imply that supporters are not only constructing the image to support Democrat Party, but their minds and thoughts are truly allied with Democrat Party campaign and they are true Democrats.

Pongsapat used red in combination with white and dark blue in his election campaign and cover pages, which are the colours of the Thai national flag and the logo of the Pheu Thai Party, as shown in Figure 4.24:

Figure 4.24: Example of the designs of Pongsapat's Facebook cover page in relation to the Thailand national flag and the Pheu Thai Party logo (**Source:** Pongsapat's cover page from Figure 4.10, Pheu Thai Party logo from http://www.ptp.or.th/page/2 , Thailand national flag: Author)

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[14] ("บทความ: แม่พระธรณี [Article: Mother Earth]," 2009, "ประวัติพรรคประชาธิปัตย์ [History of Democrat Party]," 2009)

On Figure 4.24, the selection and combination of colours used in Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook accord to the colours of the logo of Pheu Thai Party, which has some reflection on the national flag of Thailand. According to Pheu Thai Party website (http://www.ptp.or.th/page/2), the name 'Pheu Thai Party' means 'knowing the love of harmony and being united as a single power of the people in the nation'.[15] The logo of the Pheu Thai Party is the Thai letters of 'พ' and 'ท', the initial letters of the Thai name, in dark blue with the backward sloping strokes in dark blue, red and white stripes (the colours of the national flag). The meaning of these letters is 'knowing the love of harmony and being united as a single power of the people in the nation by following in the footsteps of His Majesty the King who has the royal intention for the Thai people to know the love of harmony and be united as a single power'.[16] พรรคเพื่อไทย (Pheu Thai Party) printed in dark blue means 'the commitment to bring together Thai people from all sectors to mobilise wisdom and set short-, medium- and long-term policies to jointly develop the Thai nation for prosperity, security and sustainability forever'.[17]

The colours of Thai national flag symbolise nation (red), religion (white) and the monarchy (blue). Thai national flag has been used in different occasions. Peeranant and Kettawa (2015) outline that the Thai national flag has been used for: 1. Sports competition where the national flag represents Thailand; 2. Political symbol e.g. the political protest of People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), where the designs of various products contain the national flag printed on the product for people to show their love for the nation, religion and the King; 3. Used to cover coffins or cremated bones of individuals who have been killed when they were on duty, showing their courage and the sacrifice they had for Thailand; 4. Welcoming His Majesty the King; 5. Showing the government's ownership of places such as government premises. The use of Thai national flag colours in Pongsapat's campaign could also be perceived as nationalist.

On the other hand, the use of red in Pongsapat's campaign might be associated with the Red Shirts or the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) social movement, who are supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. According to Naruemon and McCargo (2011), the Red

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[15]   Translated from 'การรู้รักสามัคคีและรวมกันเป็นพลังอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกันของคนในชาติ' ("รู้จักพรรคเพื่อไทย เครื่องหมายพรรค [Get to know Pheu Thai Party: Party's mark]," n.d.)

[16]   Translated from 'การรู้รัก   สามัคคีและรวมกันเป็นพลังอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกันของคนชาติไทยโดยตามรอยพระยุคลบาทของพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวฯที่ทรงมีพระราชประสงค์ให้คนไทยรู้รักสามัคคีและรวมกันเป็นพลังอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกัน.'Ibid.

[17] Translated from 'ความมุ่งมั่นรวมเอาคนไทยจากทุกภาคส่วนมาระดมสติปัญญา กำหนดนโยบายทั้งระยะสั้น ระยะกลางและระยะยาว เพื่อร่วมกันพัฒนาชาติไทยให้เจริญรุ่งเรือง มั่นคง ยั่งยืนตลอดไป.' Ibid.

Shirt protesters in 2010 were mainly working-class Thais from the North and Northeast. It could be said that the nomination of Pongsapat by the Pheu Thai Party under Yingluck Shinawatra, who was Prime Minister at the time of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, is further connected to the Red Shirt protesters in Thailand. The use of red in Pongsapat's campaign material can be perceived as the candidate's approach to governing Bangkok in accordance with Yingluck's and Thaksin's populist policies.

In short, the selection and symbolism of colours in 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election on Facebook is significant as it reflects certain meanings, depending on which perspective one takes to interpret the colour. The difference in colours used by M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat campaign on Facebook represents the ideological origin of the political party that nominated them for the election campaign, which clearly distinguish both candidates' campaign. Blue colour has always been used to represent Democrat Party or candidate nominated by Democrat Party in previous general elections or Bangkok gubernatorial elections. The significance of using the blue colour in M.R Sukhumbhand's campaign shows the direct relationship between his campaign and Democracy Party. Blue colour also conspicuously portrays his campaign associating with pro-royalists groupings, based on how the political party was formed. On the other hand, blue colour also represents the meaning of being Democrat Party i.e. 'the people are the ones who hold sovereign power.' As for Pongsapat's campaign, the use of red, dark blue and white colour are aligned with the origin of Phue Thai Party, which is the banned Thai Rak Thai Party, founded by Thaksin. Thus, both candidates' usage of colours was identical and was used as their political symbol before the social movements of Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt.

4.4.2. Social networking information

SNS logos and candidates' usernames appear on candidates' cover pages. M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat regularly used SNS logos to remind viewers of the SNS platforms used, with an identical username for SNS platforms.

Figure 4.25: Example of the designs of M.R. Sukhumbhand Facebook cover page that contains his SNS information and candidate number, uploaded on 21 January 2013 (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013f).

Figure 4.26: Example of the designs of Pongsapat's cover page that contains his SNS information and candidate number, uploaded on 21 January 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013b).

As shown in Figure 4.25 and 4.26, M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook cover pages contain SNS logos of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Google Plus, while Pongsapat's cover pages contain SNS logos of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. M.R. Sukhumbhand's SNS username is 'Sukhumbhandp', which is a combination of his given name and the initial letter of his family name. Pongsapat's SNS accounts have only one username, i.e. 'PongsapatBKK', which is a combination of his given name and the abbreviation of 'Bangkok'. Both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used one username for all SNS platforms, which made their SNS identities consistent, creating convenience when people search for them on SNSs. Presenting candidates' usernames for the SNSs platforms that they were using during the election campaign shows that both candidates tried to expand their networks on SNSs as much as possible. Over half of the candidates' Facebook pages contain information linked to other SNS platforms, implying a 'network of networks' that candidate strive to expand from their Facebook cover page. The SNS logos show different channels of SNS

communication and guide viewers to connect with the candidate on SNSs, ensuring that users can receive the candidates' campaign message according to their preferred platforms.

It should be noted here that Pongsapat's first four cover pages contained the message 'Like พงศพัศ, Share อนาคตกรุงเทพฯ', meaning 'Like Pongsapat, Share the future of Bangkok', showing the Facebook 'Like' logo, a hand with a raised thumb. A few connotations could be interpreted from this. Firstly, the word 'Like' symbolises the act of interacting to agree on content on Facebook and it can also be used to 'follow' Facebook users. Secondly, the word 'Share' encourages people to spread Facebook content or suggest the Facebook page to other users. Also, the word 'Share' could refer to Pongsapat's intention of 'sharing' his ideas on SNSs to build Bangkok. As a result, the words 'Like' and 'Share' used as part of SNS slogan can give a sense of encouragement for Pongsapat's followers to interact. Acquiring a reasonably high number of followers would be more important for Pongsapat as he is a new candidate who did not have a network on SNSs prior to the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

Both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat constantly used SNSs logos in the design of their cover pages, which shows the significance of SNS logos and their usernames as part of their campaigns, informing viewers about the SNS platforms that candidates use with the same usernames for different SNSs platforms. This is a way to increase the number of followers in the candidates' networks and accommodates followers' preference in SNS platforms. Pongsapat in particular also encourages followers to follow him or interact with him on SNSs, which can expand his SNS network.

The design of both candidates' Facebook cover pages is a digital format of other print media used during the election campaign as shown in Figure 5.24 and 5.25 (below):

Figure 4.27: SNS information on M.R. Sukhumbhand's brochure (middle) and mini billboard (right) reflect SNS information provided on M.R. Sukhumbhand's first Facebook cover page (left) (Source: M.R. Sukhumbhand's first Facebook cover page from Figure 4.9, other photographs: Author)

Figure 4.28: SNS information on Pongsapat's brochure (middle) and billboard (right) reflect SNS information provided on Pongsapat's first Facebook cover page (left) (Source: Pongsapat's first Facebook cover page from Figure 4.26, other photographs: Author)

Based on Figure 4.27 and 4.28, the holistic information, visual images and colours used and presented on candidates' Facebook cover pages, billboards and brochures are a reflection of each other, which strengthens the identity of the candidates' campaigns. This can be an advantage for potential followers

searching for the candidates' Facebook pages, who might have some familiarity with the visual images on billboards and brochures. Referring to McNair's (2011) definition of political advertisements, designs of candidates' Facebook cover pages that incorporate with the designs of their billboards and brochures can be considered as political advertising. The Facebook cover pages transmit similar messages to the holistic image of candidates' billboards and brochures. Candidates have control over the messages shown on these media. Traditional print media remained relevant during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign to introduce the candidate and their social networks. Candidates did not have to pay commercial rates to upload the different Facebook cover pages as they did to print election campaign brochures and billboards, but surely human and financial resources were needed to assist candidates in designing the Facebook cover pages. Candidates changed their Facebook cover pages every few days during the election campaign. The political advertisements on print media and digital media were developed as candidates' Facebook cover pages, billboards and brochures contain signs of SNSs and links to their SNSs accounts.

The SNS logos, websites and usernames stated on candidates' billboards and brochures is a way for candidates to increase awareness of their use of SNSs and at the same time the SNS links introduce viewers to the candidates' SNS pages. In other words, SNS information stated on candidates' print media could attract more voters to 'follow' the candidate on his social networking pages or website. Instead of voters decoding campaign messages only from candidates' billboards and brochures, they are introduced to another platform of communication, where voters would be able to receive campaign messages 'directly' from the candidates. As a result, voters are able to know different aspects of the candidates, their policies and updates about the candidates during the election campaign. At the same time, more voters following candidates on SNSs would mean that candidates are able to broadcast their campaign to a larger number of voters, increasing the spreadability of digital vote-canvassing networks, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Social networking links and logos shown on billboards and brochures establish a relationship between 'old' media and new media, which develops the way that voters receive campaign information.

4.4.3. Candidates' election numbers

Another significant feature of Thai elections is the candidate number, as shown in Figure 4.25 and 4.26. Example of the designs of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's cover page that contains their SNS information and candidate number, which has been a fundamental identification item for voters to recognise candidates. In Thai elections, candidates and vote-canvassers keep reminding voters of the candidates' election numbers so that voters will remember it when they vote (Sombat, 1993,

pp.92-93). Candidates believe that getting number 1 or numbers close to it makes it easy for voters to remember (Surapongse, 2002, p.186).

21 January 2013 was the official start of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, allowing candidates to register officially for the election and draw their candidate number. The process of candidates drawing their number out from the ballot becomes the climaxes on 21 January 2013. According to ASTV Manager Online (2013) news report, the director of the Election Commission for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election drew number out of the ballot in order to arrange the sequence of the candidate who will be drawing their candidate number from the ballot, which M.R. Sukhumbhand was the fourth candidate to draw his number, while Pongsapat was the last candidate to draw his candidate number.[18] As a result, M.R. Sukhumbhand drew out '16', while Pongsapat drew out '9'. This research also found that the election numbers of M.R. Sukhumbhand (16) and Pongsapat (9) were an integral part of their campaigns on Facebook and the design of their cover pages and their campaign. Both candidates showed an attempt to be optimistic about their election numbers by continuously reminding followers about their numbers throughout the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

'Number 16' does not have a significant meaning in Thai culture, but the 'Number 16' reminds Thai people of the drawing of the national lottery in Thailand, which occurs every 1st and 16th day of the month by the Government Lottery Office. M.R. Sukhumbhand tried to interpret 'Number 16' in a way that was relevant to his campaign. On the day that M.R. Sukhumbhand drew 'Number 16', he posted on his Facebook page 'Number 16' is a nice number. I am ready to be the 16th Bangkok Governor'. This shows that M.R. Sukhumbhand perceived 'Number 16' as auspicious or lucky for himself. The statement indicates that the candidate believes in superstition as the candidate made a spurious claim, using his election number to predict the result of the election.

M.R. Sukhumbhand also made use of his candidate number by summarising his policies as '10 มาตรการเร่งด่วน + 6 นโยบาย ร่วมสร้างกรุงเทพฯ คือ 16 งานที่ต้องเดินหน้าทันที', which can be translated as '10 urgent measures plus 6 policies to build Bangkok make 16 jobs to take forward immediately'. This is a way to remind voters that the 'Number 16' signifies the 16 main policies that the candidate is offering in the election and ensuring that the number of his policies reflects his election number.

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[18] ("รับสมัครผู้ว่าฯ กทม.คึกคัก! 'สุขุมพันธุ์' หยิบเบอร์ 16 ส่วน 'พงศพัศ' เฮงได้เบอร์ 9 [Lively registration of candidates for Bangkok Governor ! Sukhumbhand picks number 16 while Pongsapat luckily gets number 9]," 2013).

M.R. Sukhumbhand also used hashtag signs (#) in his Facebook posts throughout the election campaign e.g. #vote16, which personalises consumption of online information (Papacharissi, 2010) in a way that it can direct users to related topics (#vote16) within the network, providing convenience for people who are interested in the topic to read and interact more with the content. The use of #vote16 is also a sign to remind voters of the candidate's number as well as to centralise all campaign messages within one click. This shows that the candidate number is not only significant in Thai election campaigns, but candidates use their number to integrate with hyperlinks tools on Facebook.

On the day after Pongsapat drew his candidate number, he noted on Facebook that he saw many newspapers teasing him for his good fortune in drawing 'number 9', but he wanted to inform them that 'number 9' was the last ball in the ballot. This means as he was the last candidate to draw an election number, there was no other number for him to choose. 'Number 9' has certain meaning for Thai people. The current King of Thailand, King Bhumibol Adulyadej is also known as Rama IX, because King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the ninth monarch of the Chakri Dynasty. King Bhumibol Adulyadej has been making major contributions and development to rural areas, enabling the relationship between the King and Thai people to be a 'unique relationship' (Pasuk and Baker, 1998, pp.240-242).

In Pongsapat's campaign, Pongsapat related his election campaign to a near homophone. The pronunciation for 'nine' *kao* (เก้า) in Thai language is a near homophone of *kaao* (ก้าว), meaning 'to take a step' or 'to move forward'. *Kaao* (ก้าว) can be used in compounds like *kaao klai* (ก้าวไกล) or *kaao na* (ก้าวหน้า), which both mean 'to advance' or 'to progress'. Pongsapat used this homophony as part of his campaign. This was found on his Facebook posts i.e. จับมือไว้ แล้ว 'เก้า' ไปด้วยกันครับ, meaning 'Hold hands and step forward together'. Pongsapat used the spelling *kao* เก้า (9) in this message instead of the correct spelling *kaao* ก้าว (moving forward). Pongsapat introduced his policies at the Pheu Thai Party headquarters, with a backdrop displaying *kaao na*, *kaao klai*, *kaao pai phrom kan*, which means 'move forward, move far, move together'. Making use of the homophony led to an optimistic, enthusiastic and confident campaign, showing the candidate's intention to move forward together with voters and the government, Pongsapat was able to give his campaign an auspicious

sense by playing on the homophony of 'number 9'.[19] Thus, it could be said that another major aspect of political public relations in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was trying to make sense of candidate numbers, regardless of what number candidate drew out. The candidates created subjective interpretations of their numbers but the most important role of a candidate number is to identify the candidate.

To conclude, the candidates' cover pages on Facebook during the election campaign were designed and adapted to the features of campaigning on Facebook by including items such as social networking site logos, candidate usernames, political party logos, candidate numbers, visual images and colours that are symbols of their political parties. It could be said that these items reflect purposeful communication, seeking to present an image of the candidates and expand the candidates' SNS networks. The changes and management of the candidates' cover pages could draw the attention of and engage followers and potential followers to the candidates' campaigns on Facebook.

Conclusion

This chapter sets out to answer the research question: *What features of visual image management were found on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?* After analysing the fundamental elements of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages, this chapter argues that one of the primary aspects of political public relations on the candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was the management of core information that candidates revealed and the main visual images that candidates portray in their Facebook profile pictures and cover pages to show their suitability as Bangkok governor. Political public relations with respect to the candidates' core information and visual images consisted of deciding the image that the candidates intended to establish and the selection of other signs to enhance the visual representation so that followers could easily understand, assimilate and spread the visual image.

M.R. Sukhumbhand could be viewed as having a *phudi* image based on his title and long-term political background, but he also takes acre to portray himself as an ordinary person working with the

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[19] Pongsapat's biography on his Facebook page, notes that he was born on 9 December 1955. But based on a content analysis of his Facebook page, Pongsapat did not mention 'number 9' in relation to his birthday.

political elite and local people. Pongsapat has a hybrid background as highly educated and a career police officer, which also indicates his ability to work with officers from different areas and Thais of various social-economic backgrounds. Each candidate used their career and education background information to introduce themselves on Facebook, which was also able to relate to followers of different in political interests, occupations and demographics.

With the use of Grabe and Bucy's framework to analyse M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook profile pictures, this chapter found that both candidates' Facebook profile pictures used during the election campaign were framed in a similar way to portray them as ordinary people having a pleasant personality, blending their image to SNSs platforms as an informal channel of communication, with limited signs of the candidates having direct statesmanship qualities or symbols associated with their career background or social class. Both candidates' Facebook profile picture omitted from their image anything based on whom they used to be, but have approached their election campaign on Facebook in more a welcoming way. The single profile picture used on each candidate's Facebook page clearly distinguished each candidate from other candidates in the same election, enabling voters to recognise the candidates according to how the candidates wanted voters to perceive them.

In terms of Facebook cover pages, both candidates integrated different themes of images to give different overviews of their campaigns, changing their cover pages every 1-3 days. This chapter found that the ideal candidate and populist campaigner frame were significant in representing the overall image of the candidates' campaigns. Visual images associated with statesmanship and mass appeal were based on the response that candidates got from crowds. As the candidates' Facebook cover pages are the first visual image that followers and potential followers saw when they clicked onto the candidates' Facebook pages, the significant use of statesmanship and mass appeal visual images can be the first impression that followers and potential followers had, directing the *connectedness* of other politicians and using their image to endorse candidate's campaign. However, visual images that contain compassionate and ordinariness elements enabled the candidates to relate to voters better as these images showed the candidates communicating with voters and giving attention to particular voters.

Grabe and Bucy's framework in Appendix 3 remains relevant in studying visual images of candidates during the election campaign, but the use of the framework has to be adapted to the platform of communication, this particular election and the culture. Significant cultural practices such as giving and receiving marigold garlands can be used as predefined codes, categorised under mass appeal

theme. As the Election Commission did not allow candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election to use the endorsements of celebrities in the entertainment industry, this category was missing from the criteria to code mass appeal theme.

As analysed in section 4.4 of this chapter, the design of candidates' Facebook cover pages involved careful selection of visual images and the inclusion of different signs such as SNS logos, candidate usernames, candidate election numbers, political party logos and colours, to clearly communicate core information about the candidate. Colours used on the candidates' Facebook cover pages reflected the candidate's political party ideology. Candidates' SNS usernames and the use of SNS logos inform also directed potential followers to candidate social networks. Candidate's election numbers represent candidate's campaign numerically. Thus, signs associated with individual platforms of communication, elections and culture are important visual representations of candidates' campaigns on SNSs and should, therefore, be included as part of the semiotic visual framework.

The argument on political public relations on SNSs initiated in this chapter provides an understanding of candidates' management of core information and visual images to communicate their campaign. To gain a broader perspective of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's campaigns on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, Chapter 5 analyses Facebook posts published on their Facebook pages during the election campaign.

Chapter 5 : Management of Policy-related Posts on Facebook

Introduction

The policies that candidate's proposed is another fundamental element in election campaign. Viewed from election campaign perspective, Baines (2011) proposes that political public relations is 'winning electoral support by influencing public opinion and voting behaviour, partly by outlining one's own parties' policies and leadership team and partly by damaging the credibility of the opponents' policy platform and leadership aspirations' (p.116). As Facebook puts candidates and their public relations personnel in control of the posts about candidates' campaigns, the candidates and public relations personnel can strategise communication with the candidates' followers based on policies.

This chapter sets out to answer the research question: *'What features of multimodal image and information management were found on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?'* The chapter explores information management on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election with particular focus on posts which are related to candidate's policy in order to determine the patterns of disseminating campaign information and the way in which candidates and their team takes control on the flow of campaign information on candidate's Facebook page to engage and influence follows.

The first section of this chapter gives an overview of the campaigns of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat by reviewing how each of their campaign slogans was framed with regard to their approach to governing Bangkok. The second section moves on to determine the different ways and patterns that candidate adapted to communicate about their policies on Facebook during the election campaign. The final section focuses on how candidates make their campaign and policy-related posts more influential by incorporating their policies to other elements of the election campaign in order to assist followers in interpreting the candidates' campaigns in accordance with different perspectives.

5.1. Framing of campaign slogans

The concept of framing is related to the way an issue is being talked about (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) or how any aspects of the issues are more salient than others in order to promote the issue in a particular way (Entman, 1993, p.52 cited in Hamdy and Gomaa, 2012, p.197). The use of frames,

therefore, aims to influence the way the media audience reacts to news (Dainton and Zelley, 2005; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley, 1997; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). This section examines the way in which M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat framed their campaign slogans to give an overview of their policies.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign slogan in his first Facebook cover page in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was 'รักกรุงเทพฯ ร่วมสร้างกรุงเทพฯ เลือก ม.ร.ว. สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร', which can be translated as 'Love Bangkok, build Bangkok together, elect M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra', while Pongsapat's campaign slogan in his first Facebook cover page was 'วางยุทธศาสตร์ สร้างอนาคตกรุงเทพฯ ร่วมกับรัฐบาลอย่างไร้รอยต่อ' meaning 'Set strategy, build Bangkok's future with the government seamlessly'. Pongsapat's slogan relates his strategy to work with the government seamlessly, meaning 'lack of joints.' The metaphorical meaning of Pongsapat's slogan would be interpreted as claiming that the 'cause' of problems in Bangkok is the existence of 'joints' or junctions between the Bangkok governor, including the incumbent governor, M.R. Sukhumbhand, and the Thai national government, which might not produce a *smooth* result.

As for Pongsapat's slogan, the phrase 'work with the government seamlessly' refers to the interdependent co-operating relationship of *phakphuak* between Pongsapat and the government if Pongsapat or the Pheu Thai Party wins the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. The government at the time of the election, was led by a woman (Yingluck Shinawatra). This also shows the link between Pongsapat and the government in the same elite 'group' working together. As the Pheu Thai Party nominated Pongsapat, Pongsapat made use of his affiliation in his campaign. Consequently, Pongsapat's integrated his relationship with the government in his slogan to receive democratic mandate by winning the elections to govern Bangkok as the law dictates, which can minimise conflicts of interest between the Bangkok governor and the Thai government. Difficulties arise when judging whether the notion of *phakphuak* portrays a positive image of the candidate and the political party. With reference to Chai's (1994) point of the *phakphuak* system containing prejudiced elements, it could be said that the domination of political power by the Thai government and Pongsapat could bring a negative impact in that they might implement policies and make decisions based on their own interests, without facing any objection or challenges. If a voter is pessimistic on Pheu Thai Party or Thai Rak Thai Party, or the notion of Bangkok Governor being the same *phakphuak* as the Thai government, the slogan of to 'work with government seamlessly' could challenge their voting decision.

Pongsapat elaborated his slogan and approach to work with government by phrases such as 'ประสานกับ รัฐบาล' which can be translated as 'coordinate work with government.' For example, Pongsapat's final set of policies on 'Revitalize Bangkok', launched on Pongsapat's Facebook page by his strategic team two days before the election day, mentioned increasing the 'green space' in Bangkok and initiating a 'Creative Economy' by coordinating with the government. Other examples of policy coordinated with the government include Pongsapat's transportation policy for northern Bangkok with an 'International Transportation and Logistics Centre' in preparation for the introduction of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Pongsapat explains his approach to working with the government seamlessly by proposing his policies in relation to working with the government.

Another phrase that Pongsapat used in his campaign on Facebook was 'จับมือไว้แล้วไปด้วยกับ' which can be translated as 'Hold hands then go together' and 'จับมือไว้แล้ว เก้า (ก้าว) ไปด้วยกับ' which can be translated as 'Hold hands then step forward together.' These two phrases can be interpreted in two ways when used as a more informal campaign slogan, which Pongsapat might have attempt to integrate with his initial core slogan of 'work with government seamlessly.' On one hand, the two phrases envisage Pongsapat holding hands with the Thai government, which means that the phrase repeats the idea of 'work with government seamlessly', but with the noun 'government' taken out. On the other hand, the phrase 'holding hands' reflects Pongsapat's intention to work collaboratively with Bangkokians or all sectors in Bangkok to move Bangkok forward together.

The word 'ยุทธศาสตร์' means 'strategy' and 'ไร้รอยต่อ' means 'seamless'. These two words/phrases need further elaboration and examples for readers to understand what Pongsapat intended to communicate on his cover page. Notwithstanding the fact that Pongsapat aimed to design his campaign specifically under this slogan or that he intended to establish his relationship with the government, the message could have been more reader-friendly to diverse potential followers in order for them to be able to decode his campaign message quickly.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's original campaign slogan was 'รักกรุงเทพฯ ร่วมสร้างกรุงเทพฯ เลือก ม.ร.ว. สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร', which means 'Love Bangkok, build Bangkok together, elect M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra'. This slogan was not framed in relation to his political party, but it was framed to encourage voters to directly vote for the candidate. The use of the word รัก (love) to start off the message highlights the

strong feeling of concern that a person has for Bangkok. The second part of the message shows M.R. Sukhumbhand's willingness to have people collaborating with him to สร้าง (build) Bangkok, giving a sense of engagement by including voters to be part of his proposal to 'build Bangkok.' M.R. Sukhumbhand was trying guide people to vote for him by showing the cause and consequence i.e. if people love Bangkok, they should elect M.R. Sukhumbhand so that they can collaborate in building Bangkok with him. M.R. Sukhumbhand's slogan was giving a sense of unity, belonging and identity to Bangkok. Thus, if viewers read the message and they feel that they 'love' Bangkok, they would be interested in 'building' Bangkok with M.R. Sukhumbhand. The word 'elect' encourages voters to vote for M.R. Sukhumbhand.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's slogan has a few similarities to Samak Sundaravej's campaign slogan in the 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign as shown below:

Figure 5.1: Print medium of Samak Sundaravej in the 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election from (Photograph from Surapongse Sotanasathien, 2002, p.204).

Figure 5.1 shows the text message in the brochure of Samak Sundaravej, the winner of 2000 Bangkok gubernatorial election: 'ถ้าจะใช้ผม ...กรุณาเลือกผม หมายเลข ๗ ๒๓ กรกฎา เลือกสมัคร เป็นผู้ว่ากทม', which can be translated as 'If you want to use me, please elect me. Number 7. 23 July, elect Samak as Bangkok governor.' The slogans of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Samak are similar in that both use the word 'elect' and their name as part of their slogan. In Samak's slogan, the word 'elect' gives a sense of direction for voters to take action in voting for the candidate as a result of the condition that candidate gives, which the candidate viewed himself as subordinate to the voters, who would be the candidate's bosses if the candidate won the election. Also, the word 'elect' is related to 'democracy' in which voters are allowed to have choices in elections and vote for the candidate that they support, without any authoritarian command to restrict voters from choosing which candidate to vote for.

It is noteworthy that another of M.R. Sukhumbhand slogan was: 'กรุงเทพฯ เดินหน้าทันที ►►' which can be translated as 'Bangkok moves forward immediately ►►.' This slogan used the benefit of being the incumbent to explain his policies in the next term. The verb 'เดินหน้า' (move forward), represents the candidate's idea of keep on developing Bangkok and implement policy. The word 'ทันที' (immediately) indicates there will not be any delays in implementation policy. The 'forward sign' ►► symbolises a sense of direction in the candidate's campaign as well as conveying a sense of the modern, digital world. Thus, this slogan indicates a connecting point between M.R. Sukhumbhand's first and second terms as governor. Arguably, M.R. Sukhumbhand was an incumbent of the election and has the advantage to formulate such slogan, but new candidate of the election can also frame their slogan in a similar way if they intend to communicate the same meaning.

When M.R. Sukhumbhand elaborated his campaign slogan on his Facebook posts during the election campaign, he made extensive usage of the word *tham*. Literally, the word *tham* alone means 'do' or 'make'. M.R. Sukhumbhand used the word *tham* in the context of his policies, in combination with other words to form new phrases. M.R. Sukhumbhand attempted to link his policies to his work performance as a Bangkok Governor and the policies which he proposed in 2009 Bangkok gubernatorial election. M.R. Sukhumbhand mainly used the word *tham* to talk about what he had achieved as a Bangkok Governor in the previous term. For example, M.R. Sukhumbhand links his new policies with his work performance in 'ตลอด 4 ปีทำหลายอย่าง' which can be translated as means 'Throughout the past 4 years, I did many things', 'ทำแล้วจะทำต่อ' which can be translated as 'What has been done already, will continue to be done' and 'ทำได้จริง which can be translated as 'truly able to do'.

In the phrases 'ตลอด 4 ปีทำหลายอย่าง' ('Throughout the past 4 years, I did many things') and 'ทำแล้ว' ('done already'), M.R. Sukhumbhand was summarising his past 4 years work performance as Bangkok Governor. He was creating awareness among Bangkokians and was promoting his work performance in order to establish the image of being an incumbent who has significantly contributed to Bangkok. M.R. Sukhumbhand's frequent references to what he had done for Bangkok might be due to voters' questions about what he had done in the previous four years and why he should be re-elected. M.R. Sukhumbhand took Facebook as a platform to clearly highlight the development that he had contributed to different areas and sectors in Bangkok, for example, the 12.75 km BTS extension lines to reduce traffic congestion and increase convenience in moving around in Bangkok, the installation of more CCTVs in Bangkok, his contribution to the Thonburi side of Bangkok and Nong

Jok District, and the free breakfasts that he had provided to 340,000 schoolchildren in Bangkok as examples of groups of people benefiting from his work performance.

Highlighting what the candidate had done in the previous four years shows the candidate's attempt to portray himself as an action-minded governor who accomplished the goals and policies that he initiated four years ago. Also, continuously stressing his own work performance reflects M.R. Sukhumbhand's way of telling voters that he was worth electing in four years ago, and voters should vote for him again in the upcoming election. This point leads to another phrase, 'จะทำต่อ' (will continue doing), found to also have important meaning in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign. This phrase connected what he had already done to what he will carry on doing. At times, this phrase was replaced with 'สานต่อ' (follow through), both phrases indicating that what he is going to do or what he will continue to do is related to what he had already done in the previous four years. These have a few implications.

Firstly, M.R. Sukhumbhand will persist with the projects and policies which he perceived to be useful and relevant in developing and improving lives in Bangkok, once he is re-elected. A change in governor will not guarantee that the projects will remain. Secondly, M.R. Sukhumbhand was unable to complete some projects or fully implement some policies, which, as stated on his Facebook page, was due to the limited timeframe (4 years) and the challenges to his governorship from external events such as the flood crisis in 2011. At this point, it could be said that the phrases 'จะทำต่อ' and 'สานต่อ' were used to protect his image from the incomplete projects and at the same time, give voters the sense of follow-up and establish the direction of M.R. Sukhumbhand's policies and campaign, which might make voters reluctant to change governor. Arguably, for voters who were against or did not favour M.R. Sukhumbhand's policies or his approach to solving problems, the phrase 'จะทำต่อ' signifies that his campaign was conventional because he is going into the same direction as before, without much indication of new approaches being used. This means that voters who have doubts about M.R. Sukhumbhand's work performance as Governor might become even more pessimistic with his current campaign, indicating that the phrase 'จะทำต่อ' could create different impressions among different voters.

Lastly, the phrase 'ทำได้จริง' (truly able to do) reflects what is possible, and M.R. Sukhumbhand used this phrase in the context of what his experience as Bangkok Governor showed him about which types

of policies were achievable. As critical voters tend to perceive candidates in Thai elections as being unrealistic in planning and implementing their policies within a timeframe, candidates tend to just market their policies during the election campaign to persuade voters to vote for them. Thus, by stressing what is achievable, M.R. Sukhumbhand was attempting to show that his proposed policies are not wishful thinking but can be implemented. The phrase 'ทำได้จริง' establishes and confirms M.R. Sukhumbhand's image of having realistic policies. It was possible for him to continue developing his policies based on his experience as Bangkok Governor. Above all, the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was a connecting point between M.R. Sukhumbhand's first and second terms, and he attempted to portray his image as an incumbent who had experience in this position, ready continue for another term.

To summarise, M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat framed their campaign slogans and propose their policies differently, based on their status and what they were known for at the time of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. As these candidates were the main competitors, they used different approaches to portray their image of being what Grabe and Bucy (2013) refer to as an 'ideal candidate', having the qualifications to take the position that the candidates are campaigning for. Pongsapat's image of being an ideal candidate consists of a significant element of 'statesmanship' as his policy strategy was to collaborate with the Thai government seamlessly. If Pongsapat wins the election, there would be a change in the trend of Bangkok having a governor from the Democrat Party. The overall perception that voters could get from Pongsapat's slogan is that his campaign is related to the government and is somehow interdependent with the government as he intends to work with the government seamlessly. On the other hand, M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent, and the framing of M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign slogan took advantage of this to say in his campaign that Bangkok would move forward if he was re-elected. As M.R. Sukhumbhand also used his name as part of his slogan, it related to voters in a more individualistic manner, commanding voters to democratically return him to power as Bangkok governor. Thus, the overall perception that voters could get from M.R. Sukhumbhand would be that the candidate is independent and action-minded to govern Bangkok for another term.

5.2. Management of policy-related posts

According to Anek (1996), middle-class Thais critically evaluate candidates' policies based on the impact that the policy will have on the country as a whole, which is different from how rural people judge candidates based on the 'parochial and personal benefits' that they gain from the candidates (p.221). This means that policy is an important selling point during an election campaign for middle-

class Thais. Taking into consideration there were 45 days to campaign, introducing and explaining policies on Facebook involved management of the number of posts on Facebook in relation to the different phases of the election campaign to accord with Bangkokians' voting behaviour. Due to the differences in the backgrounds of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat, each candidate might also emphasise particular policies in relation to their specialist knowledge and the voters that they are specifically targeting.

This section aims to examine candidates' management of policy-related posts on Facebook by first determining the overall distribution of policy and non-policy-related posts of each candidate and the different ways candidate adopted to introduce their policies. Then, this section moves on to review the emphasis of their policy statements during different phases of the election and the weight that candidates gave to different policies. The analysis in this section enhances our understanding of the management of policy-related posts in relation to the establishment or development of a relationship between candidates and followers, and how the management of policy-related posts could lead to a different level of interaction over the entire election campaign period.

5.2.1. Quantity of policy-related posts

The following table presents an overview of Facebook posts by M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat, showing the percentage of posts which are policy-related and non-policy-related

	M.R. Sukhumbhand		Pongsapat	
	No. of posts	Percentage	No. of posts	Percentage
Posts which contain the keyword 'นโยบาย' (policy)	114	24.5%	66	16.3%
Posts which were manually coded as policy-related posts	84	18.1%	69	17.1%
Total policy-related posts	**198**	**42.6%**	**135**	**33.4%**
Non-policy-related posts	267	57.4%	269	66.6%
	n=465		**n=404**	

Table 5.1: Distribution of policy and non-policy textual content on the Facebook pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat.

Table 5.1 shows that M.R. Sukhumbhand had 42.6%, and Pongsapat had 33.4% policy-related posts. The remainder were non-policy-related posts, which contained no element of a plan or strategy in problem-solving or developing Bangkok. The difference in the percentages of policy-related posts between M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat campaign on Facebook indicates the different level of focus that both candidates place on policy-related content. M.R. Sukhumbhand was more policy-orientated than Pongsapat as he had more policy-related content on Facebook. A possible reason for this could be that M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent, giving him an advantage of skills and knowledge to relate his campaign to his experience as Bangkok governor in the past four years and further develop his policies or propose new policies with more expertise and efficiency. The 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election was an appraisal for M.R. Sukhumbhand as voters got to judge if M.R. Sukhumbhand should be Bangkok Governor for another term.

Because Pongsapat was a new candidate for Bangkok gubernatorial election, Pongsapat needed to use his Facebook post to construct an image based on his personality, background and campaign schedule so that his followers would be able to get to know him better. Also, the Pheu Thai Party had never won any Bangkok gubernatorial election in the past, so Pongsapat and the Pheu Thai Party might struggle to develop policies in the interests of Bangkokians. Another possible reason for Pongsapat having a lower percentage of policy-related posts was due to his proposal to work with government seamlessly as he stated in his campaign slogan. This means that Pongsapat could depend on the government for policies. On one hand, it could be said that Pongsapat was not as policy-oriented as M.R. Sukhumbhand on Facebook. On the contrary, Pongsapat might be significantly dependent on another medium to communicate on his policies.

Non-policy-related posts of both candidates constitute more than 50% of the total posts made during the election campaign. These posts include short messages and images which contain information on the place and time of campaign events, media interviews, debates with other candidates or meeting voters. In non-policy-related posts candidates encourage their followers to interact with candidate's Facebook page. (This will be further analysed in Chapter 6 on how such posts can increase the spreadability of candidate's campaign on Facebook as candidates engage followers on their Facebook pages and ensure continuous momentum on 'live feeds'.) Real-time reporting of the candidates' campaign with images allowed followers to experience the candidates' offline campaigns. Information on candidates' future schedules informed followers about the place and the time of campaign events, which gave followers the chance to meet and interact with the candidates.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's policy-related posts were associated with his work performance and the policies which he campaigned on in the 2009 Bangkok gubernatorial election. 24.5% of M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook posts directly referred to policy, containing the keyword 'policy' to indicate his policy in the posts e.g. 'ผมมีนโยบายเกี่ยวกับ' (I have policy about) 'ผมมีนโยบายที่จะเพิ่ม' (I have policy to add) or 'หนึ่งในนโยบายของผม' (one of my policies). In another 18.1% of M.R. Sukhumbhand's posts which were policy-related but did not content the word 'policy', he would use phases such as 'ผมจะเดินหน้าติด CCTV' (I will walk go forward to install CCTVs), 'ผมตั้งใจที่' (I intend to) and 'ผมตั้งเป้าพัฒนา' (I aim to develop). These phrases are examples of rephrasing policy and attempting to mention policy in an implicit way, but at the same time still showing his objective to launch his policy and create awareness of what he intends to do.

The result of Table 5.1 shows that 33.4% of Pongsapat's Facebook posts were policy-related, made up of 16.3 % of total posts using the word 'policy' and 17.1% of total posts manually coded as policy-related. Pongsapat used two ways to launch and discuss his policies on Facebook during the election campaign and both ways might or might not use the word 'policy.' The first type of policy was launched formally in different sets with time intervals in between each set, which contained a clear statement and identification of Pongsapat's proposed policy. This type of policy-related post had the word 'policy' in the title given to the set of policies that he was launching. It was found in this research that Pongsapat launched a total of five sets of policy during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and each set was posted in a numbered sequence with a proper title to the posts, which gave the sense that the next few posts were related to what the candidate just posted.

There was no pattern or timeframe in the launching of M.R. Sukhumbhand's policies on Facebook, but the posts which M.R. Sukhumbhand considered to be 'policy-related were organised into one album on Facebook. However, when examining Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook, this research found patterns in relation to the time of launching policies and the use of different visual images. As stated earlier, Pongsapat launched five sets of policies at different times and he used different info-graphics to identify the different sets of policies. For example, on the night of 31 January 2013, Pongsapat posted the first set of policies entitled 'เปิดตัวนโยบายหลักเรื่องที่ 1: ลดรายจ่าย เพิ่มรายได้'

('Launch of main policy number 1: reduce spending, increase income'). The content under this title includes what Pongsapat planned to do in order to achieve the objective of reducing spending and increasing income. Then, the presentation of Pongsapat's policies on his Facebook page continued on the following day, 1 February 2013, with another seven posts directly related to the heading 'Launch of main policy'. This set of policies was officially announced to his Facebook followers, with a clear outline of what the candidate attempted to achieve in his main set of policies.

The prevalent elements of Pongsapat's policy-related posts consisted of clear statements introducing policies, presented in bullet points and short paragraphs in order for the message to be reader-friendly on the Facebook page. The different sets of policy-related visual images were posted in sequence within 24 hours of the first post in the set. Dividing a set of policies into 3-8 posts allows the messages to be more comprehensive and might tempt followers to follow up on other policies. In other words, this type of posts gives a sense of 'follow up' on Pongsapat's Facebook page in order to completely understand the whole set of policies. Consequently, after viewing Pongsapat's info-graphics, viewers might want to share the content with their friends on Facebook, enabling more people to know more about Pongsapat's policies. Lastly, each set of policies was posted at intervals, varying from 7 to 13 days, which allowed the strategy management team to revise or adapt their

policies according to the problems that voters raised during Pongsapat's field campaigning. Another possible reason to stagger the presentation of policies was to give followers sufficient amount of time to digest the policies. Similar to M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook campaign, there were also policy-related posts in Pongsapat's campaign that contained the keyword 'policy' but these were not found in the posts which were launched in sets. Where the word 'policy' was not found in policy-related posts, Pongsapat used language such as แนวทางการ ('procedure'), 'ผมตั้งใจที่จะพัฒนา' ('I intend to develop') and 'ยุทธศาสตร์การ' 'strategy'). Such language was another way that Pongsapat communicated about his policies.

Thus there were the two major types of policy-related posts made on the Facebook pages of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat. The first type gave a direct indication that the candidate is talking about policy. The second type did not contain the keyword 'policy' but indicated what the candidate intended to do if he won the election. With a significant percentage of both types found on both candidates' Facebook pages with the same intention of persuading their followers about their policies, it could be said that both types of policy-related post were useful in campaigning on Facebook in the way for candidates to keep communicate about their policies and draw followers' attention to candidates' campaigns.

5.2.2. Overview of publication of policy in each phase

Two Gantt charts have been produced to visualise the candidates' emphasis on different policies during the period of the election campaign (see following page). Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show the patterns of individual candidate's policy mentions in relation to election campaign phases. The number in each cell shows the number of posts on that day that mentioned a particular policy. One post might mention more than one policy. The columns at the right show the total number of posts and the total number of days with posts.

Phase no: Phase 1 — Phase 2 — Phase 3 — Phase 4

Dates/ Policies	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	Total no. of posts	Total no. of days with posts
Day of the week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M		
Security M.R Sukhumbhand			1	3							2	1	2	4										2	1	2	1		3	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	2				1	1	3	1	3			48	27
Water Management M.R Sukhumbhan									1	1				1				1			1		2		7		2				4		2		1	1		3	1					3	1	2					33	16
Transportation M.R Sukhumbhand		1								2		1	2	1	1	2		1			2	1	4	3	5	1		4	2	2	1	4	1	6	4	2	1	1	5	2	1	1	2	3		5					74	32
Health care M.R Sukhumbhand			2						2		1	1	1	3							6	2	1	2	3		1	1	2	3	3	4	1	2		1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	3					60	29
Environment M.R Sukhumbhand	1					1		1			1		2	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1		1	1	1	2		1	3		1				48	34
Education M.R Sukhumbhand	2				2				1	1		1	4				2			1		1			2	1	1	4	2	4	2	6	1	3	3	1	3	5	6	4	1	1	2	3		4					74	30
ASEAN M.R Sukhumbhand	2			1				1			1	1		1			1				2	2		1	2	5		1	3	2	2	2			1	3		1	1		3	1									39	22
Economy M.R Sukhumbhand						1			1	1	1					1						1		1	3	3	4		3	1	4	1	1		3	3	2		1	1	3	3	3								46	23
Total number of policy mentions per day	5	1	1	5	3	0	1	0	4	4	4	6	10	11	6	3	1	2	4	1	9	4	9	10	6	26	5	5	20	17	15	11	26	8	23	15	8	7	15	25	11	7	6	9	24	8	21					
Total number of policy mentions per phase				34													70												177											141												

Key: ■ > 3 posts ■ 2 posts ■ 1 post

Other column labels: Official start of election campaign · Final day of election campaign · Election Day · Post Election

Figure 5.2: Gantt chart to visualise M.R. Sukhumbhand campaign on Facebook relating to the types of policy and emphasis on policy during the different phases of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

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Phase no: | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Phase 4

January 2013 / February 2013 / March 2013

Dates/ Policies	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	Total no. of posts	Total no. of days with posts
Day of the week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M		
Security Pongsapat															3		1	6				2	6	3	1	1		1	1		2	1	1		1		2	2							1		2				37	18
Water Management Pongsapat																1		1						1											1		1	1					1							7	7
Transportation Pongsapat			1					2	1	2	2	1		2			2			2	2				1	1	4	5	1	2	3	3	4	1						4	2	3									51	23
Health care Pongsapat		1	2				2	1	1	1	1		1			4			2	1	1	1		1							3						1	1			2							25	16
Environment Pongsapat			1				2			2	1	4		1						1	1		1	2			3			3	1	2						25	14
Education Pongsapat			1			1			2		1		1	1	1				1	1	1		2	3	3				1		2				22	15
ASEAN Pongsapat			2		1	1	2		1	1		1		1		1		1	1	3	1	3			1	4	2	4			31	18
Economy Pongsapat		1		1	1		2	2	2	2		1	1		3	1	1	1	3	2	7	3	3			39	19
Total number of policy mentions per day	0	0	0	1	2	4	4	0	0	4	2	4	6	2	6	10	2	5	21	0	1	4	7	8	5	2	4	0	3	3	6	13	2	4	4	7	10	14	7	1	1	6	0	4	22	8	18					
Total number of policy mentions per phase	21												72												53												91															

Legend: > 3 posts · 2 posts · 1 post

Vertical labels: "Official start of election campaign", "Final day of election campaign", "Election Day", "Post Election"

Figure 5.3: Gantt chart to visualise Pongsapat campaign on Facebook relating to the types of policy and emphasis on policy during the different phases of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

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Figure 5.4 (below) is derived from Figures 5.2 and 5.3, showing the frequency of policy mentions in each phase.
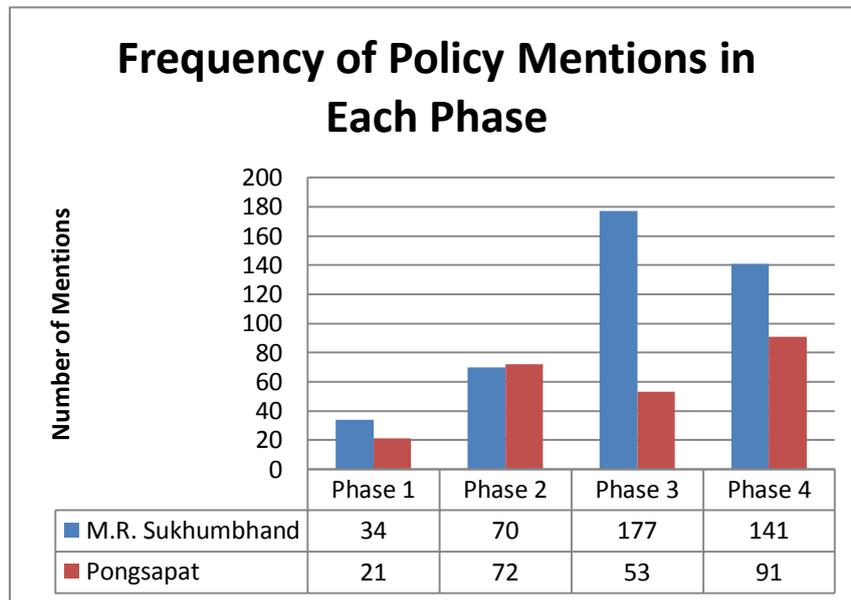
Figure 5.4: Frequency of policy referred to in each phase.

Figure 5.4 shows that **Phase 1** of the election campaign contained the fewest number of policy-related posts for both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat, 34 posts and 21 posts respectively. There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, the first half of Phase 1 was before the official start of the election campaign so both candidates intended to focus on introducing themselves to voters and raising awareness that they are competing in the election. M.R. Sukhumbhand did not make any Facebook posts about resigning as Bangkok governor until two days after he resigned, with a post about 'the atmosphere of opening the Election Centre' and his nomination by the Democrat Party, using of images to indicate his affiliation with Democrat Party politicians. During Phase 1, M.R. Sukhumbhand was also letting his followers know about his campaign experience and his schedule at different venues. The small number of policy-related posts found on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page during Phase 1 states that the candidate was utilising this phase to make a gradual a start to his campaign and introduce his policies.

As a new candidate, Pongsapat spent Phase 1 of the election campaign establishing his network on Facebook. This was to increase the number of followers and expand his network, making sure that his campaign message was broadcast to a mass audience. After his first Facebook post, subsequent posts published in Phase 1 (on 16, 17 and 19 January 2013) encouraged his followers to interact on his Facebook page. As the result of clicking 'Like', 'Share' or make a comment, Facebook algorithm

would enable Pongsapat's posts to appear on the followers' friends' status pages, as will be further analysed in the digital vote-canvassing network in Section 6.2. Thus, the majority of posts in this phase were non-policy-related, as Pongsapat focused on introducing himself to voters, with the secondary intention of proposing or explaining his policies.

Another possible reason why Phase 1 had the lowest number of policy-related posts might be that candidates attempted to focus on field campaigning to formulate and develop policies based on voters' problems that emerged after the candidates met the voters. Also, as will be discusses in Chapter 6, at the beginning of the election campaign, public relations personnel work to familiarise candidate's SNSs page. Thus, Phase 1 might have been a 'trial and error' stage for candidates' public relations personnel to familiarise themselves with the candidates' campaigns, making a few posts to investigate how the composition of different posts might affect how followers interacted with the candidates' Facebook page. Consequently, the number of policy-related posts for both candidates in Phase 1 was lower than other phases of the election campaign.

For both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat, the number of policy-related posts increased dramatically in **Phase 2** from 34 and 21 to 70 and 72 respectively**.** This increase can be explained by the fact that as voters became aware that both candidates were competing in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and had a certain number of followers as their base supporters on SNSs, both candidates started to feel more confident about introducing their policies formally and informally on Facebook. There were certain days in Phase 2 when both candidates started to stress particular policies, e.g. on 5th and 6th February 2013, M.R. Sukhumbhand made a total of 7 Facebook posts related to transportation policy, while Pongsapat mentioned policies related to security issues in two Facebook posts per day from 28 January to 1 February 2013. This pattern of gradual increase found in both candidates' campaigns implies the momentum of the election campaign on Facebook for both candidates.

The most striking result emerging from the data is that **Phase 3 and Phase 4,** which M.R. Sukhumbhand made 177 and 141 policy-related posts on Facebook respectively. In Phase 3, Pongsapat made a comparatively moderate total of 53 policy-related posts, which increased to 91 in Phase 4. These results support Boonlert's (2015b) explanation that a 'late swing of undecided votes' was a key element in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Taking into consideration the existence of swing voters, M.R. Sukhumbhand and his campaign team spent the first two phases of the election campaign to develop their policies according to the social problems they found and the

feedback received during the first half of the election campaign, and used the second half of the election campaign to assure the feasibility of all his policies.

Pongsapat made the highest number of policy-related posts on his Facebook page in Phase 4, which Pongsapat launched the two final sets of policies. This shows that Pongsapat attempted to intensify his policy-related posts in the final stage. Another possible reason could be that Pongsapat's campaign team monitored his election rivals, which might have encouraged Pongsapat to give greater emphasis to policy in the final phase of the election campaign. Hence, as Phase 4 contains the most policy-related posts on Pongsapat's Facebook page, Phase 4 was paramount for Pongsapat to concentrate on persuading voters about his policies.

A closer examination of the Gantt charts, Figures 5.2 and 5.3, show that Friday is common day for both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat to make posts about their policies on Facebook. The Gantt charts show that both candidates made multiple posts on a particular policy on one day. E.g. M.R. Sukhumbhand made posts on every policy on Friday 8 February but with particular emphasis on security (7 posts), transportation (5 posts) and the environment (4 posts). On 1 February 2013, Pongsapat made posts on every policy with particular emphasis on security (6 posts) and the environment (4 posts). Moreover, the day of the week also matters in talking about policy on Facebook. The highest number of posts on policy for Pongsapat was Friday 1 February 2013 and Friday 1 March, and for M.R. Sukhumbhand were Friday 8 February 2013, Friday 15 February 2013, and Friday 22 February 2013.

It is difficult to explain why candidates emphasised policies on certain days. Friday is the last working day of the week, which follows by Saturday and Sunday. Gaining more followers' attention would be possible on a Friday and during the weekend. It is possible that if followers do not see and interact on candidate's policy on followers' news feed on Friday and if there is high level of interaction on the particular post occurring throughout Friday and the weekend, Facebook algorithm will prioritise the post shown on followers' news feed during the weekend. This gives possibility to draw followers' attention on the candidate's posts. In contrast, if significant policy content of were posted on Monday, the first working day of the week, followers might have a different impression of the candidate's campaign as followers might be busy at work and feel that it was the candidate's intention to bombard followers with policies. This shows that the day of the week chosen to present policies is significant.

The dissemination of campaign message on Facebook is associated to how a candidate manages policy-related posts during specific phases or days in an election campaign. The second half of the

election campaign was a significant period for emphasising policies. Nearer to the day of the election, followers started to be interested on candidates' policies and become more enthusiastic about deciding to vote for. The candidates tried to draw their followers' attention to their policies during the final stage of the election campaign as followers started to be interested about the election. The candidates attempted to ensure that their image in relation to policy are constantly visible on their follower's Facebook timelines as voters started to think about the candidates' campaigns. When followers interacting candidates' policy-related posts there is a possibility for the posts to reach more followers and the possibility for more Facebook users to follow the candidates' campaign on Facebook. As a result, it was necessary to repeat and rephrase each policy to gain supports from news followers as well as to increase the spreadability of each policy-related post published on the candidates' Facebook pages. Also, Friday is the day when candidates most often presented their policy-related posts. If policy-related posts published on Fridays were not read by followers, there was the possibility for them to read and react to the policy-related posts during the weekend, when the posts might be shared or spread to other Facebook users.

5.2.3. Emphasis on particular policies

Each candidate also made a different number of posts about each policy, giving more prominence to some.
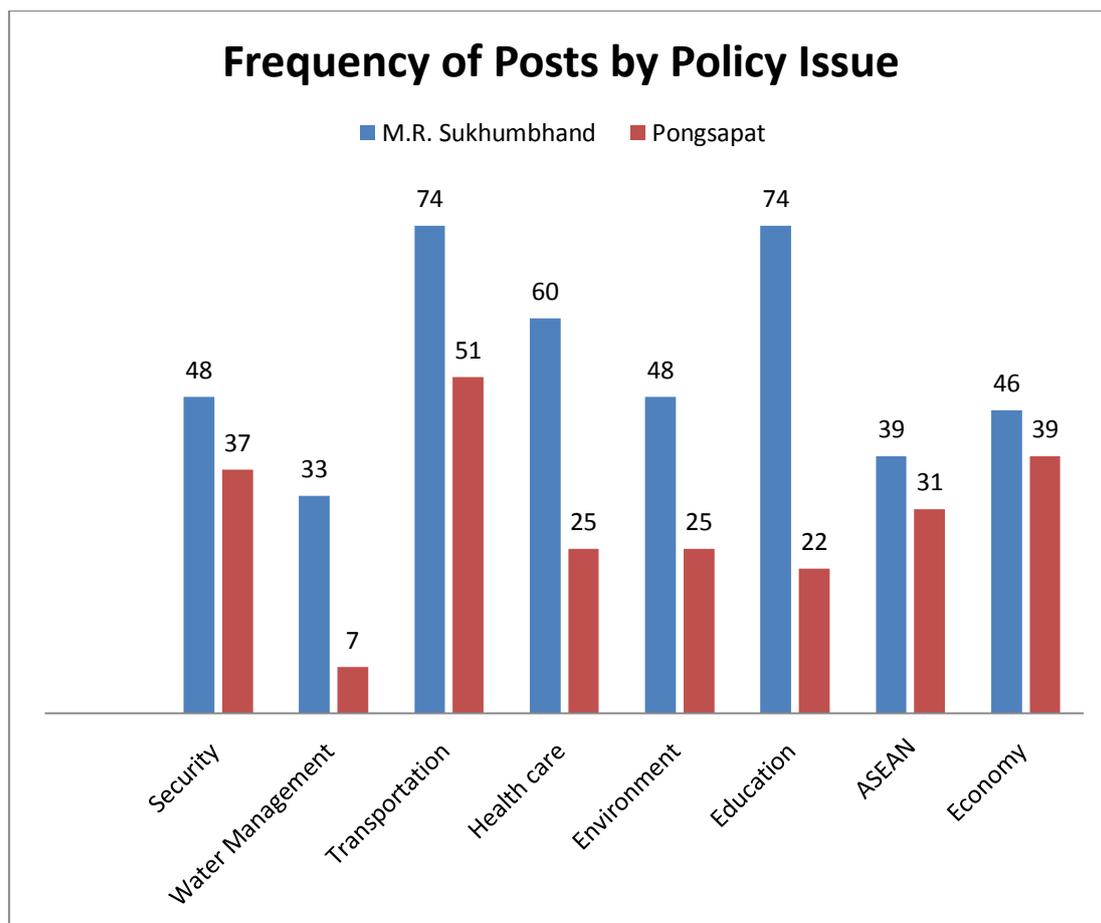
Figure 5.5: Number of times different policies were mentioned.

It is apparent from Figure 5.5 that M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat gave different prominence to each policy issue. The number on top of each bar represents the number of posts dealing with that policy. It can be seen from Figure 5.5 that:

1. the top three policies for M.R. Sukhumbhand are transportation (74 posts), education (74 posts), and healthcare (60 posts);

2. the top three policies for Pongsapat are transportation (51 posts), economy (39 posts), and security (37 posts);

3. posts related to transportation was the most frequent in total;

4. the policy issue which shows the greatest difference in frequency of posts between the candidates was water management i.e. 26 posts (M.R. Sukhumbhand 33 posts; Pongsapat 7 posts)

The following analyses the above results.

Healthcare and Education: M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign

Posts related to healthcare and education policies were the two most frequent in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign on Facebook, which covers a range of age group. Policies on healthcare are associated to elderly, intended to increase Bangkokians' life span. Having reasonably good access to healthcare facilities implies a good standard of living in the city. Policies on education concerns with young generation, increase opportunity for children to be knowledgeable and creative in the long-term. An education can increase the chance for Bangkok children to be employable in the future. It could be said that such policies contains some sort of *phudi* character in M.R. Sukhumbhand's approach to strategic planning to 'build' Bangkok as expressed in his slogan.

Security and Economy: Pongsapat's campaign

Posts related to security and economy policies were the two most frequent in Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook. With a background as a police officer, Pongsapat had specialised knowledge and experience relating to drugs, crime and road accidents in Bangkok. The policies to increase safety in various areas of Bangkok, would also make Bangkokians feel safe in risky areas and on the road. Pongsapat had used his professional experience as a unique selling point in security policies to distinguish himself from his main competitor.

Pongsapat's policies relating to economic issues aimed to increase income and reduce spending for Bangkokians in the short term and develop the economy in Bangkok in the long term. This emphasis in Pongsapat's campaign is associated with the Pheu Thai and Thai Rak Thai parties, which have both been well-known for proposing policies to resolve income and spending problems among Thai people, particularly lower-class Thais. Hence, it could be said that Pongsapat's policies relating to security and the economy are related to the daily life of Bangkokians, aiming to resolve their problems in the short-term and having an immediate impact on Bangkokians, especially lower-class Bangkokians.

Transportation: M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's campaigns

The two candidates had transportation as the most frequently mentioned in their campaigns on Facebook. The transportation policies that both candidates proposed were reducing traffic congestion in Bangkok, making it more convenient for people to move around in Bangkok, which both candidates promising to reduce travelling time and cost. During the election campaign, both candidates attempted to portray themselves as candidates who understood the problems of transportation in Bangkok with photographs on both candidates' Facebook pages of them travelling to

election campaign sites via the BTS sky train or MRT underground train as well as having conversations with motorcycle taxis in Bangkok. This showed the candidates' attempts to experience and gains access to the problems that Bangkokians face. Given that all Bangkokians, regardless of gender, age, occupation and location, need to move around in Bangkok, it could be said that both candidates attempted to ensure that their policies on transportation would enable Bangkokians to relate easily to their policies, so posts on transportation-related policies were found to be the most frequent in both campaigns.

Water Management: M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's campaigns

Water management was the only policy showing a significant difference in the frequency of posts between the campaigns of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat on Facebook. A possible reason for this are the political attacks against M.R. Sukhumbhand during the 2011 flood crisis in Bangkok, when there was conflict in water management between M.R. Sukhumbhand and the Pheu Thai Party. The memory of the 2011 flooding in Bangkok and long-term water management are a major concern of Bangkokians during the rainy season. Efficient water management requires the ability to plan strategically, and M.R. Sukhumbhand showed the intention to handle future floods in Bangkok. It is hard to explain Pongsapat's lack of emphasis on to water management policies, but it might be related to his slogan of 'working with government seamlessly.' This means that Pongsapat might collaborate with the government to resolve flood issues in the future, and therefore it was not essential or necessary for him to elaborate on his water management policy.

The candidates' management of policy-related posts on their Facebook pages is based on the overall distribution of policy-related posts over the entire election campaign, the number of policy-related posts during each phase of the election campaign and the frequency of posts that candidates make on different policies. Even though the semiotic analysis in Chapter 4 shows that the candidates' visual images and signs, such as election numbers, are important in identifying the candidates' campaigns, the ongoing publication of candidates' policies during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaigns on Facebook was also important for candidates in engaging with their followers. The amount of attention that candidates give to policy-related posts on Facebook suggests that candidates also perceive policy to be a significant factor in the eyes of their followers. Based on the analysis in this section, it could be said that political public relations on Facebook is associated with the management of number and distribution of policy-related posts on Facebook that candidates have adopted in line with the atmosphere of the election campaign, the candidate's background, candidate's status during the election and the diversity of the candidate's followers on Facebook.

Candidates increased the number of policy-related posts during the second half of the election campaign as voters started to be more aware of candidates' policies nearer to the Election Day. M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's policy-related campaigns were related to their specialist knowledge, the interests of their political party and their status in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election as either the incumbent or a new candidate. Voters may have had higher expectations of M.R. Sukhumbhand's policy formulation based on what he had achieved in the previous four years. In contrast, the fact that Pongsapat was new and had a different background led him to link his policy to his professional experience, giving voters a new alternative.

5.3. Making sense of candidates' campaigns on Facebook

The candidates' campaigns, based on their posts on Facebook, can be perceived as a unilateral point of view by the candidates about their campaigns. As candidates intend to influence voters based on the images that they construct on their Facebook pages, they seek ways to associate their campaigns with interrelated actors to give credibility to their campaign and to assist voters in interpreting their campaign. The themes associated with the analysis in this section consist of the way candidates associated their campaign with the political party that nominated them for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, the source and origin of candidate's policies, the districts where the candidates directed their policies, the festivals celebrated during the election campaign, and reference to mainstream media during the election campaign. The analysis in this section provides an understanding of how the candidates made their campaigns more influential by using various ways to increase the feasibility of their Facebook campaigns.

5.3.1. Political parties and other politicians

Further to the finding from Chapter 4 on visual images in relation to politicians of their political parties and the identity of their political parties, this subsection further examines how both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat relate to their political party in their campaign on Facebook. As the candidates' Facebook campaigns were individual channels of communication unfiltered by any third party with regard to policy posts, the analysis in this subsection helps to understand the candidates' approach to using the images of their political parties and their politicians in giving credibility to their campaign.

Pongsapat and the Pheu Thai Party

A keyword search of 'Pheu Thai Party' and 'government' showed that Pongsapat used these two expressions in different contexts. Pongsapat explained the benefit of collaborating with the Pheu Thai Party or the government to implement policies, which was a more comprehensive way to elaborate his slogan: 'work with government seamlessly.' Pongsapat developed his policies with significant use of the phrase 'coordinate with government' (ประสานกับรัฐบาล). Pongsapat repeatedly referred to the advantage of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration working closely with the government.

At the beginning of Pongsapat's campaign, the name 'Pheu Thai Party' was used in contexts where Pongsapat introduced himself as someone trusted by members of the Pheu Thai Party, who had given him the chance to be the representative to serve his 'brothers and sisters' as 'candidate for Bangkok Governor, representative of the Pheu Thai Party'. When Pongsapat was about to launch his final set of policies on the theme 'Revitalize Bangkok', he mentioned that the 'Strategy Team of the Pheu Thai Party would like to invite everyone to exchange their opinions on the future of Bangkok.' Pongsapat intended to establish his candidate identity in relation to the Pheu Thai Party, and he was showing his appreciation for the politicians of the Pheu Thai Party, who had given him the opportunity to represent them in the election. Those who received this message would not perceive Pongsapat as an independent candidate, but as a candidate from the Pheu Thai Party.

The expression 'Pheu Thai Party' was found in non-policy-related texts, where Pongsapat seemed to have the intention to inform the public of his schedule or give live updates what he was currently doing or about to do in the Pheu Thai Party headquarters. Pongsapat used the Pheu Thai Party headquarters as a hub to officially launch his different sets of policies to the media and the public. Pongsapat was able to remind the public that he was a candidate nominated by the Pheu Thai Party for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

Throughout Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook, the names of Pheu Thai Party politicians, particularly that of Yingluck Shinawatra, were mentioned in the context of acknowledging their accompaniment of Pongsapat to different places. However, no evidence on Pongsapat's Facebook page was found of Pongsapat writing that Pheu Thai Party politicians support give credit and promote his campaign. Pongsapat only integrate the noun 'government' in his policy-related posts. This could be viewed as an individualistic way that the candidate used to communicate with his followers. Pongsapat was not a politician or member of Pheu Thai Party but he was nominated as their representative just for the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. Therefore, Pongsapat's campaign on

Facebook was related to Pheu Thai Party and the government in the form of his policy to work with the government seamlessly and was associated with the Pheu Thai Party throughout the election campaign.

M.R. Sukhumbhand and the Democrat Party

A search for 'Democrat Party' and the names of Democrat Party politicians in M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook posts shows that politicians such as Abhisit Vejjajiva, Apirak Kosayodhin, Chuan Leekpai, Ongart Klampaiboon and Korn Chatikavanij had a significant involvement in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign. Democrat Party politicians were acknowledged on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page in the context of their assistance in his campaign and evaluating his work performance for the previous four years. In the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, M.R. Sukhumbhand organised and delivered a total of seven campaign speeches and Democrat Party politicians played a major role in the campaign speeches. When Democrat Party politicians were on stage, they were persuading voters to vote for M.R. Sukhumbhand based on his work performance, his policies, his management style as Bangkok governor and his nomination by the Democrat Party. Examples of this include:

Apirak Kosayodhin:

In the past 4 years Sukhumbhand has worked to push for Bangkok's recovery from various crises (23 February 2013).

Chuan Leekpai:

I would like to tell our brothers and sisters 'however you write policy, what is important is the practice. Bangkok wants someone who can talk and really do things like M.R. Sukhumbhand.' (15 February 2013)

Abhisit Vejjajiva:

Sukhumbhand does not care who is the government because M.R. Sukhumbhand says that the boss is not the government, the boss is every person in Bangkok (24 February 2013).

Ongart Klampaiboon:

#Vote16 because the policies offered are real, can really be done and Governor Sukhumbhand will move forward for Bangkokians (8 February 2013).

Korn Chatikavanij:

Small jobs, little jobs are never neglected. If it is about Bangkok, it reflects the sincerity of Sukhumbhand toward Bangkokians who he intends to work for throughout 4 years (1 March 2013).

M.R. Sukhumbhand's use of comments by Democrat Party politicians about his work performance, contribution, attitude, working style and policies as the incumbent Bangkok Governor enabled him to bring in views that other politicians have, and showed their endorsement of his re-election. The above quotes also made significant use of the word '*tham*' (do) to portray M.R. Sukhumbhand as a Bangkok Governor who 'really did what he said' (พูดแล้วทำจริง), 'did a lot, talked little' (ทำมากพูดน้อย), 'really can do, has already started doing' (ทำได้จริง เริ่มต้นทำมาแล้ว), 'move forward and continue doing' (เดินหน้าทำต่อ) and 'determined to work' (ตั้งใจทำงาน). These quotes provide evidence that politicians of Democrat Party were endorsing M.R. Sukhumbhand as Bangkok Governor for the interests of Bangkokians. According to them, he was an action-minded and realistic person in implementing policies in the previous four years. As a result, M.R. Sukhumbhand was not only constructing his own image based on his own opinions but he was letting his followers know how other politicians of the same political party viewed M.R. Sukhumbhand during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

The name of Apirak, who was Bangkok governor from 2004-2009, was mentioned on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page throughout the election campaign. Apirak was able to assess M.R. Sukhumbhand's policies and work performance as a former Bangkok governor. For example, on 6 February 2013, Apirak said that M.R. Sukhumbhand's policies aimed at 'development' and as long as Bangkokians trusted him, M.R. Sukhumbhand would implement policies for Bangkokians, and there would be a better environment, community libraries, support for education and a solution to the flood problems in Bangkok. Using quotes from Apirak was a way to give confirmation to voters of M.R. Sukhumbhand's suitability to become Bangkok governor.

Abhisit was the former prime minister and leader of a political party at the time of 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Abhisit referred to both Apirak and M.R. Sukhumbhand by giving concrete examples of the projects that had been successfully implemented by both governors. The various projects, especially the BTS extension, showed the continuity of work by Apirak and M.R. Sukhumbhand as governors. Despite central government rejection of projects that Apirak and M.R. Sukhumbhand proposed in the past, they were able to proceed with projects that they thought would be beneficial for Bangkokians. Abhisit attempts to portray an image of both candidates nominated by the Democrat Party as being sincere and focused on delivering policies in the interests of Bangkokians. This reflects on their ability to proceed with projects during political conflict.

One of the very final posts made by M.R. Sukhumbhand on his Facebook page is the one below:

Choose the Democrats because method of the Democrats is 1. We do not abandon our brother and sisters, we are alongside the people, we share sadness and happiness with the people, because we maintain that we do well because of the people.

Second, we do not use the authority of the state for personal benefit. The Democrat Party has respect for government officials and working people.

Third, we give importance to our brothers and sisters at every level, let our brothers and sisters be themselves and take care of their own interests by themselves.

Fourth, we emphasize development which is sustainable, do not use bribes, but we work on development which is not eye-catching but very important such as school milk and free breakfasts.

Fifth, the Democrats looks after all groups of people including children, the elderly, women, working people, the homeless, and animal lovers. No matter which colour, we look after you because our origin is the people.

(1 March 2013)

The above post summarises the five different reasons why the Democrat Party thinks that Bangkokians should vote for them. What makes this post significant is the multiple use of ปชป, which is the abbreviation of ประชาธิปัตย์ *Prachatipat* or 'Democrat'. Instead of communicating why Bangkokians should vote for M.R. Sukhumbhand, the message was framed and focused on the image and identity of the Democrat Party. Thus, this post truly substitute M.R. Sukhumbhand's image with that of the Democrat Party as a whole.

Democrat Party politicians were named on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page with the use of Facebook 'tags.' Tagging enables the posts on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page to also appear on those of the politicians tagged. In other words, 'tagging' spreads the campaign message to the networks of other Facebook users named by M.R. Sukhumbhand. Consequently, those following other politicians on Facebook, but not M.R. Sukhumbhand, would receive the messages on their new feeds. Through the 'connectedness' of the Facebook network, 'tagging' increases the visibility of M.R. Sukhumbhand.

References on Facebook posts to other politicians of the same party also allowed the candidate to extend the network of support. By mentioning and quoting what other politicians of the Democrat Party said about him, M.R. Sukhumbhand was able to endorse his campaign with other politicians' points of view, giving voters a broader view on how other politicians of Democrat party evaluate his work performance and policies. In other words, M.R. Sukhumbhand was able to show that what he did in the past four years and what he will do in the next four years have been widely assessed by different politicians of Democrat Party. Each quote was additional support, which could enable M.R.

Sukhumbhand to establish a clearer and stronger image and eventually gain more votes from Bangkokians who have been following Democrat Party politicians on Facebook. Thus, it could be said that M.R. Sukhumbhand's use of Facebook to portray the image of Democrat Party as a whole was targeted at Bangkok voters who are loyal to Democrat Party. M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign on Facebook was not only about voting for M.R. Sukhumbhand as an incumbent, but it was also about voting for the Democrat Party.

To sum up, M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat referencing the names of political parties or other politicians was another significant way for candidates to gain endorsements of their campaign and to influence Facebook followers based the credibility that other politicians lent to their campaign and their relationship with their political party. By doing so, this enhances the image of 'ideal candidate.' Although the image of the candidate of Bangkok gubernatorial election is focused on the candidate, not the political party, as not every candidate is nominated by a political party (Surapongse, 2002, p.43), both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used Facebook to associate their individual images, their campaigns in general, and their policies in particular, with those of their political parties. This establishes a connection between the candidates' Facebook networks and the politicians of the same political party, which can increase the spreadability of the candidates' campaign. This is also a way to gather support from the political party that has nominated them for the election, which can be used to target Bangkokians voters who are loyal to the political party instead of judging the candidate as an individual. For M.R. Sukhumbhand in particular, this gives followers a broader view of how different politicians of Democrat Party evaluate and assess his performance and policies.

5.3.2. Policies in reference to other countries

While M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page continuously reported other politicians' remarks about his campaign and his performance, another type of policy-related posts found only in Pongsapat's campaign, was the relation of his policies to other countries. Pongsapat referred to different countries that implemented some of the policies he proposed during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on Facebook. A total of six Facebook posts by Pongsapat, referred to similar policies in other countries in support of the policies that he was proposing.

Translated version of post: One of my policies to develop the mass transit system is to coordinate with the government in order create standards for a common ticket system for the convenience of travelling on all routes using only one card.

This idea is widely used in many metropolises around the world. One of the cities that has the best mass transit system is London, which uses a common ticket called the "Oyster Card".

The brightly-coloured Oyster Card is can be used to pay fares under the Transport for London system, or London's BMTA, in all forms whether underground or overground electric trains, buses, boats or other types of trains, in the London transportation network. The card has greatly increased convenience in people's lives. It is used in up to 80% of the transportation system. It can be said that the card is part of London people's lives.

Figure 5.6: Capture of Pongsapat's Facebook post, on his policy on 'one seamless travel card' to increase convenience for Bangkokians, using London as an example, posted on 16 February 2013, (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013k).

Figure 5.6 shows how Pongsapat explained existing problems of multiple transportation cards in Bangkok in relations to London Oyster Card makes, which can make it easier for followers to visualise the feasibility of candidate's policy. The above post explains how the card works and how the policy will be implemented. Pongsapat also emphasised that the policy will bring more convenience for Bangkokians who use trains and buses.

Figure 5.7: Capture of Pongsapat's Facebook post, showing monorails in Kuala Lumpur (top) and Singapore (bottom) posted on 18 February 2013, (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013l).

In addition to the example of the Oyster Card, Pongsapat made a post on 18 February 2013 with the example of monorails in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to show voters the idea of Bangkok having a

monorail, as shown in Figure 5.7. In this post, Pongsapat stated the distances, numbers of stations and ticket fares in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Pongsapat also used his Facebook page to raise awareness of the ongoing construction of the monorail in Ho Chi Min City, by emphasising the importance of having a monorail in developing infrastructure and reducing traffic congestion. Thus, it could be said that these posts was comparing the capital of Thailand, as a ASEAN country, with neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam in the development of transportation.

On 14 February 2013, Pongsapat made a post elaborating his policy on waste management, which he proposed during a presentation of his vision. Pongsapat mentioned that he plans to bring in new technology to Bangkok to turn waste into recycled products, energy, and money, and this has been successfully implemented in Europe and the United States of America. Three Pongsapat Facebook posts on 24 February 2013 were also about waste management, and two of them referred to how the Netherlands and Sao Paulo have been managing waste through recycling. These two posts emphasised the efficient conversion of waste into energy in the future, given the large amount of waste collected in the Netherlands and Sao Paulo. These examples led to Pongsapat's final post, which included an analysis of how his policy on waste management will benefit Bangkokians. Instead of continuing to landfill waste in Bangkok, Pongsapat proposed that the recycling of different waste material could lead to energy production and the sale of recycled materials for local community revenue in the long-term. Using successful examples of developed countries in solving a particular problem shows the candidate's intention to bring in new feasible ways to approach problems in Bangkok.

Another way to explain the implementation of Pongsapat's policy was to reference his policies to other countries which he believed were realistic and achievable if implemented in Bangkok. This was also a way to repeat, reemphasise, rephrase and further analyse a particular problem or policy from an international perspective. Even though Pongsapat referred to other countries' policies in only six posts, the content was significant and noteworthy in providing readers with a broader view of the impact that his policies would bring to Bangkok.

5.3.3. District-based policies

With reference to the result of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election presented in Appendix 1, M.R. Sukhumbhand won a total of 39 districts in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election while Pongsapat won 11 districts. This result indicates a strong base of support among Bangkokians for M.R. Sukhumbhand and the Democrat Party at the time of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. This section analyses candidates' policies in relation to the frequency of references to the different districts

in Bangkok on the candidates' Facebook pages. This section reviews how candidates set policy-related posts in relation to particular districts of Bangkok to target directly those districts.

The overall and district-based results of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election were very close, but a few districts in Bangkok showed significant support for either M.R. Sukhumbhand or Pongsapat. For example, M.R. Sukhumbhand gained more votes than Pongsapat in Khlong Toei district, a Bangkok working-class residential area, although Pongsapat proposed a security policy especially for this district. Also, M.R. Sukhumbhand gained more voters than Pongsapat in districts such as Khlong San, Thon Buri and Chom Thong, whereas districts in northern Bangkok such as Don Mueang, Lak Si and Bang Sue were a strong hold of Pongsapat and the Pheu Thai Party.

It is apparent from Figure 5.8 (next page) that there was a major difference in identifying of districts in policy-related posts. M.R. Sukhumbhand mentioned 32 districts while Pongsapat mentioned 6 in their policy-related posts, with five districts identified in both candidates' campaigns. The most interesting result to emerge from the data is that Thon Buri was the district given most attention by M.R. Sukhumbhand to (10.1% of total number of policy-related posts, equivalent to 20 posts), while Lak Si was the only district mentioned by Pongsapat (once) but not M.R. Sukhumbhand.
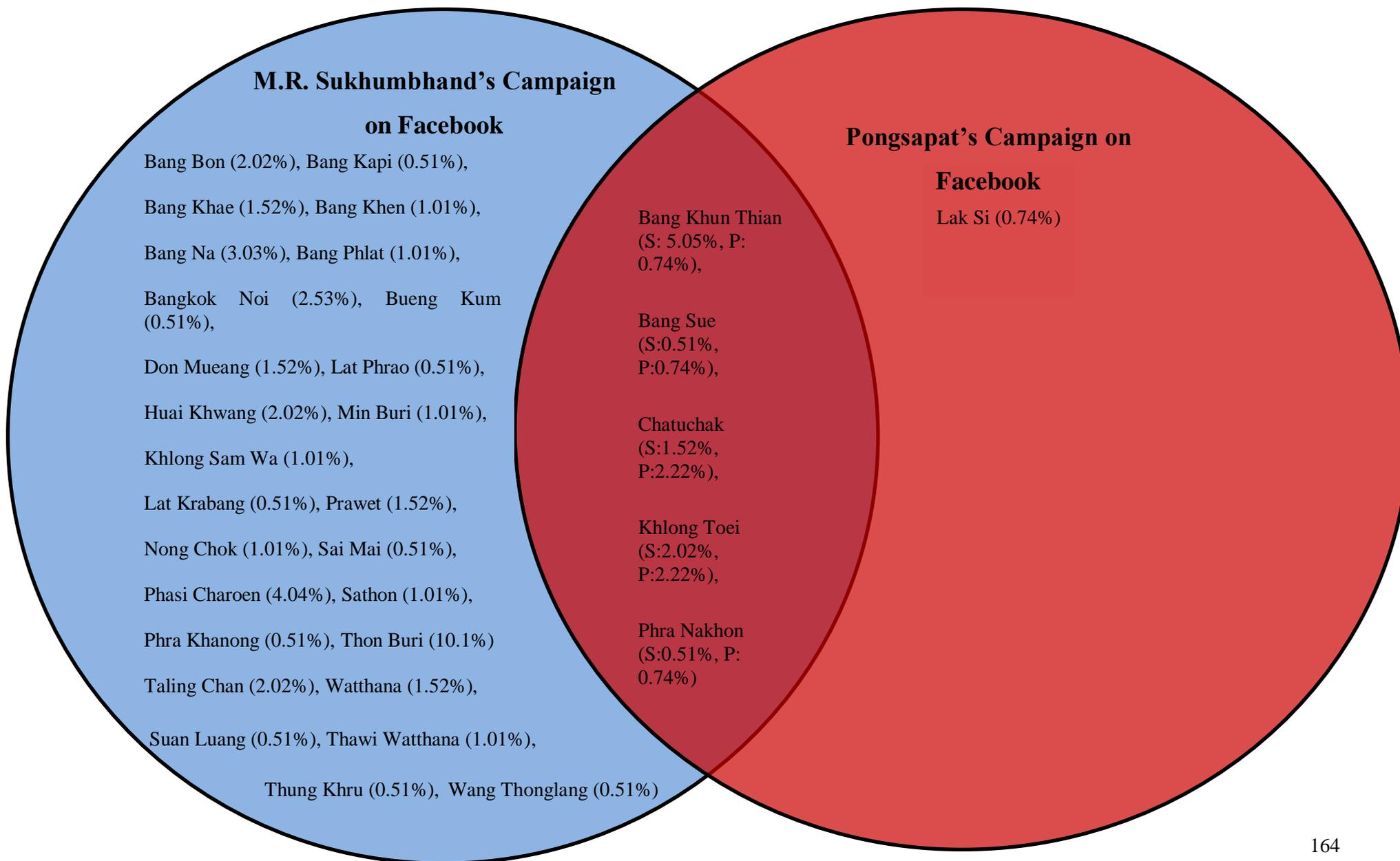
Figure 5.8: Districts named in candidates' policy-related posts on Facebook, and percentages of policy-related posts containing the name of particular districts

The difference in the ways candidates relate their policy to districts is that the incumbent M.R. Sukhumbhand was specific and detailed in his policy proposals, making a major attempt to target his policies to impact particular districts. The policy-related posts of the Pongsapat Facebook campaign were more general, targeting all groups of voters. This approach does not pay attention to any district in particular or any personal relationship between the candidate and voters in that district. In districts which were not mentioned by a candidate, followers may feel that the candidate's campaign is unequal or unfair to different districts of Bangkokians. However, this difference in approaches between M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat could also be explained by the fact that M.R. Sukhumbhand was the incumbent and Pongsapat was a new candidate nominated by the government at the time of the election. Pongsapat's policy proposals seemed to be structured and will be coordinated with the government seamlessly to implement policies. M.R. Sukhumbhand had more specialised knowledge of the different districts and was able to relate his policies to specific districts directly.

Thon Buri and Lak Si are two districts identified in both candidates' posts associated with water management and flood policy. M.R. Sukhumbhand proposed policy to be implemented and for the benefit of Thon Buri district the construction of wastewater treatment plants and a giant drainage tunnel. As Thon Buri was one of the districts in Bangkok severely hit by the Great Floods in 2011, this policy to be implemented particularly in Thon Buri could be used to prevent floods and handle heavy rains in the future. Pongsapat's policy proposal for Lak Si District was also connected to flood issues. Pongsapat explained to voters in that particular post that waste water in Bangkok has to be re-managed by working with the government seamlessly through rebuilding and reconnecting drains and drainage tunnels and extending sewers in Bangkok. Pongsapat's policy was more generally related to water management policy in coordination with the government after he had spoken to residents in Lak Si District. Identifying a particular district for policy implementation or relating a specific district to candidates' policy-related posts, could have an impact on voters' perceptions of the candidates. Voters who live and work in Thon Buri or Lak Si districts could have better interpretation of the water management policies proposed by M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat. They could feel that they were the direct target of the candidates. However, if followers are critical of candidates' campaign, they might argue against the policy. This makes such policy-related posts a two-edged sword.

Among the five districts which were specifically mentioned by both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat, Bang Khun Thian and Khlong Toei were the two that received most mentioned. M.R. Sukhumbhand

mentioned Bang Khun Thian District in the context of the hospital that he built there for the elderly and his plans to build further 'ageing communities' near the hospital. Bang Khun Thian District was mentioned once by Pongsapat in the context of working with the government to resolve future flooding. Both candidates mentioned Khlong Toei District in the context of increasing security and reducing the crime rate. Khlong Toei District has a vast number of Thais squatting in slum, and is considered as one of the poorest districts in Bangkok. The both M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's campaigns formulated policies to increase the safety and living conditions in Khlong Toei District.

The results of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election in Appendix 1 correlate to a certain extent to attempt target on districts in the Facebook campaigns of both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat at on. M.R. Sukhumbhand won the majority of votes in Thon Buri District while Pongsapat won in Lak Si District. In nearby districts, M.R. Sukhumbhand gained the majority of votes in districts to the North of Thon Buri District, whereas Pongsapat won the majority of votes in Northern Bangkok around Lak Si District. This suggests that there could be a relationship between those areas and the candidates or of their political parties. M.R. Sukhumbhand gained the majority of votes of Bang Khun Thian and Khlong Toei districts despite Pongsapat's attempts to use his specialist knowledge to formulate a security policy targeting Khlong Toei District.

Many districts were not mentioned on candidates' policy-related posts, but it would be said that policy-related posts integrated targeting feature to establish and develop a relationship between the candidate and followers in a specific district with the aim to gain votes. It is too simplistic to claim that a candidate's mention of a particular policy in relation to a district in would impact on the number of votes gained, because the number of followers on Facebook is not representative of the Bangkokians voters. Moreover, there is no information available on the number of voters in a particular district who followed the election campaigns on Facebook. Voters in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election used different media to gain access information about candidates' policies.

5.3.4. Festivals celebrated during the election campaign

Observation of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages found that the daily agendas set by candidates based on the policies discussed and the places visited are linked to festivals that were celebrated in Thailand during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The period of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign covered Chinese New Year celebrations (10 February),

Valentine's Day (14 February) and Buddhist Magha Puja Day (25 February). Both candidates used these festivals to introduce their policies and construct an image of candidates giving prominence to the festivals.

Figure 5.9: Image of Pongsapat with the announcement that Pongsapat will be going to Bang Rak Central Post Office on 14 February, from 6:30am, (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013j).

Figure 5.9 shows that on Valentine's Day, Pongsapat went to Bang Rak Post Office to congratulate newly registered married couples. It was conspicuous that for Valentine's Day, Pongsapat visited Bang Rak (บาง รัก) District Office. The name of the district contains of the word *rak* (รัก), which means 'love'. Many Thai people register their marriages at Bang Rak District in the hope of an auspicious married life. This shows that Pongsapat tried to relate his campaign to the festival celebrated by newly registered voters.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign on Facebook launched a policy on women one day before Valentine's Day, and used Facebook to explain how concerned he was about women in Bangkok.

Figure 5.10: M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook post explaining his policy on women, posted on 13 February 2013, (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013k).

Figure 5.10 shows M.R. Sukhumbhand launching a policy on women, coded under security policy and healthcare policy in the Figure 5.3 Gantt Chart, on the day before Valentine's Day, when he took the opportunity to explain policies on women in relation to the Valentine's Day festival. M.R. Sukhumbhand was thus able to associate his campaign to a festival celebrated during the election campaign, with a relationship with a particular group of voters.

Both candidates visited different Chinese Temples and Chinatown in Bangkok during the Chinese New Year festival and visited Buddhist temples in Bangkok on Magha Puja Day. Associating the launch of policies with festivals, and publishing Facebook post relating to festivals or visiting places, this shows candidates give prominence to the festivals celebrated during the election campaign. By doing so, there is possibility for followers to interpret the policy or campaign better, which can also lead to more interaction and spreadability on a particular policy.

5.3.5. Media management on Facebook

From a mainstream media perspective, McNair (2011) defines 'media management' as the way politicians maintain a positive relationship with the media and recognising the importance of each other political communication (p.123-124). Research has found a connection between the agendas on SNSs and those on

mainstream media in Thailand (Isriya, 2012; Supreeya, 2009). During election campaigns, candidates tend to give recognition to themselves by referring to mainstream media reports about their campaigns (Sombat, 1993, p.107). This research did not find out how public relations personnel work to enable candidate's to gain a positive coverage on the mainstream media as this research was focused towards the operation of candidate's SNSs page.

With reference to how Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) state that the 'two-step flow of campaign message' occurs by expecting journalists to use candidates' campaign information on Web sites to further spread on traditional news media, this research found that candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election had used their Facebook pages to provide a source of information for journalists as well as for their followers to know candidates' campaign coverage on traditional media, which shows the relationship between the candidate and media, or what Hall et al. (1978) referred to 'primary definers' and 'secondary definers' of news production respectively. Candidates provided information for followers to access and by also posting photographs of traditional media giving attention to the candidate. In addition, public relations personnel intend to frame campaign message on SNSs to attract mainstream media attention to candidate's SNSs posts and public relations personnel also tried to give information to followers in advance about the television programme and any print media that have interviewed the candidate. The candidate's Facebook page is a central point in disseminating campaign information and public relations information relating to candidate's media appearances, where mainstream media and followers can access more information and different perspectives on candidates via their Facebook pages.

The relationship between mainstream media and the candidates' SNS pages also shows that candidates aim to make mainstream media report about their campaign. If mainstream media would like to gain information about candidate's campaign, journalists access candidate's SNS page and use candidate's posts as the source of information for their news coverage. As mentioned by one public relations personnel, Personnel C, interviewed in this research, what the personnel intend to achieve when working for the candidate on SNSs is for the news agency to use candidate's campaign content on SNSs as the agenda or talk about candidate's posts on the mainstream media. The personnel said that when this occurs, it shows that the candidate's post in reliable and worth giving attention to. Because of their appearance on mainstream media, their campaigns can reach wider groups of voters who rely on different media channels to receive information about the election campaign and candidates' policies. This is also a way to increase the credibility of the candidates' campaigns for followers to interact with.

Candidates also provided website links for interviews conducted by specific media outlets as well as other forms of positive coverage. In his campaign, M.R. Sukhumbhand posted that he was interviewed by a day Bulletin magazine, Channel 11, TNN, Modern 9, The Nation, Channel 5, Daily News and Thairath, while Pongsapat reported that he was interviewed by a day Bulletin magazine, Thai PBS, China Central Television (CCTV) and Channel 9. This information indicates that both candidates attempted to link their Facebook pages to other channel of communication and show that they are continuously recognised by other media outlets. This integration of Facebook with mainstream media may motivate SNS users to seek information on the campaigns from mainstream media. Followers can access the interview recordings where they can get to know more about candidates' campaign from media interviews. Also, when mainstream media give attention to candidate's campaign, candidates benefit when they take part in media interviews or appear in news coverage.

Figure 5.11: M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page (18 January 2013), Pongsapat's Facebook page (23 January 2013) (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013n; ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013l).

On M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages, a relationship with the mainstream media was evidenced by candidates using their Facebook pages to inform their followers about their interviews with mainstream media. Among both M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's posts on Facebook would be information about different media outlets interviewing and recording the candidates. Figure 5.11 shows images posted on the candidates' Facebook pages, showing the amount of attention that both candidates gained from different media outlets during their campaign in general. Such visual images can also be related to what Grabe and Bucy (2013) refer to 'populist campaigner' under the theme of 'mass appeal'. Instead of showing a large number of crowds supporting candidates, the image of candidates surrounded

by cameras and microphones also demonstrate the candidates' popularity and some kind of 'celebrity image.'

As candidates and public relations personnel are in control of information to disseminate on candidate's Facebook page, there is a question of how valid are candidate's claims of the feasibility of the policy or how voters can ensure candidate has the potential to govern Bangkok. The activity of media management in political public relations on Facebook is related to information management on candidate's Facebook page in way to refer to the candidate's campaign on mainstream media throughout the election campaign. As the election campaign was very competitive, candidate's tried to influence followers' voting decision by referring to the mainstream media. This is a way for candidates to raise awareness on their Facebook pages of their appearances on other media outlets, and the attention and credibility that candidates receive from other media outlets during the election campaign. As a result, the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on candidates' Facebook pages did not occur individually, but candidates have related their campaign on Facebook with their campaign information printed on their billboards and brochures (analysed in Chapter 4) with mainstream media.

To summarise, both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat tried to guide and mediate voters to view their campaigns from different perspectives and also to help followers to make sense of their campaigns on Facebook. Both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat tried various ways to increase the trustworthiness of their campaign, with attempts to frequently develop their relationship with their political party and other politicians as well as the mainstream media. Both candidates also relate to the festivals celebrated during the election campaign, which could draw more attention from followers engage with their campaign on Facebook. As for M.R. Sukhumbhand in particular, he targeted voters with links to specific districts, showing how his policies would benefit particular districts, while for Pongsapat made references to other countries to show a pragmatic approach to formulating policies.

Conclusion

This chapter sets out to determine the candidates' framing of campaign slogans, the pattern of policy-related posts disseminated on candidates' Facebook pages and the various ways candidates adopted to help followers make sense of their campaign on Facebook. The campaign message is another significant element of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, where candidates communicated their policies and clarified their standpoints. The content communicated on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok

gubernatorial election campaign was managed to establish campaign momentum and highlight different aspects of the candidate's campaign. Based on the analysis, this chapter argues that information management of political public relations on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign included the management of policy-related posts and the way in which candidates communicated their campaign to enable voters to easily understand and interpret them.

The mediation of campaigns on Facebook consisted of the linkage between candidate's individual image and political party image. Although candidates in Bangkok gubernatorial elections can be independent of any political party, M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat relied on their political parties in developing their images. Both candidates framed their campaign slogans differently and attempted to make their campaigns more influential by relating their campaign to the political parties that nominated them for the election. Nevertheless, both candidates' campaigns show the intention to challenge Bangkokians' pessimism about politics by constructing their images to be what Grabe and Bucy (2013) refer to 'ideal candidates.' As the incumbent in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, M.R. Sukhumbhand approached his campaign by highlighting his ability to implement policies immediately once he gets re-elected. Although M.R. Sukhumbhand's slogan portrays his individualistic approach to governing Bangkok, he still relied on other politicians of the Democrat Party to give him credit for his past performance and policy formulation. M.R. Sukhumbhand framed his campaign by portraying himself as the candidate and using the Democrat Party's image to strengthen his campaign. On the other hand, Pongsapat attempted to give one solution to problems in Bangkok in the form of 'working with the government seamlessly' and show the trustworthiness of his policies by referring to other countries that have benefited from the same policies.

Based on the results of content analysis, it was found that policy-related posts on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages were managed by taking into consideration of swing voters' voting behaviour, new followers connected to candidates' campaign throughout the election campaign and the atmosphere of the election and candidates' professionalism in implementing specific policies that they are familiar with. The ongoing publication of policy-related posts throughout the election campaign attempted to elaborate on candidates' policies, hoping to increase followers' engagement, interaction and the spreadability of the candidates' campaigns on Facebook. Candidates' Facebook pages was therefore based not only on the policy-related posts that candidates discussed, but also associated with the time that candidates discussed their agendas or the times that candidate viewed as appropriate for followers to make the most sense of the posts. In addition, candidate's Facebook page stored campaign information,

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which followers and mainstream media can access to candidate's campaign information at any time during the election campaign.

The management of the publication posts on candidates' Facebook pages also requires an understanding of the operation of candidates' campaigns on SNSs, leading to Chapter 6 to explore the management of the candidates' relationships with their public relations personnel and followers. The analysis in next chapter will demonstrate that political public relations on SNSs is also associated with the networks of messages disseminated on SNSs, which importantly requires not only management of campaign content but also the management of relationship among campaigns staff and followers connected to candidates' SNSs pages.

Chapter 6 : Spreadability of Digital Vote-canvassing Networks

Introduction

The relationship among individuals who are connected to candidates' SNS pages is another significant element of an election campaign and political communication. The backdoor operation of campaign staff and public relations personnel co-operating to send out messages on SNSs during an election campaign is vital to manage human resources to manage candidates' SNS pages. The interactive feature of SNSs provides an opportunity for followers to interact about candidate's campaign, and has the potential to spread candidates' campaigns on SNSs from one user to another.

This chapter aims to answer the research question: *'What was the relationship among the individuals who were part of the candidates' networks on social networking sites during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?'* By reviewing the roles and responsibilities of public relations personnel working for candidate's campaign on SNS, this chapter determines the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Based on candidates' and political public relations personnel's viewpoints on interaction, this chapter determines the relationship between candidate, public relation personnel, followers and other SNS users that were established and built during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Using media features identified by Baym (2010) (interaction, reach, temporal structure and mobility), this chapter examines the networks disseminating campaign messages in relation to the concepts of spreadable media, two-step flow and traditional vote-canvassing networks in Thai political culture, which will be used as the framework to analyse how interacting on SNSs could create and expand 'digital vote-canvassing networks'.

This chapter is organised in the following way. Firstly, this chapter examines the role of public relations personnel in communicating on behalf of candidates on SNSs and the relationship between the candidates and their public relations personnel before and during the election campaign. This is to understand the internal communication and backdoor operation on candidates' SNS pages during the election campaign. The second half of this chapter examines how campaigning on SNSs is a development of traditional vote-canvassing in Thai political culture by discussing particularly on how the interaction and algorithms of Facebook can enhance candidates' campaigns based on the way Facebook users are connected to each

other. The analysis in this chapter explains the management of human resources and the relationship among people who are involved and connected to candidates' SNSs to use SNSs to their full potential.

6.1. Public relations personnel

Using the definition of 'personalisation' of Sweetser (2011) and Trammell and William (2004), this section determines the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel and how this relationship is a development from the traditional role of public relations practitioners in Thailand. The analysis of the development of the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel takes also into consideration of Sombat (1993) analysis of how candidates in Thai elections changes the emphasis of their election campaign content as the election campaign proceeds and the findings of Boonlert (2015b) on swing voters in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. This section is divided into three subsections: the first will identify the basic roles and responsibilities of public relations personnel during the election campaign; the second analyses how public relations personnel personalise candidates' SNS pages; and the last section discusses changes in the relationship between public relations personnel and candidates before and during the election campaign. The information in this section was obtained from public relations personnel working for party-based candidates and fringe candidate using SNSs.

6.1.1. Basic tasks and responsibilities

This subsection reviews the basic tasks and responsibilities of public relations personnel in order to analyse the relationship between the candidates and public relations personnel during the election campaign. Firstly, personnel have to spend time in attempting to gain background knowledge about the candidates' campaigns and also to establish the relationship between the two parties before the election campaign actually started. The following are quotes by public relations personnel who worked for candidates of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, highlighting what they did before and during the election campaign to establish and maintain their relationship with the candidate:

> I had to be with him for weeks before really working. I could not do it. I followed him everywhere, took taxis with him. Wherever he went, I was always there.

(Staff Member B)

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I will do a daily report on the previous day and today do three posts and will circle what he needs to follow. However, he is slow at answering. But before this I talked to him and was with him for about one to two weeks. I will know that he is a person with this kind of thoughts.

(Staff Member B)

Actually, when we started doing this, we were not 'in', we did not know which direction to come from, that we should collect questions and everything to send to the candidate for him to read what people were saying. There were questions like this questions and what kind of approach do the candidate's answers take. The candidate would answer that if they ask about this issue, we respond in this way. Since we came in to do this job, we send questions almost every day, until things calmed down, and we could adapt and answer ourselves.

(Staff Member C)

We did not think up things ourselves. Those are things that the candidate had already thought. Because of the fact that we follow him in field. We have a team member watching what the candidate says, what he does. This is what we use to put something together. It is not something that we think up on our own.

(Staff Member D)

The interviews with Staff Member B, C and D, show that background knowledge of the candidate and the image that the candidate wants to establish were not something that the public relations personnel could understand in a short period of time. The personnel spent time and effort prior to the election campaign or in the early stages of the campaign in order to learn background information on the candidate such as family, education, previous experience and performance. Personnel had to understand the candidate's policies, his point of view and the way the candidate attempted to solve problems faced by Bangkokians because this will be questioned on the candidate's SNS page. Most importantly, what personnel post on behalf of candidate has to reflect the type of image that the candidate would like to establish during the election campaign. Therefore, before undertaking their job on the candidate's SNS page, the personnel had to gain a background understanding of the candidate.

The internal communication of operating candidate's SNSs page involves candidate being able to rely on campaign staff to work together to make posts on the candidate's SNS page. The roles and the number of public relations personnel vary according to the size of the campaign team. For a candidate with one or two personnel working on the SNS page, their role was mainly to help the candidate to post messages and photographs on the SNS page, e.g. basic information on what the candidate did and where the candidate

went during the day.[20] For a candidate with a team of social networking campaign staff, each member of the campaign staff was allocated a different task such as strategic planning on SNSs, recording videos and taking photographs of the candidate on the campaign trail, note-taking, transcribing or summarising what the candidate said in public speeches, at election campaign forums, in interviews with the mainstream media or in any interaction the candidate and the voters. Then, with the use of the *Line* message system or voice messages, a member of the campaign staff would be responsible for sending to the head of the staff on-site information, or any key points by the candidate in the conversation. Because the head tends not to be on-site with the candidate, the content would be sent to the chief of the SNS public relations team for editing before messages or photographs were posted on the candidate's SNSs page.[21]

Another important role of personnel was to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of communication on the candidate's SNS page, as personnel ensured that the candidate's Facebook status was updated within 5-20 minutes or 'as fast as possible', as stated by one party-based staff member, in order for followers to gain the sense of a live feed on Facebook. Real-time communication, or the use of the *check-in* feature on Facebook, was able to attract more voters to meet the candidate in a particular place. However, real-time communication has to be accurate, and another role of personnel was to ensure the accuracy of the candidate's posts on SNSs to minimise misunderstanding. Public relations personnel had to be cautious while structuring and framing messages, as seen in the quotation below:

> When we are doing the strategy that we will post, we need to think that sometimes we post something and then the good thing about is? – The message that we post makes the least miscommunication. – It's not a matter of posting anything – posting about a rival. It becomes two-edged sword. Post something that makes people understand in a negative way; this is something that needs care. Posts have to be accurate, posts have to be tight and when it's posted it must not be criticized. When it's posted it must not be an old issue that we have been criticised about. All this has to be thought of. If we post something, will it attack others? The attack is good at first. They will think like this, those who do it for them.

(Staff Member B)

In the above quote, Staff Member B stressed her concern to avoid miscommunication based on the content that she posts. As miscommunication and misunderstanding could have negative impact on candidate image, the staff were very conscious when framing the candidate's campaign messages. Staff

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[20] Interview with Candidate B.
[21] Interview with Staff Member C.

Member B had to consider prudently the effect of the content that she is going to post on behalf of the candidate in order to minimise critical comments or challenges to the candidate's image during the election campaign.

Politician B mentioned that his political party has a team to monitor the profiles of Facebook users who are followers of his political party, politicians in the party and competitors in the election. They do 'extensive' research on followers' profiles as is seen in the following quotation:

> We have both internal and external social media staff and professional staff to come and help us. We do extensive research to see the profile of our candidate and our competitor. So we monitor every day. We monitor 24 hours, and have a daily meeting to wrap up what has been happening in the last 24 hours. Moreover, we are very flexible to change, to do more or to do differently in this social media war.

(Politician B)

Staff play a role in collecting candidate's followers' profiles on SNSs and how they make use of followers' profiles to strategise the candidate's campaign. This point is further supported by M.R. Sukhumbhand, who mentioned in a social media forum that there were more men than women following him and the majority of his followers were aged below 24 years old, while Suharit Siamwala, an independent candidate in the election, mentioned that he also had more men than women following him, but the majority were aged between 24-30 years old.[22] This means that the candidates and their staff know the gender and age group of the people following them on SNSs. It could be said that personnel could gather followers' demographic information on SNSs so that candidates know their target group or the profile of people who are receiving messages from their SNS pages. By doing so, they can frame the message in a reader-friendly way for a specific group of followers.

Staff were involved in dealing with answering questions, including critical questions, that followers posted on candidates' SNS pages. By frequently conferring with the candidate on the ways to deal with followers' criticism, this ensures that personnel would deal with the critical comments according to how the candidate would tackle the criticism. In other words, this ensures that the thinking of the candidates and their staff is the same in dealing with the same problem as staff are acting on behalf of the candidates.

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[22] Social Media forum organised by *The Nation Channel* on 16 February 2013

When staff are more independent in handling candidates' SNS pages, they would deal with criticism by themselves and would also immediately send a report to update the candidate that questions on SNSs have been answered in a particular way or discuss with the candidate if the candidate is fine with the answers.[23]

For candidates' Facebook pages with a high level of interaction and a number of comments, a staff member would focus on reading and accepting questions and comments posted by followers. They would also filter them in a report passed to the candidate.[24] Due to the different types of comments posted by followers, staff tended to structure answers based on the candidates' policies, biography, and ways of thinking.[25] These were used to frame answers to questions, which ensures that personnel would deal with questions based on the candidate's campaign or personality. Even though interactive feature on SNSs allow followers to be more involved in candidates' campaigns, critical comments were a challenge to the candidates' image, and personnel had to be committed to work through such challenges to maintain a positive image of the candidate throughout the election campaign. This commitment includes the discussions that personnel had with candidates on how to handle critical content.[26] (Chapter 7 will analyse further how critical comments and questions posted by stirrers are deal with).

The basic task and responsibilities of public relations personnel in managing candidates' SNS pages have contributed to public relations personnel 'personalising' communication on candidates' SNS pages, which is what Sweetser (2011) and Trammell and William (2004) refer to. Personalising candidates' SNS pages is about personnel posting content on candidate's SNSs page and giving a sense to followers that the content was written by the candidate, which subsection 6.1.2 analyses.

6.1.2. Personalisation of candidates' SNS pages

This research further examines if there are any features or evidence of public relations personnel personalising the posts of M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat. With the use of candidate's first name as the keyword search to examine how candidates' names were used on candidates' Facebook posts , it was found that there were posts which candidates signed off using their names. There were also posts which

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[23] Interview with Staff Member D.
[24] Interview with Staff Members B and C.
[25] Interview with Staff Member B.
[26] Interview with Staff Member D.

were signed off with 'ทีมงาน', which means 'Team' or 'Staff'. This type of post contains the candidates'
names as part of the post because the campaign staff were reporting about the candidate. The rest of the
posts were anonymous. The results of this content analysis are presented in Table 6.1 (below):

Type/name of candidate and result	M.R. Sukhumbhand		Pongsapat	
	No. of posts	Percentage	No. of posts	Percentage
Type 1: Anonymous	450	96.8%	321	79.5%
Type 2: Candidate's name used to sign off the post	1	0.2%	70	17.3%
Type 3: 'Team' or 'ทีมงาน·' used to sign off the post	14	3.0%	13	3.2%
Total number of posts	n=465		n=404	

Table 6.1: Ways in which candidate's Facebook posts ended.

Based on the results shown in Table 6.1, candidates' Facebook posts which are categorised as Type 1 or
'anonymous', constituted the highest percentage of posts, with 96.8% and 79.5% of anonymous posts
M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat respectively. In this type of post the candidates' names or their
candidate's campaign team was not used to sign off the posts, but the posts were written in a way to give
a sense to the reader that the candidate wrote the posts, with the use of first person language 'ผม' or 'I' to
refer a male. In Type 2, candidates' names were used to sign off; this constituted only 0.2% of M.R.
Sukhumbhand's posts and 17.3 % of Pongsapat's posts. In Type 3, about 3% of each candidate's total
posts were signed off by their campaign staff.

The overall finding of the different ways that posts were signed off on both candidates' Facebook pages
suggests that candidates intended to show a high level of responsibility on Facebook by being fully
involved in communicating to his followers, with minimal involvement of personnel in writing and
posting messages to them. However, if the reality was that personnel were writing candidates' posts, then

it could be said that the candidates' Facebook pages have shown a high level of consistency in personalisation, making followers feel confident that candidate wrote the messages themselves.

In fact, based on interview data, it seems that public relations personnel posted content on behalf of the candidate but the result of the content analysis in Table 6.1 shows that only 3% of each of candidate's overall posts were signed off by their teams, leaving the rest of the posts showing, explicitly or implicitly, that campaign messages were coming directly from the candidate. Anonymous posts do not mean that campaign staff did not write or were not involved in composing or gathering information for the post. This may confuse readers who notice this feature of candidates' posts. There is a gap in knowing if the post was written by the candidate or their personnel, as followers cannot easily differentiate.

From followers' point of view, they might follow a candidate on SNSs with the expectation of receiving campaign messages 'directly' from the candidate, without third party interference. However, it is also understandable that candidates cannot compose every post by themselves. What should matter is how this is acknowledged on candidates' SNS pages. This information is necessary if followers want to know if the post was coming directly from the candidate. If the candidate wrote the post and signed off the post using his name, it shows the candidate's sincerity and willingness to communicate with their followers although their personnel might develop the posts. Also, there might be posts which personnel wrote over candidate's signature, which becomes problematic for followers to identify.

The overall roles and responsibilities of public relations personnel indicate the relationship between public relations personnel and candidate before and during the election campaign. The findings in the previous and this subsection suggest changes in the relationship, the level of interaction between candidate and public relations personnel and the degree of autonomy that public relations personnel had over the candidate's SNS pages, which is treated in the next subsection.

6.1.3. Changes in relationship between candidates and their public relations personnel

Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1 show the changes in the relationship between the candidates and their public relation personnel before and during the election campaign with reference to the changes of emphasis of election campaign content (Sombat, 1993) and swing voters of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (Boonlert, 2015b).

Elements/Phase of election campaign	Before election campaign	1	2	3	4
Interaction between candidate and public relations personnel	High	High	Low	Low	Medium
Autonomy of public relations personnel over candidates' SNS pages	Low	Low	High	High	High

Table 6.2: Changes in the level of interaction between the candidates and public relations personnel during the election campaign and of autonomy that public relation personnel has over candidates' SNS pages.
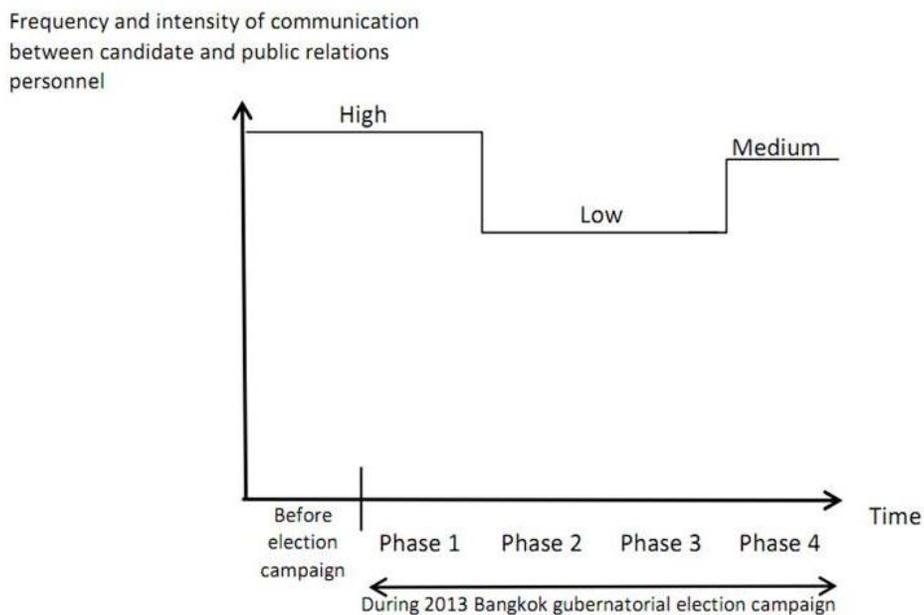
Figure 6.1: Changes of relationship between candidate and public relations personnel during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

Based on the analysis done so far in this chapter, Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1 show the changes in the relationship between the candidates and their public relation personnel in different phases before and during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Before the election campaign, the relationship between candidates and their public relations personnel was the most intense as the personnel had to

familiarise themselves with the candidates' biographies, personalities, management styles, policies and opinions on different issues. The personnel had to invest a significant amount of time and effort to gain a deep understanding of the candidates' campaigns for them to be able to do strategic planning for the election campaign on the candidates' SNS pages. The personnel had limited control of candidate's SNSs page.

During Phase 1 of the election campaign, the intensity of interaction between candidates and their personnel remained high as the personnel had to discuss frequently with the candidate about managing campaign content on candidate's SNSs page and how they should reply to followers' comments and questions. During Phase 1, the personnel had to understand and familiarise themselves with the candidates' ways of speaking in public and their opinions to personalise the candidates' SNS pages. The communication between the two parties might occur a few times a day, depending on the amount of content that they intend to post on SNSs and the feedback that they receive from followers. Therefore, the interaction level between candidates and their personnel during Phase 1 would be very frequent and intense because the personnel tried to acquire skills in posting messages on SNSs on behalf of the candidates, while the autonomy that personnel had over the candidates' SNS pages remained low as both candidates and personnel were still dependent on each other during Phase 1.

In Phase 2 and Phase 3, the frequency and intensity of interaction between the candidates and their personnel would be lower than in Phase 1. As the election campaign proceeded, the autonomy of personnel over the candidates' SNS pages started to increase gradually, the personnel were given a reasonable degree of autonomy and independence to manage the candidates' SNS pages. There were still regular or daily contacts between the candidates and their personnel. The regular meetings between the candidate and personnel remained important in Phases 2 and Phase 3 because the candidates still needed to know what was happening on their SNS pages and at the same time their personnel also needed to know what the candidates did and said in field campaigning, debates, speeches, and interviews.[27] Both candidates and their personnel maintained a positive relationship with each other, not allowing any gap of communication to exist as there were times in which news reporters and voters would ask the candidate for clarification about the candidates' posts on SNSs. Their personnel had to keep an eye on mainstream

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[27] Interview with Staff Members C.

media news coverage related to the candidates or if the candidates' rivals mentioned the candidates in any way.[28] Therefore, the level of interaction between the candidates and their personnel during Phases 2 and 3 was lower than Phase 1, with a high level of leeway for personnel to be more independent in their jobs and responsibility.

Taking into consideration of the difference between results of opinion polls and actual result of the 2015 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (Boonlert, 2015b), Phase 4, the conclusion of the candidates' election campaigns on SNSs, allowed the issues that had been observed and gathered during the election campaign to be formulated into the final message sent out to followers on SNSs. Thus the interaction between the candidates and their public relations personnel was closer again in Phase 4, gaining more involvement from the candidates to participate in their SNS pages. The analysis in this subsection suggests that during the different phases of the election campaign, there were changes in the level of autonomy that public relations personnel had over the candidates' SNS pages. As the election campaign preceded, public relations personnel were able to confidently regulate the candidates' SNS pages, personalise and post message on behalf of the candidate.

Turning now to the use of public relations personnel for political communication on SNSs, a public relations staff member[29] who has managed a Thai politician's SNS accounts mentioned that after he had been responsible for the Thai politician's SNS page for quite a long period, he knows what the politician wants him to do on the SNS pages and at times, he would still consult with the politician on certain things. He describes his responsibilities as someone who has to manage 'a database for press releases' by taking photographs of the politician and transcribing what the politician said in conversations and parliament in order for the politician's followers to have access to raw data from politician's SNS page based on what the politician is doing on the daily basis. At the same time, the politician also monitors his SNS page by posting certain messages and pictures to see the effect that the content might have on his followers. Simultaneously, the staff member also ensured that the politician was aware of the actions taken by the public relations personnel on the politician's SNS page. Hence, the finding on the roles and relationship

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[28] Interview with Staff Members C.

[29] Interview with Staff Members F.

of public relations personnel with their political figures in the context of the election campaign and political communication on SNSs in general consist of the same approach.

To conclude, the roles of public relations personnel found in this section indicate the development of Thai public relations. Updating Daradirek and Rosechongporn (2004) findings on the duties of Thai public relations personnel of press release writing, media relations, organisational publications production, public relations planning and special events, the roles of political public relations on SNSs at the micro level consist of efficient internal communication to manage campaign message from political figures to public relations personnel, who had the knowledge and ability to think on behalf of the candidates based on the content posted the candidates' SNS pages through the establishment of a relationship between the candidate and their personnel. The messages flow from the public relations personnel to the candidates' followers. Public relations personnel acted as the link between candidates and their followers on SNS. Public relations personnel working for candidates might be in-house staff employed by the political party, who might or might not be personally related to the candidates. The primary role of public relations personnel was to personalise the candidates' SNS pages, respond to and manage comments and communicate in real-time during the election campaign. The autonomy that public relations personnel had over the candidates' SNS pages increased over time. However, it should be noted here that the high level of personalisation of candidates' posts by public relations personnel could lead to a problem in assigning responsibility for candidates' SNS pages. The changes in the relationship between candidates and their personnel raise the question of who is actually in charge of candidates' SNS pages. (Chapter 7 will discuss further this issue).

The establishment of a relationship between candidates and their personnel was essential for personnel to personalise the candidates' SNS pages. Section 6.2 moves on to contextualise the flow of messages on SNSs in relation to the communication theory of two-step flow and vote-canvassing networks in Thai political culture.

6.2. Digital vote-canvassing networks

With reference to Van Dijk's (2006) definition of 'interaction', Van Dijck's (2013) concept of 'connectedness' and Baym's (2010) analysis of relationships between Facebook friends, this section uses a prototype to discuss how the flow of campaign information on Facebook and the relationship between individuals who are part of the candidates' campaign on Facebook can establish and expand their digital

vote-canvassing networks. This section starts off by analysing how the role and relationship of public relations personnel and candidates establish a digital vote-canvassing network, which is a development from traditional vote-canvassing systems. Building upon the establishment of the digital vote-canvassing networks on SNSs, this section then examines how candidates perceived interaction to be beneficial for their campaigns. Finally, this section envisages the expansion of digital vote-canvassing networks by looking into the implications of followers interacting with and spreading candidates' campaigns on SNSs.

6.2.1. Establishment of digital vote-canvassing networks: Core digital vote-canvassers on Facebook
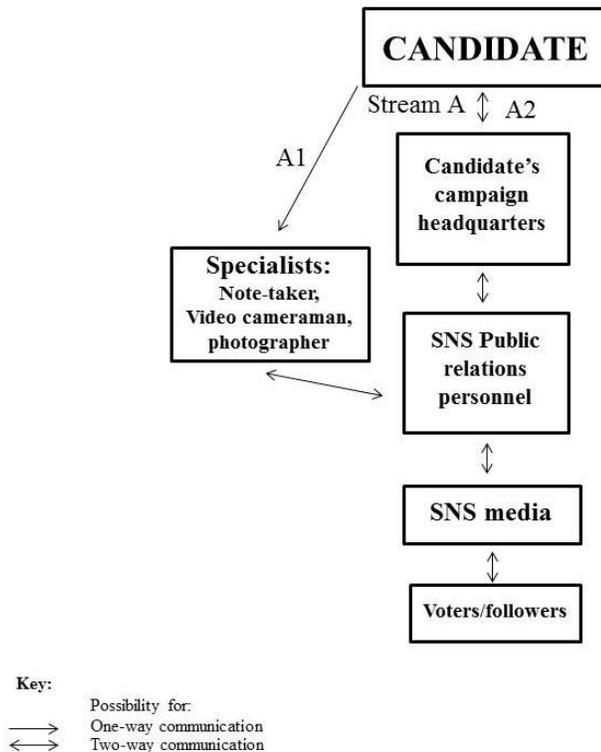

Figure 6.2: Flow of information on SNSs between candidates who use public relations personnel to transmit campaign messages to followers (Author's compilation).

Figure 6.2 is a prototype of the transmission of election campaign message flows from candidates to followers on SNSs, which consist of:

1. **Candidate**.

2. **Candidate's campaign headquarters:** On Stream A2; the people who disseminate campaign information from the candidate to other channels of communication.

3. **SNS public relations personnel:** Campaign staff who post messages on behalf of the candidate on SNSs.

4. **SNS media:** SNSs as media platforms where campaign messages between candidates and followers are transmitted and exchanged.

5. **Voters/followers:** Voters in the election or followers of candidates who are SNS users.

6. **Specialists:** Note-takers, video camera operators and photographers who keep a record of candidates' movements. These specialists send their work to public relations personnel to select content to be posted on candidates' SNS pages.

As shown in Figure 6.2, personnel use Facebook to make the connection between candidates and followers. This section argues that the prominent role of candidates' personnel and their relationship with the candidates have developed on the framework of traditional vote-canvassers in Thai election campaigns, turning personnel into 'digital vote-canvassers,' who operate 'digital vote-canvassing networks'. The noun 'network' and 'system' are similar in showing the way people are connected through communication. This research will use the term 'network' in the establishment and development of digital vote-canvassing to demonstrate that this is formulated on social networking sites, where users have been able to articulate their opinions through interacting.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Subsection 2.3.2, there are parallels between the roles of digital vote-canvassers and traditional vote-canvassers in Thai election campaigns. Anek (1996) and Anyarat (2010) characterise the latter as those who regularly visit local villages or communities to have personal ties with voters. However, both digital vote-canvassers and traditional vote-canvassers play an intermediary role in linking candidates and voters during the election campaign. This research found that it was impossible for candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election to take full responsibility for communications on their SNS pages. Public relations personnel were a type of in-house vote-canvassers during the election campaign on SNSs. They acted on behalf of the candidates in various roles. With the intention of influencing voting decisions, both digital and traditional vote-canvassers have specialised demographic knowledge on their electorates and target groups with whom they are communicating. Public relations personnel or digital vote-canvassers play a significant role in managing and personalising candidates' SNS pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

There are differences in the temporal structure of communication among traditional vote-canvassers and digital vote-canvassers. Communication in traditional vote-canvassing networks was mainly through face-to-face meetings and telephone calls, but communication with digital vote-canvassers, campaign staff or specialists was mainly made by e-mail and instant message applications such as Line and WhatsApp, which were practical only with internet connections. Depending on internet connection and how people are notified about the message transmitted, the temporal structure on the digital vote-canvassing networks is an asynchronous communication as there might be delay between the time the sender sends the message and the receiver gets or reads the messages (Baym, 2010). Arguably, communication in digital vote-canvassing networks is real time in terms of updating the message on computer screen and the ability to extend its reach to more SNSs users. Communication between digital vote-canvassers and followers was made through different SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Google Plus, which also require an internet connection, making the speed of communication in digital vote-canvassing network faster than in traditional ones. On the screen, communication between the candidates and their followers might seem 'short' and 'direct' but there was a hierarchy of teams acting behind the screen to publish posts on SNSs. One possible explanation for this is the digitalisation of communication on digital vote-canvassing networks, allowing rapid communication on candidates SNS campaigns though several staff campaign were in different locations during the election campaign.

The different form of communication used in traditional and digital vote-canvassing networks defined the sub-duties of campaign staff connected to digital vote-canvassers. With reference to the finding in Chapter 5 on agenda-setting in relation to the phase of the election campaign, digital vote-canvassers acted on behalf of candidates to personalise communication on candidates' SNS pages by structuring individual posts to suit the timeframe of the different phases of the election campaign as well as to target followers. As a result, digital vote-canvassers coordinated and built online networks using their specialised knowledge of followers or voter segmentation and decided on the strategies to use on SNSs. Communication strategies on SNSs have been used to influence voting decisions through the basic idea of microtargeting (Bimber, 2014; Edgerly et al., 2013; Stokes-Brown, 2012). Given that followers can follow more than one candidate's SNS page and the existence of swing voters in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election (Boonlert, 2015b), it was important for digital vote-canvassers to make SNSs personalised channels of campaign communication to reach voters' needs, engage with them and persuade them to vote for the candidate. In other words, digital vote-canvassers had to ensure that candidate's campaign was relevant to voters, and they had to be able to sustain their attention throughout the election campaign.

Links between candidates and different campaign staff led to collaboration among campaign staff in the digital vote-canvasing networks. The head of the public relations team had regular contact with the candidate during the election campaign, and the head would provide the candidate with a daily report based on what has been posted and follower's interaction on the candidates' SNS page. The outer layer of the digital vote-canvassing network (Stream A1 of Figure 6.2.) consisted of different specialists, namely note-takers, video cameramen, and photographers recording what happened during the candidate's field campaign, while editors in another location edited photographs and video, with their finished products sent through the internet to the head of public relations team. The head of public relations team was able to compose a message and publish it on the candidate's SNS page based on the strategic communication plan initially defined for the election campaign.

This research found that digital vote-canvassers monitored other candidates' Facebook pages by noting whether other candidates mentioned anything about their candidate in a positive or critical way. This was done so as to be aware of the candidate's competitors attempts to acknowledge or attack them during the election campaign. Traditional vote-canvassers obstruct other candidates' campaign movement in villages and rig election results (Phichai Rattanadilok Na Phuket, 1998, pp.167-168 cited in Anyarat, 2010, p.72), which makes the work on digital vote-canvassers a development from the traditional vote-canvassing network.

Another interesting finding about M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign on Facebook was about M.R. Sukhumbhand acknowledging politicians and campaign staff of Democrat Party who disperses themselves to different places in Bangkok during the second half of the election campaign period, without the attendance of M.R. Sukhumbhand. There might be coordination about such movement in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign. However, no evidence was found of individual politicians or campaign staff of the Pheu Thai Party dispersing to canvass votes for Pongsapat. It could be argued that the politicians and campaign staff of the Democrat Party were also 'vote-canvassers' in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign Although Anek (1996) identifies vote-canvassers in rural areas as village headman, landlords, shopkeepers, and school teachers who are personal supporters of the candidate, the involvement of politicians and campaign staff of Democrat the Party in M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign reflected the difference in the type of people who are vote-canvassers, who also played an integral role in assisting M.R. Sukhumbhand to access many groups of Bangkokians. By using politicians such as Abhisit or Apirak in particular to campaign, voters were able

to recognise them as the leader of the Democrat Party and former Bangkok Governor respectively, so the credit they give to M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign could be more influential.

M.R. Sukhumbhand's digital vote-canvassing network used politicians and campaign staff of the party to expand the campaign network and the coverage of activities by 'vote-canvassers' on the candidate's Facebook page could increase the possibility of followers interacting with the content. Even though M.R. Sukhumbhand was absent, voters were still able to receive direct information about M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign from Democrat Party politicians and campaign staff, who acted as his representatives during the election campaign. By acknowledging this activity on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page, the accumulation of support in the offline campaign was portrayed, which is another way to give confidence to the voting bloc that M.R. Sukhumbhand had. Also, this vote-canvassing network enabled M.R. Sukhumbhand and the Democrat Party to establish further the image of members of the Democrat Party collaborating with each other to win the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, which strengthened M.R. Sukhumbhand's image in relation to the Democrat Party.

In short, the backdoor operation of election campaigns on SNSs indicates that political public relations on SNSs during the election campaign developed from traditional vote-canvassing networks based on the roles of vote-canvassers and their relationship with candidates, which established digital vote-canvassing networks through a different temporal structure of communication, enabling more rapid and centralised management of human resources and communication on SNSs during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. Personnel become core digital vote-canvassers, playing a significant role in communicating with candidates and their followers, with the use of different campaign staff specialists collaborating to send out campaign messages on candidates' SNS pages. M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign in particular decentralised his offline network to ensure that his campaign reached as many voters as possible within the limited time available to campaign, but this network was still acknowledged on his Facebook page. These findings point out that the notion of the traditional vote-canvassing network remains important in developing election campaigns through the use of technology.

6.2.2. Interaction on SNSs to gain campaign feedback

The interaction feature of SNSs seems to be a beneficial communication feature for followers to express their opinions on different agendas and for candidates to receive feedback about their campaigns on SNSs. Allowing followers to interact is a way to establish and build a relationship between candidates and

followers. This subsection uses the results of content analysis and interview quotes in relation to the encouragement of interaction initiated by candidates and core digital vote-canvassers to examine how candidates and personnel perceived interaction on SNSs to be beneficial for the election campaign. The analysis in the rest of this section depends on two facts. Firstly, not every follower interacts on Facebook about the candidate, but there was a certain level of interaction on candidates' Facebook posts. Secondly, in exploring the comments that followers' left on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's profile and first cover page on Facebook, it was found that some followers are voters in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, while other followers showed their support for the candidates' campaign but also acknowledged that they are not eligible to vote in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. This indicates that there isn't a set of defined criteria for followers to establish and expand the digital vote-canvassing network on Facebook and therefore not all followers are voters of the election.

Interaction on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was initiated in two ways. The first type is that regardless of the content of posts, every Facebook post had a certain level of interaction via clicking 'Like', 'Share' or commenting. The second way is when candidates directly encourage followers to interact on particular posts on particular topics as candidates seek followers' opinions on an issue. In other words, candidates posted to initiate interaction on Facebook, encouraging followers to click 'Like', 'Share' or commenting on campaign content.

In the second type, content analysis showed that 1.01% of M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook posts (5 out of 465) contained content asking followers to provide feedback on the post, while 4.95% of Pongsapat's Facebook posts (20 out of 404) contained the same feature. For example, on 9 February 2013, M.R. Sukhumbhand posted a short message asking followers to click like for 'Number 16', which is his election number, and on 16 January 2013, Pongsapat began his campaign on Facebook saying that he would like to get to know his followers' friends and therefore he asked followers to 'share' his Facebook page .

Candidates and their staff were able to make use of the interactive features on SNSs to receive feedback or concerns that followers had on different issues. As SNSs allow candidates followers' to click 'Like,' or 'Share' or comment on candidates' posts or photographs, interviewees mentioned that they were able to measure the performance of their campaign through these interactive features on SNSs. An independent candidate stated:

The good thing about social media is that we know to interact with them and what thoughts they have. There are people who are satisfied and some are not. It's a media that we can measure rather quickly. Otherwise, we have to wait for research to see if it's right, e.g. television, or various apps, or another medium, we need to wait to check when the research results come back. But social media reacts immediately, day-by-day. We can know immediately. We know what others say. It comes our target group, what they think, the language that they use, the feelings that they express. It is not like other media where there is no feedback which is direct and quick like this.

(Candidate C)

The above quote indicates that the followers' use of language in comments on candidates' SNS pages could give a quicker determination of followers' viewpoints on candidates' campaigns. Candidates were able to receive a timely response from voters. The interaction features on SNSs allow candidates to identify followers' opinions. An independent candidate commented that he was able to keep an eye on voters' opinions to modify his campaign. He believed that the comments he read on YouTube enabled him to know what his followers were thinking.[30] In comparison with mainstream media or research, another independent candidate stated that candidates would have to wait for a long time to know what followers were thinking about their campaigns.[31] By the use of SNSs in the election campaign, candidates were able to gain a faster response from followers during the election campaign.

Another public relations staff member working for an independent candidate went on to express her concern about the lack of public opinion in Thailand and she viewed SNSs as an appropriate space for people to voice their views on different issues. Therefore, she attempted to set an appropriate communication strategy on the candidate's SNS page for followers to feel comfortable in interacting with the candidate, as seen in the quoted below.

Public opinion, Thailand has never had this issue emerge before, right? Every issue — every issue. if it's a governor, five governor candidates sit together and say what they each want to do – Thai people listen no matter what the issue is about – not just about politics – Thailand lacks expression of opinion– lacks discussion – it only listens – If I choose you—what do you have – but you cannot talk to the Governor – nothing – Numbers 1,2,3 – My aim of Facebook is 1. Let people know the candidate 2. I want to get public opinions from Bangkokian, what they think about these issues. Our aim directly is what is the strategy doing, have people come and talk about those issues with us. Thai people do not understand – if you graduate from journalism you will understand that Thai people are good at one-way communication—I tell you and you listen, listen – When I come to do Facebook – the paradigm has changed already – Facebook has to be two-way and it must really be two-way – not – two-way in the sense – two-way and it does no good benefit.

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[30] Interview with Candidate A.
[31] Interview with Candidate B.

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So the thing that I currently have and other governor candidates do not have is – I do a campaign – one campaign is linking Instagram and Facebook together easily –… … this is our goal – I do not know about other governor candidates – they want Facebook 1. Want to be famous 2. Want their aim in communication is one-way communication – talk, talk, talk.

(Staff Member B)

Staff Member B went on to explain that the value of using SNSs in the election campaign is to make the best use of two-way communication to gain the most benefit for the candidate and the followers. During the interview, she provided an example of a post that she made on behalf of the candidate, discussing why many taxi drivers in Bangkok do not agree to take customers, as quoted below:

If we look from the taxi driver's side, where will he get security? He doesn't know if the person who calls him is a the if or what he is – then we keep waving – will he take us?—I ask if this is the problem of Bangkok people – this is the problem that is close to people that I brought it up to talk about and share – Today I posted this issue, people are, like, surprised – it's striking, lots of talking going on – I didn't think that the candidate would talk about micro level problems – but if you ask what we talk to the mass about, we need a lot of products to sell, right? It began with the campaign – I posted on the first day, as an ad – as a banner saying – I'm a sincere person, a direct person, I want to hear the opinions of Bangkokians directly. Follow [candidate number] the problems close to Bangkokians and it's IG. I wrote that [candidate number] day and [candidate number] vision on issues close to Bangkokians. I want to invite people on the fan page to join in giving their opinions together. Every opinion enables me to know what view you have about those problems. And you can follow on IG. I have posted and people share – the latest – three days already – this is the picture of someone sitting in a taxi and the opinion of the candidate – his opinion – the candidate said a lot of people talk on the Internet and people around him said that taxis only stop to pick up passengers when they don't want them – but they never go when we call them – before they claimed they were returning their cars – but now they just won't go without giving a reason why they won't go. This issue needs co-operation from the garage owners, the taxi drivers, and the police. I will have a hot line take reports, and deduct points from the drivers and the garage owner have lose points as well for not looking after their employees. I will return licenses to taxi drivers, increase security for both sides, bring in GPS technology to use, so that when the driver is lost or the passenger is lost, we can track them for the safety of both sides. What do you think? This is what we want.

(Staff Member B)

The above quotation shows candidate's concern about fundamental transportation problems in Bangkok by interacting with the candidate's followers on SNSs. Unlike having a large number of followers clicking 'Like' on candidates' posts and photographs, Staff Member B stressed the value of interaction between the candidate and his followers, by asking followers to post their opinions on different problems in Bangkok and critically analysing the problems from various perspectives. Being interactive and receiving public opinions seemed to be important for candidates because candidates were able to know the voter segmentation through interaction. Candidates showed that they gave prominence to their

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followers' comments and their SNS pages were open for discussion and allowed followers to participate in the dialogue. As a result, candidates knew what their followers were thinking. By encouraging followers to interact on the candidates' Facebook pages, candidates were able to ensure that the social networking platform was used to its full potential during the election campaign. Thus, interactive posts can be used to portray the candidate's image as having the potential to be the Bangkok governor, willing to listen to Bangkokians' problems and thoughts. On the other contrary, there are doubts about whether candidates valued the social issues or comments that followers posted on the candidates' SNSs pages, which means that candidates might be using SNSs to construct an image of being concerned with the problems that followers face, without actually paying attention to the content of interaction.

Two public relations personnel agreed in the interview that the number of candidates' followers on SNSs does not mean much. Staff Member A said that 'followers might not be voters' and gave the example of many product brands that have many followers on SNSs but do not have a high level of sales. Applying this to the election campaign, this means that people might be following candidates from a distance but might not be influenced by the candidate's SNS posts. Staff Member B said that having a large number of followers does not show that the candidate is 'hit or hot'. What is more important is the interaction that occurs between the candidate and the voters on Facebook. This point shows that the actual interaction on candidates' SNS pages matters more than the number of followers that a candidate has. Arguably, if a candidate has a small number of followers on his SNS page, it would mean that not many followers would receive his campaign message, and low level of interaction would occur on the candidate's SNS page. It could be said that both the number of followers and the level of interaction matter for election campaigns on SNSs.

To summarise, interaction on SNSs during the election campaign was a way to establish a relationship between candidates and their followers with the use of SNSs as the platform of communication to allow followers to be express their opinions on the agendas posted by candidates. This relationship is associated with the concept of political public relations in the way that personnel manage agendas on SNSs to enable two-way communication to occur between the candidates and their followers, which was passed public relations personnel who played a role in managing and filtering comments for candidates to followers' views on different issues. Consequently, the interaction allowed more SNSs users to receive and interact with the candidate's campaign content, expanding the digital vote-canvassing network, and the next subsection demonstrates how this could be done.

6.2.3. Expansion of digital vote-canvassing networks: Making Facebook *friends* become part of digital vote-canvassing networks

Elaborating from the establishment of digital vote-canvassing networks, this subsection demonstrates how candidates' followers and followers' friends can be part of the digital vote-canvassing networks through interaction on SNSs, particularly Facebook. As stated by Dubrofsky (2011) about the functions of SNSs such as Facebook, 'the more people comment on a piece of data, the stronger the likelihood that this bit of data will appear as 'Top News' on a friend's newsfeed', which increases the likelihood that the data will spread and for other users to interact (p.122). This circulation of content is what Jenkins et al. (2013) refer to the 'spreadable' feature of SNSs. As a result of followers interacting on candidates' Facebook posts, the interchangeability of Facebook (Kent, 2010) would lead to the expansion of candidate's networks on Facebook, which is a reflection of the two-step flow communication proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955b), enabling campaign content posted on candidates' Facebook page to reach other Facebook users, and expanding digital vote-canvassing networks. This subsection explains how the interaction could expand digital vote-canvassing networks.

It was found on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages that every post provoked interaction through all features, i.e. sharing the post, clicking 'Like' on the post and leaving a comment. The level of interaction varied from post to post. Taking the candidates' first posts about the election campaign as examples, M.R. Sukhumbhand received 3,192 Likes, 95 Shares and 191 Comments on his first Facebook post, while Pongsapat received 5,394 Likes, 1,495 Shares and 912 Comments (data accessed on 15 August 2015). These figures indicate the number of followers who further disseminate candidate's campaign on Facebook intentionally and unintentionally.
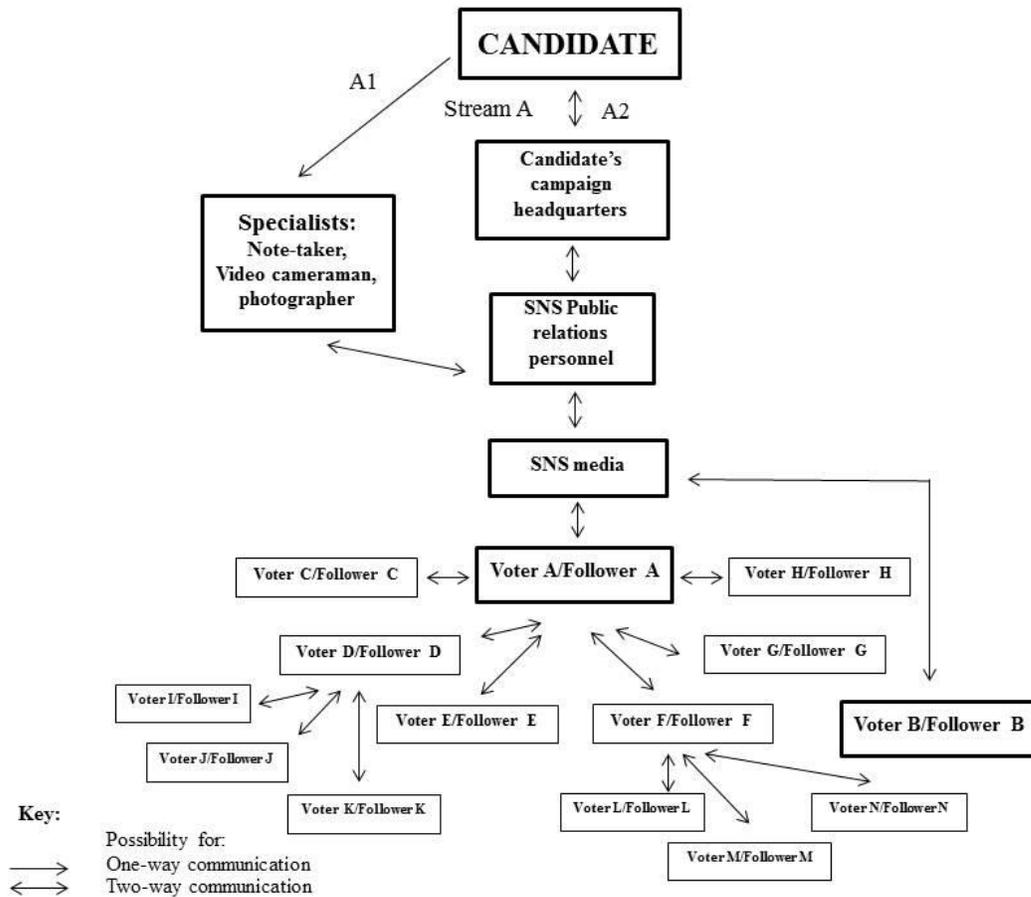
Figure 6.3: Voters as vote-canvassers through interaction on social networking sites (Author's compilation).

With reference to Van Dijck's (2013) concept of '*connectedness*' (pp.46-7), interaction on Facebook would allow Voter A on Figure 6.3 to spread the digital vote-canvassing network. In Figure 6.3, Voter A and Voter B are followers of the candidate on Facebook, and received campaign information directly from candidates on Facebook. After Voter A received a post from the candidate and if he decided to interact on the post, whether through sharing, clicking on the 'Like' icon or making a comment, friends of Voter A would be able to see the candidate's campaign content and the type of interaction by Voter A. In other words, the candidate's campaign content and the type of interaction would appear on news feeds of Voter A's friends, who are Voters C, D, E, F, G, and H. Assuming that Voters D and F continue to share the post with their Facebook friends, Voters I, J, K, L, M and N would also receive the campaign message. The interactive features of sharing Facebook posts, therefore, increase the visibility of candidate's posts to followers' friends, which expands the flow of information from a follower or a non-follower in the

candidate's Facebook page. If this continues, the campaign information will spread to more Facebook users who are non-followers of the candidate. Conversely, Voter B, who is a passive follower of the candidate, did not interact on the post, which means that Voter B's friends would not receive the campaign message on this network.

The different ways of interaction indicate different intentions of followers spreading a candidate's campaign message on Facebook. For example, if Voter A shares the post, the content would spread to Voter A's friends' news feed and will also be shown on Voter A's Facebook timeline. If Voter A makes a comment on the post, Voter A is 'unintentionally' spreading the post to his friends on the network. Depending on the Facebook algorithm to prioritise news feeds, Voter A's friend might be notified on the news feed that Voter A has made a comment on the candidate's post, which Voter A might not know about. However, if many followers leave comments on the same post at the same time, the comments that Voter A made might be hidden but would be visible to viewers who search to filter all the comments posted on the individual post. Consequently, Voter A was 'unintentionally' increasing the candidate's visibility on Facebook as Voter A might not know that making a comment on the post would be acknowledged on Voter A's friends' news feeds according to the Facebook algorithm. This effect also applies when Voter A clicks 'Like' on a post. At this point, however, what is known is the number of interactions at the initial stage, which is the number of active followers who interact on the candidate's post. Voter A would not know if Facebook friends of Voter D and Voter F continued to interact on the post at the outer layer of the network, but we can assume that a few will continue to do so.

The multiple layers of interaction by different Facebook users connected directly and indirectly to candidates' Facebook pages expand the digital vote-canvassing networks. This expansion constitutes the notion in Jenkins et al. (2013) of spreadable media content on SNSs from one user to another, and Kent's (2010) proposal of interchanging networks via interaction, making campaign messages reach more users, which further reflects the notion of two-step flow in circulating campaign information through interaction (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). With further reference to how Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) state that 'two-step flow of campaign message' in the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany in 2010, occurs by candidates expecting journalists to use candidates' campaign information on Web sites to further spread on traditional news media, this research found that idea of two-step flow on Facebook were significantly associating with followers interacting and spreading candidate's campaign content. Followers of a candidate's Facebook page are the online opinion leaders while friends of such followers on Facebook are a less active group of voters who do not seek to gain campaign information directly from

candidate's SNS page. In addition, based on the exploration of the comments that followers' left on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's profile and first cover page on Facebook, followers started to interact on both candidates' profile pictures right after the photographs were posted on Facebook and the interaction went on until the end of the election campaign. This further indicates that as a result of interaction, the spreadability of candidate's campaign on Facebook is not restricted to time.

Online opinion leaders might also conduct interpersonal communication offline with friends and family who are not friends of opinion leaders on Facebook. Thus, candidates' followers who interact with candidates' campaign content on Facebook might spread the content to their online or offline friends in a two-step flow manner. If the content continues to spread, the multiple-step flow of campaign messages will reach other voters who are indirectly connected to the digital vote-canvassing networks. Therefore, when candidates encouraged followers to interact directly about the candidates' campaign on Facebook, they were implicitly asking followers to expand their digital vote-canvassing networks. From this point, it could be said that the candidate perceived followers as digital vote-canvassers while followers who interacted on candidates' Facebook pages indirectly became part of the candidates' digital vote-canvassing networks, which they might be willing or unwilling to do. The spreading of campaign information on Facebook becomes more complex in the outer layers of the digital vote-canvassing networks as there is no information about where campaign messages are heading and where the flow of information ends.

The multiple-flow of communication on digital vote-canvassing networks is individualistic, enabling candidates and voters or voters' friends to establish a more direct and personal relationship. In campaigns that did not contain any encouragement to followers to interact, a certain level of interaction on candidates' Facebook could be beneficial in spreading campaign content on SNSs. Followers who left critical comments on candidates' SNSs pages were challenging the candidates' image, and SNSs allow such content to be further spread to other users. In addition to the way followers are connected to candidates on the digital vote-canvassing network, the relationship between candidates and followers on Facebook was also associated to the *phi nong* relationship that Sanit (1994) analyses. On M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages, staff use '*phi nong*' to refer to offline voters that candidates met as well as to address their followers on Facebook. This shows both candidates and their staff intend to establish a close relationship with voters and give a sense of connection between the candidates and voters. As a result, this relationship shows a positive image of the candidates as they are able to establish a positive rapport and 'closeness' with voters.

Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) noted that there are possibilities for citizens to influence political outcomes if they can compose and post political messages on the internet. Based on how SNSs users are related to each other i.e. 'strangers, admirers, confidants, co-workers, family and a host of other relationship types' (Baym, 2010, p.145), such '*connectedness*' (Van Dijck, 2013, pp.46-7) leads to the possibility that Facebook users were interested in how their Facebook friends interacted. With reference to Granovetter's (1973) definition of 'strong tie' and 'weak tie', if SNS users' relationships are weak ties, they might be less interested in knowing that their friends were interacting. However, if the relationships are strong ties, the relationships could expand the digital vote-canvassing networks.

The relationship between the outer layer of digital vote-canvassers and candidates was not a long-term relationship because such relationship was focused mainly during the election campaign, which was 42 days (from the official start of election campaign, 21 January, till the day before the election campaign, 2 March 2013). This means that candidates and their public relations personnel had to devote their time and attention to delivering their campaign messages on SNSs to different groups of followers in a short period. Thus, it must be stressed here again that public relations personnel played a crucial role in structuring the posts and continuously encouraging followers to interact on the posts, which built the relationship between candidates and followers as well as other SNSs connected to followers.

Above all, there was no evidence found about how campaigns on SNSs can guarantee votes from followers. Staff Member F commented that:

> It is not something like oh because of social media that's why we won. Well partly, if social media meant that much in the campaign, we would have won last time because we actually got more support in social media last time. But social media numbers in Thailand are not that great yet. I am saying 'yet' because it is not happening yet. Mainly because elections happen every couple of years, it will affect more. But the last time for sure, the reason why we won is because of social media but not the social media by us. It is because of opinion leaders in the social media who express their ideas on what people are already thinking.

(Staff Member F)

Staff Member F attempted to explain that there is still insufficient evidence to show that the use of SNSs cause election results. This means that the number of supporters that candidates gained on SNSs could not be used to indicate or predict the number of votes that the candidate will get in the election. Staff Member F justified this by saying 'social media numbers in Thailand are not that great yet', which implies that the

digital divide in Thailand had limited the ability to use SNSs to predict election results. Hence, the use of SNSs for the election campaign and political communication cannot involve the whole Thai population.

As noted in Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.2, Callahan and McCargo (1996) note the literal meaning of *hua khanaen* is 'head vote', while *hua khanaen* act in practice as canvassers, vote gatherers and vote banks. The distribution of money and gifts to rural voters could be used to predict or indicate the number of votes that candidates would get under the patron-client relationship. With reference to Hutton's (1999) claim that public relations is 'managing strategic relationships', the management of relationships between candidates and followers on SNSs during the election campaign is 'strategic' as the primary goal of candidates is to win the election by utilising SNSs to spread their campaign messages to reach voters. However, other than knowing the reaction that candidates receive to their campaign message on SNSs, there has been no way to determine the relationship between campaigning on SNSs and the number of votes that candidates would get. The transformation of campaigning on digital technology allows more diverse groups of SNSs users to connect to candidate's SNSs network. Followers of candidates' SNS pages might be voters or non-voters and followers can also follow more than one candidate to access direct communication channels with the candidate. This suggests that SNSs have moved vote-canvassing systems into the direction where SNS users of various backgrounds are connected to candidates' SNS networks without having any electoral tie with the candidate. Consequently, campaign strategy on SNSs becomes more challenging as SNS users connect to candidates' networks for various reasons. There was no way for candidates or their staff to guarantee that campaigning on SNSs could affect voting, and this finding supports previous researchers who had commented on this (Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2014; Nalinee and Brown, 2006; Strandberg, 2013).

To summarise, Van Dijk's (2006) definition of 'interactivity' as 'a sequence of action and reaction' and the four dimensions of interaction *space*, *time*, *behavioural* and *mental* (p.8-9) that Van Dijk outlines have led to the establishment and expansion of digital vote-canvassing networks through different Facebook users who are connected to candidates' Facebook networks in one way or another, through continuous interaction on candidates' Facebook pages. The interaction of followers on candidates' Facebook pages was another fundamental part of the election campaign on Facebook as it increased the spreadability of campaign content and maximised candidate presence on Facebook during the election campaign for other Facebook users to take into consideration. Followers who interacted on campaign content that they received directly from the candidates' Facebook pages can be considered as the outer layer of digital vote-canvassing networks. Therefore, the interaction features of Facebook are especially beneficial for new

candidates like Pongsapat or candidates with a small number of followers. Efficient management of interaction on Facebook can expand digital vote-canvassing networks through the way people are related to each other, which might or might not influence voting decisions but increases candidates' visibility, allowing campaign messages to reach more Facebook users.

Conclusion

To answer the question on *What was the relationship among the individuals who were part of the candidates' networks on social networking sites during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign?*, public relations personnel acted as core vote-canvassers to co-ordinate campaign message on SNSs, to communicate with followers as well as to encourage followers to spread the candidates' campaign on SNSs. Candidates allowed public relations personnel to have independence and autonomy to enhance their image on SNSs during the election campaign, and the establishment of such roles and relationships are similar to those of core vote-canvassers in Thai political culture. The core digital vote-canvassers performed the same function as the traditional ones with the intention of bringing voters to make a decision. However, there was no evidence found in this research on how this could be guaranteed or measured from campaigning on SNSs.

Candidates and public relations personnel attempted to have a good rapport with followers, to initiate and build an individualistic and direct relationship to enhance the election campaign on Facebook and to use Facebook to their full potential. Even though followers have diverse connections with their friends on Facebook, some followers interact and spread candidates' campaigns on Facebook to enhance their relationships with candidates during the election campaign. Through Facebook algorithms, expanding the digital vote-canvassing network on Facebook can increase the number of people exposed to the content regardless the type of interaction.

The findings in this chapter are developed from the traditional vote-canvassing networks in Thai political culture (Anek, 1997; Anyarat, 2010), spreadable media (Jenkins et al., 2013) and the two-step flow (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), under the features of *interaction, reach, temporal structure and mobility* that Baym (2010) identifies and interchangeability of networks that Kent (2010) outlines. Thus, this chapter argues that political public relations on SNSs during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign were associated with the expansion of networks through the management of human resources and relationships in order to organise and spread campaign content on SNSs and increase exposure to as many SNSs users

as possible in a short period. This management of human resource constitutes the establishment and development of relationships among individuals who are connected to the election campaign networks.

The comprehensive operation of election campaigns and political communication on SNSs is a mixture of what Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) refer to as the second and third age of political communication. The mediation of political communication is no longer only dominated by political parties, but public relations personnel who demonstrated their value and skills in managing as well as personalising the dissemination and interaction of messages that candidates aimed to communicate to their followers. Although mediation on SNSs cannot ensure that followers support candidates through voting, the decentralisation of communicating and spreading messages on SNSs provides an opportunity for the messages to be circulated to more SNS users, enabling more SNS users to recognise the image of candidates. As Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) point out, the third age of political communication on the internet is also associated with the challenges and complexities raised in the networks, leading to next chapter to discuss about concerns of the election campaigns on SNSs and the question of responsibility when dealing with what might not be allowed on SNSs during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

Chapter 7 : Challenges of Political Public Relations on Social Networking Sites

Introduction

In general, political communication and election campaigning on SNSs is arguably contributing to the emergence of deliberative forms of discussion on the internet in Thailand, which is important for the development of democracy. Thai citizens who have access to SNSs interact on political figures' SNS pages to express their opinions and take part in debates in ways they could not before. However, there have been issues associated with political figures' images and the management of interaction that limits this development. This chapter is concerned with the management of interaction, and focuses on its limiting role rather than the deliberative aspect of SNSs. Having public relations personnel is one approach that Thai political figures take to operate their SNS pages. Another approach to political communication is for political figures to have full control of their SNS pages. Based on SNS features of interaction, reach, temporal structure, storage and mobility that Baym (2010) outlines, this chapter attempts to answer the research question on *'How did the features of social networking sites challenge political public relations during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and political communication in Thailand?'* Building upon the content related to management on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages as well as the establishment and development of digital vote-canvassing networks on SNSs, this chapter examines political public relations on SNSs by looking at how features of SNSs complicate the regulation and moderation of political communications and 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. The analysis in this chapter takes into consideration SNS pages mediated by public relations personnel for candidates compared to SNS pages managed by the political figures themselves.

The first section analyses Thai politicians' experience of using SNSs to communicate with followers directly to disseminate messages and build a long-term relationship with followers. This section demonstrates another way to approach political public relations on SNSs based on the way Thai politicians manage their channels of communication for political purposes. The second section discusses how interaction on SNSs becomes a two-edged sword for political figures' image and how political figures deal with followers who are critical of them. Finally, this chapter discusses the challenge and risk to election campaigns on SNSs in Thailand by further analysing the scope of responsibility of public

relations personnel toward the external factors which threaten political public relations on SNSs in Thailand.

7.1. Political communication on SNSs

The use of public relations personnel is a choice in political communication on SNSs. Some Thai politicians decide to take full control in the composition and publication of content that they communicate on their SNS pages, enabling SNS users to receive messages directly from them, without the intervention of mainstream media or public relations personnel in any aspect. This section examines Thai politicians' motivation for and experience of using SNSs to communicate directly with their followers by first reviewing politicians' perception of how they use SNSs to communicate with followers. This section then moves on to analyse the relationship between politicians and their followers developed in this way. Analysis in this section indicates how political communication SNSs can have an impact on deliberative democracy in general.

7.1.1. Direct communication between politicians and followers

Politicians A and B interviewed for this research stated their experience of the benefits that they gained from using SNSs to communicate directly with their followers and the press. Politician A managed his SNS accounts without employing any public relations personnel to assist him, while Politician B shared his experience of being significantly involved in the strategic planning of the political communication on SNSs of his political party, other politicians of the same party, and of himself.

> With the advance of Facebook, we can communicate with our followers, our members on a minute to minute basis, at least on a daily basis, and we can monitor, whether these messages are being received. It is also a medium whereby members can also respond, comment and advise us. We can update our activities with photographs. It is amazingly free and Mr. Zuckerberg guarantees that it will be free forever.
>
> (Politician A)

> I do also use it as a way to communicate with the press. Whereas typically one would use to organise press conferences and not be able to control what is reported, nor even control the accuracy of what is reported. Now on sensitive issues in particular, Facebook is a very good medium because I can control exactly what is communicated. And be sure that the message is reported in a complete manner. So this is very helpful.
>
> (Politician A)

Politician A had experienced communication faults in the past in political communication through mainstream media, where the politician did not have any channel of communication to make corrections to or give further explanations of what has been reported by mainstream media. The emergence of SNSs is, therefore, a development in political communication in Thailand, which eliminates the significance of the role of mainstream media in McNair's (2011) political communication model. As noted by Sathiian (2008), citizens, in general, do not have personal meetings with political organisations, politicians, or the prime minister, and the media act as the mediator of messages from political organisations to citizens This means without the media, both parties are not informed about any significant political issues that occur on each side. But with SNSs, Thai politicians have used SNSs to have direct communication with citizens and facilitate the political communication between politicians and citizens. On one hand, it could be said that the mainstream media is not as significant as it used to be in acting as a middle person to transmit political messages to the public as politicians have their SNS pages to communicate with the public. But on the other hand, the mainstream media in Thailand still remain a primary source of political information for many citizens (Nalinee and Brown, 2006; Pimonpan and Pirongrong, 2013).

By being able to use SNSs to communicate directly with their followers, politicians have been able to decide and have control over the content that is reported, especially on sensitive issues as the politician can fully ensure that what he intends to communicate is structured and framed according to his interests.

> I think what I might help to use my social media, to help to inspire people to help, inspire people to do good things, inspire people to think of social, inspire people to be successful in whatever you like. For example, when I create the [name] Facebook page. Normally we don't have the tools, we don't have the budget, we don't have money, but that's my way of working that I think social media is a new way that you can communicate to people effectively… … Secondly, sometimes I would like to promote some ideas. For example I would like to promote the [adjective] economy concept during the [politician name] Administration… … So I start using my social media to help find information or do activities for try to raise awareness, try to share my thoughts or at least to inspire people that follow me that creativity is very important, imagination is very important. Think outside the box is the way of living. That's the source of ideas that I think will inspire people.

(Politician B)

Politician B can frame his message to reflect his opinions and interests according to his purpose in political communication, which, in Politician B's case, is the idea that he would like to inspire people and promote certain ideas from his point of view. Politician B was also able to encourage his followers to get involved in volunteer projects. With a channel of communication on SNSs, a lack of budget and resources

was not a barrier to political communication any more. As a politician using SNSs, he has been able to motivate and show his support for different ideas.

Based on Politician B's experience of using SNSs for political communication, it could be said that the politician has the autonomy to define what issues to communicate with his followers, the time of communication and the approach to handling communication on SNSs. As the politician is in control of his SNS page, he can send a message or post a photograph at any time, allowing him to become the gatekeeper authorising the publication of messages in political communication on his SNS page. Thus, with SNSs, Thai politicians can facilitate political communication with their followers through the mobility and temporal structure of SNSs. The low barrier to communication on SNSs has led politicians and citizens to have access to SNSs as it does not involve any cost of entry. When politicians choose to control and manage their own SNS pages, political public relations on SNS becomes a self-managed channel of communication for politicians to disseminate political and non-political messages. Political communication on SNSs is a direct, without the intervention of mainstream media and public relations personnel to set agendas and frame messages.

Political communication on SNSs is an additional, rather than an alternative, channel of communication between politicians and followers in Thailand. It is still problematic to say if communicating on SNSs can substitute for political communication on mainstream media or the five roles that McNair (2011, pp.18-20) outlines for the media in the democratic process (inform citizen, educate citizens, provide space for public political discourses, give publicity to government and political parties and provide a space for the 'advocacy of political viewpoints'). In the development of political communication on SNSs, there are possibilities for these objectives to be accomplished if there is a centralised SNS page as an online platform of communication for politicians and followers to communicate with one another. Politicians can frame their message and facilitate political communication on SNSs to accord with these objectives. But as long as the digital divide exists in Thailand, there would still be certain groups of Thais who do not have access to online political discussion.

With further reference to Pitch's (2002) analysis that deliberative democracy via internet message boards in Thailand has not resolved 'the politics of personality', SNSs have also provided a channel of communication for politicians to express their political opinions and show their personality, which can widen political divisions in Thailand. This means that receiving messages from a particular Thai politician's page can be just a point of view coming from a particular politician. But, if active followers

follow more than one politician on SNSs i.e. the government party and the opposition party, political information and views sent from both networks might enable followers to gain different perspectives and allow followers to make their own judgements on the political issues. After all, consumption of political information on SNSs is also dependent on who followers choose to connect with on SNSs and what information they choose to consume or interact with.

7.1.2. Long-term and direct relationships

The direct communication between politicians and followers on SNSs has also developed the long-term relationship between politicians and followers.

> I spend a total of about one hour per day in the car or whatever on social network. I see it is an important tool. After all – in fact in any given day, I am actually communicating more on social network than I am – in anything else that I am doing. Even tonight, I am going a TV show. It is debatable that more few people will see it compare to read my Facebook page. So it is an important part of what I have to do. And I don't feel that it is appropriate for me to delegate communication with general public to somebody else. It's what politicians have to do by themselves – not least because it forces you to think about what you say and I also---the last sack of one hour is reading people's comment and feedback and that tells me a lot about what people are thinking and it helps me to keep my figure on the path.

(Politician A)

> If people feel that my account is managed by myself, at least they believed. When they follow me, they know that they are talking to 'this politician.' But if another guy, always use 80-90% Team to help, the level of credibility is – it is like the advertisement.

(Politician B)

Politicians who choose to control and manage their SNSs accounts saw the importance of developing a relationship with their followers by dedicating a reasonable amount of time and attention daily for political communication on SNSs. Politicians A and B perceived that having public relations personnel communicating on behalf of politicians on politicians' SNS pages gives a different impression to followers compared with SNS pages that are self- managed by the politicians.

Politician A commented that that it is not appropriate for him to delegate communication with the general public to somebody else while Politician B said that if messages are posted by his team most of the time, political communication on SNSs would be similar to 'advertisement.' Therefore, communicating directly with their followers and having full control over their SNS pages shows their genuineness, willingness

and intention to communicate with their followers, which is a way to increase the credibility of political communication on SNSs. The politicians stressed the importance dedicating a reasonable amount of time and attention to communication with their followers, which shows that the politicians did not have SNS accounts just because other politicians have one, but they took political communication on SNSs seriously with the main intention of approaching followers directly.

It could be said that politicians' investment of time on SNSs is a way to accumulate support and cultivate followers through the relationship that they build.

> The relationship is closer. I am able to explain my thoughts more clearly to more people. And also, I am able to actually help more people because my followers would ask for help through Facebook, usually through the inbox. I get 10—20 inbox messages every day. I read them all. There is hard work. Most of them are either ones that give specific advice or ask for specific help as a MP and from all over the country. So I would try to process them all. Instead of having a specific traditional MP clinic in the UK, every Monday or whatever, the MP would be in office, I have an open clinic through Facebook effectively.

> (Politician A)

> Knowing that you will not be accessed by the majority of followers, some are purely personal, simply because I decided earlier that I want to use Facebook as a way to basically talk with my followers. And when you talk with your followers, you don't just talk about politics. They follow you because they are interested in you. They want to know a little bit more about you. So I tell them sometimes what I am thinking, what I am doing. Recently, I told them that I got a particular disease that I am trying to find a cure for. A lot of response to those kind of messages as well. And I find that by making them feel that they know you better, they can touch you. When it is that you have a message that you want to deliver, there is a much greater chance for the message to being accepted and trusted. As if it was something that was spoken by a friend, they know and they going to know well rather than by just another politician.

> (Politician A)

The above quotations from Politicians A indicate that they have been able to use SNSs as a channel to communicate about non-political issues that they are interested in. Politician A gave the illness that he had as an example. He used this topic to gain a response from his followers. This made his followers know the 'politician' as more than just a politician, and somehow the relationship is similar to a 'friend' relationship. Moreover, the politician uses Facebook as a platform of communication for him to be able to advise people who send private Facebook messages to his inbox. In this way, the politician was able to provide direct support to and assist people who needed help on an individual basis. The composition and dissemination of political communication is not significantly dominated by political parties, but the

agenda and frames of messages are based on what politicians think is substantive to them and to their followers. Without public relations personnel intervention in political communication on SNSs, mediation of politics on SNSs can also occur when politicians handle communication on their SNS pages by themselves, through trial and error, to test the impact that particular messages have on followers. Political communication on SNSs becomes less mechanical and more flexible, enabling SNSs users to have more choice to receive political information and get involved in political communication

With regards to Hutton's (1999) definition of public relations as 'managing strategic relationships', it could be said that the relationships established and developed between politicians and their followers are a manageable and strategic kind of relationship that occurs at a more individual level of political communication. 'Managing strategic relationships' between politicians and followers becomes 'political' when the communication is purposeful. With further reference to Strömbäck and Kiousis's (2011) definition of political public relations, it could be said that communication between politician and followers might not be what Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) refer to 'purposeful communication' in the short term as some content posted by politicians are not directly politically-related content. But in the long-term, the relationship developed between politicians and followers could result in whether politicians gain political support from the followers. As Castells (2012) concludes that digital media established deep communication ties and organisational capacity in protesters before the actual mobilisation of protest in the Arab Spring (p.105), deliberative democracy on SNSs can cultivate and accumulate followers to support a politician in elections and social movements in the Thai context. With regular updates about politicians and the responses followers leave through interaction on SNSs, followers know more about the politician than the politician's policies and political views – and vice versa.

For educated middle-class Thais who are critical in evaluating candidates' policies and elect 'honest and capable persons to serve as lawmakers and political executives' (Anek, 1996, p.221), direct communication on SNSs between politicians and their followers would assist them in receiving information and interacting on politician's policies on a regular basis. SNS users can also follow more than one politician on SNSs to gain each politician's perspective on the same political issue, enabling SNSs users to have more information in evaluating politicians. Suchit (2009) comments that the 2007 constitution in Thailand alone does not resolve the problem of 'conflicting political forces' (p.93). It could be said that political communication on SNSs allows Thai politicians to express their opinions or if they have any disagreement with any political issues as Thai politicians have SNSs as their own channel

of political communication. It seems beyond the bounds of possibility for political communication on SNSs to resolve political conflicts. What SNSs have done to develop the relationship between political figures and citizens and as will be further analysed in section 7.2. SNSs have opened a space for followers to challenge political figures' image.

To sum up, another approach to information management in political public relations on SNSs is direct communication between a politician and his followers on SNSs, which shortens the political communication network as it eliminates mainstream media from the transmission of political messages from politicians to followers. SNSs in Thailand have enabled political communication to become more informal as there is no restriction on the time and content of communication. SNSs enable Thai politicians to decide on what they want to communicate with citizens and also to ensure the accuracy of the message. Politicians compose their messages sent through their SNS accounts, by which they have chosen to communicate both politically-related and non-politically related content, believing that non-politically related content is also what followers are interested to know more about. Consequently, these networks of direct communication have enabled the relationship between politicians and citizens to become closer.

7.2. Interaction and challenges to image management

Based on the exploration of the comments that followers' left on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's profile and first cover page on Facebook, it was found that there was no interaction between personnel and followers, which means that candidates were just initiating the interaction among the followers by posting the content. It was just followers who left comments on candidates' Facebook pages and other followers would comment or click 'like' on the comments that were left by followers. The comments that followers leave on political figures' SNSs page express various opinions, including both supportive and critical views that followers have on particular political figures. The literature shows that the general notion of stirrer exists in other democratic contexts where stirrers attempt to set up SNS accounts to continuously show disapproval of political figures on political figure's SNS page (Bailard, 2012; Chinnasamy and Griffiths, 2013; Gueorguieva, 2007; Harfoush, 2009; Leong, 2014; Rosyidah, 2015). Looking specifically in the Thai context, stirrers on SNSs seem to have been a significant distraction on political figures' SNS pages. Even though the consensus in the literature is that campaign content is very unlikely to influence voting decisions (Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2014; Nalinee and Brown, 2006; Strandberg, 2013), the moderation feature (Kent, 2010) and social cues feature of SNSs (Baym, 2010) raise the question of whether followers who are critical of Thai political figures would be retained in the

digital vote-canvassing network or if critical comments posted by followers are kept on Thai political figures' SNS pages. With the use of the features of moderation and social cues on SNSs as the basis for analysis, this section examines the challenges of interaction in relation to political figures' images on their SNS pages in Thailand. This section first identifies the characteristics of followers who challenge political figures' image by posting critical content then examines the methods and reasons of political figures and public relations personnel in moderating critical content.

7.2.1. Characterising Thai stirrer interaction on SNSs

As Chapter 6 found that followers commenting on political figures' SNSs posts can expand digital vote-canvassing network during the election campaign, and candidates of the election have shown attempts to encourage followers to interact in various ways, there have been doubts about the advantage of digital vote-canvassing networks arising from the way Thai stirrers interact on SNSs. This subsection uses interview quotations from politicians, candidates and personnel to exemplify the character of followers whom interviewees viewed as problematic to their SNS pages.

> Typically, they are from individuals who do not post their own photographs on their profile nor have any friends, as if somebody's accounts are created specifically for the purpose of harassing you.. … I can tell because these comments are written about 3 in the morning (3am) and they come in blocks. So all of the sudden, there are five aggressively negative comments, written by people who don't have a proper name or picture, in a roll… … When I look at their profile, I know that they are a crazy [a Thai politician's name], supporters who never listen to me or they might be normal people who might be over a reason. If the only pages they follow, other than mine is I love [a Thai politician's name], I just don't bother with that.

> (Politician A)

> Right now since the politics is very bad. People discredit you, don't like you or challenge you. So there might have a group of people against me or against my party. Try to come to my page and try to screw up in my page, post bad stuff on my page or try to discredit me on my page… …They use it because they like to attack, they like to criticise. Because to me, you need to open who you are if you like to communicate. And that could be one way to help, to protect the right of the people. Because if not you might have like ten accounts, and you just use different names and bribe people doing crime on social media.

> (Politician B)

> You know if it is just a negative comment, we will leave it there. But if people start cursing or start drawing fights, sometimes it is not just negative comments, but it is comments to fight or upset people on the page, you can look at their account and it is a fake account.

<div align="right">(Staff Member F)</div>

Based on the above interviews, it could be said that reading followers' comments allowed politicians and their personnel to sense followers' intentions in interacting with politicians' SNS pages. There were both supportive and critical followers. The negative comments that critical followers post can be constructive, but there were followers who showed disapproval of the political figures and showed the intention to harass them through the comments they left, which can deteriorate into arguments between the followers. As stated by Baym (2010), people have doubts when communicating with digital media due to the lack of visual and auditory social cues to visualise who they are communicating with. As a result, a fundamental problem of anonymity is that people are not sure if they should believe who they are communicating with on digital media (ibid., p.32). This research found that as for 'anonymous' followers interacting with political figures' SNS pages, there were social cues of the interaction which can indicate their intention of interaction. Followers who set up SNS accounts to destroy political figures' images can be identified by the comments that they leave, the time when they leave the comments and the name and profile pictures. As mentioned by Politician A, one group of followers were supporters of his rival or were demonstrators attempting to bring down the government under the political party that the politician belonged to. These followers did not show the intention of using SNSs for communication, but set up their accounts to attack and spam the political figures' SNS pages by posting consecutive comments during off-peak hours. They used aggressive language to actively harass political figures on SNSs and 'screw up' their SNS pages.

Followers hiding their identity to challenge political figures' images on SNS pages can be referred to 'keyboard warriors'. 'Keyboard warriors' seem to feel more comfortable expressing themselves or posting critical political views on political figures' SNS pages when they do not reveal their name and appearance. In addition to how the use of SNSs for political communication corroborates with Pitch (2002) analysis on deliberative democracy in section 7.1., it was found so far in this section that there is also a lack of trust among the discussants in political discussion on the internet in Thailand. As for SNSs, this research found that there are also some Thai internet users who are still not sincere in political discussion on SNSs, and such group of people can be characterised through 1. the username of the commentator; 2. the time of the comment; 3. the content of the comment. Whether the political views of 'keyboard warriors' have substance depends on the individual's perception of the content. Whether followers'

comments can affect political figures image during the election depends on the interpretation of the person reading the comments.

In an examination of the comments left on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's profile pictures and first cover pages on Facebook, there was no strong evidence found of followers attempting to harass the two candidates' campaigns. Critical comments that are still shown are negative views on candidates' photographs, general opinions of dislike of the candidates or their political parties, and predictions of the candidates losing the election. As this research was conducted after the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election was over, there is a high possibility that 'inappropriate' comments have been removed and stirrers who post the 'inappropriate' comments have been blocked from candidates' SNS pages. The comments which still appear on political figures' SNS pages are what the political figures consider to be acceptable, which moves on to subsection 7.2.2 to examine the moderating of comments on political figures' SNS pages.

7.2.2. Moderating comments

Following a political figure on SNSs *reflects* the followers' interest in receiving political messages directly from their SNS pages. However, because some followers have set up SNS accounts to attack political figures' images, not every follower on the digital vote-canvassing network follows political figures' SNS pages with positive intentions. This means that the interaction and spreadability of content on SNSs does not guarantee the enhancement of political figures' images due to stirrers interacting on candidates' SNS pages. This raises the question of whether stirrers' comments on political figures' SNS pages should be moderated. Interviewees commented that unconstructive criticism of political figures posted on the political figures' SNSs page will be moderated.

> We delete comments or just block people who come in to say 'I hate you', stupid comments or hate speech, we will delete that. Some negative comments, we will still live it in. So if you go in, you will still see lots of negative comments and people will fight it out. We just let them fight it out. But if it is something like 'Hey you know what I hate you bla bla bla. I want to kill you and leave your wife.' So stuff like that we do erase but we do keep negative regular comments… … This is not a web blog, this is a fan page, if you are not a fan, you should not join in the first place, so you have just leave it to let them have freedom of speech in other page.

(Staff Member F)

I just block, delete, block, delete. If it is abusive, I report it. And they disappear. And those don't mean anything to me at all. There are people who negatively comment in an intelligent way, and not an abusive way. And if I sense that they can be turned with proper explanation and proper information, I will take trouble writing, usually either on the wall or often in the inbox. I often click into their page, look at their profile. And in Thailand, it is very easy.

(Politician A)

Rather than attack you personally wherever you go, they just form the team in social media to come and attack you. So I think that is fair to block them. But if people have different opinion, I just simple, openly criticise let them criticise. That's fine. I don't care… … People could make negative comments because you have different opinion. That's fine, I don't block them. I never block them. But if I understand that you get paid to come and attack me, there is no reason why I have to open for you… … I would say negative does not mean negative in that negative way. It is like crime, it is like harassment, which I don't think we have to promote. I think that is very bad and I think people are learning to use it in the wrong way. People learning to use social media in the wrong way, which I don't think we need to support them. I don't think we should support people that misbehave. If people in the class, misbehave in the class, shout in front of people and get paid to do that, it's even worse. It is crime.

(Politician B)

Another public relations personnel mentioned she also deletes comments which are against the monarch. Above interviewees explain their criteria in judging which comments or followers should be moderated, which these criteria are determined by the intention reflected in the comments. The judgment of whether a comment should be deleted or retained on SNSs might vary from one political figure to another but the regulation is done under the Section 14 and Section 15 of the *Computer Crime Act B.C 2550 (2007)*, stated in subsection 2.3.3. Staff Member F stressed that a political figure's SNS page is a 'fan page' and followers have positive intentions in connecting to the political figures' networks. Politician A said that negative comments that are 'intelligent' will not be removed. However, individual comments which are considered as aggressive or hate speech are removed, and the followers are blocked. This content should not be encouraged on SNSs as it is abuse of political figures, and they viewed it as their right to defend themselves by removing the comments and blocking the senders. This shows that political figures or public relations personnel acknowledged that they read the comments and perceive them to be unconstructive. Such followers should not be part of political figures' SNS networks. Thus, if political public relations in election campaign includes what Baines (2011) refers to 'damaging the credibility of the opponents' policy platform and leadership aspirations' (p.116), then it could be said that stirrers who are followers of Thai political figures have used the interaction space on SNSs challenge Thai political figures.

On SNS pages managed by public relations personnel, it was briefly stated in Section 6.1 that they also played a role in managing critical comments on the political figures' SNS pages. Whether to delete comments or not, public relations personnel would make a judgment based on how sincere the content is. Staff Member C said that if a comment reflects a strong intention to discredit the political figure or if the comment or question contains bad language, they would also delete it straight away because of the lack of manner and respect. This is because insincere critical comments could lead to other followers arguing with each other on SNSs, which is an unconstructive way of interaction on political figures' SNS pages.

Staff Member B went on to state that there were times when she wanted to scold followers, but she cannot do so. Staff Member C admitted that the staff has to be mindful with the communication on political figure's SNS page in order to reduce the risk of people attacking each other. Also, the staff member saw no value in initiating issues which will make people argue on SNSs. Hence, the strategy was defined in terms of how they should communicate on behalf of the political figures on SNSs. However, difficulties arise when in judging who should be liable if public relations personnel posted 'inappropriate' content. Also, based on the fact that public relations personnel were acting on behalf of political figures on political figures' SNSs page, it could be said that this is a form of using a *fake* identity on SNSs because the personnel are not the real political figure, even though the use of the fake identity is more intentional.

If SNSs are perceived to be a space of deliberative democracy, it could be said that deliberative democracy in Thailand is developing on SNSs as political communication occurs within the scope of *Computer Crime Act B.E. 2550 (2007)* law to prevent damages on SNSs users, third party and national security. The regulation of political discussion occurs at individual level as political figures and their personnel regulate content and moderate followers according to cues such as the username, the time of posting and the 'inappropriateness' of the comment content. The lack of visual and audio identity of SNS users can make their the comments perceived to be less reliable (Baym, 2010). The removed political opinion tends to be unconstructive content associated with political polarisation in Thailand and the division between Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt demonstrators. As a result, political public relations on SNSs during the election campaign and political communication in general, is a new and individualistic information management process, where individual political figures also make their own judgments to determine and moderate unconstructive comments and followers who attempt to challenge their image.

With reference to Aksarapaak (2013), this research also found that SNSs have broadened the democratic space of online political communication in Thailand, enabling citizens to publish diverse political

opinions. This also includes citizens abusing and challenging the images of political figures on SNSs, which is similar to how SNSs are used for political communication in other context (Bailard, 2012; Chinnasamy and Griffiths, 2013; Gueorguieva, 2007; Harfoush, 2009; Leong, 2014; Rosyidah, 2015). However, the findings in this research on critical comments posted on political figures' SNS pages are a development from previous research as there have been attempts to halt this free-flow of opinion as political figures and public relations personnel in Thailand moderate comments and followers They perceive it to be their right to remove 'inappropriate' content and disrespectful followers from their SNSs networks. Also, moderation of comments is required by law. Consequently, this might enable political communication on SNSs to be perceived as less democratic and not necessarily furthering deliberative aspects of political debate. Political figures and their public relations personnel attempt to expand digital vote-canvassing networks under the external forces of interaction on SNSs that tends to weaken their image on SNSs. The low barriers to initiating political communication on SNSs in Thailand have led to citizens having the opportunity to interact with political content, where different SNSs users are connected on political figures' SNS pages with different intentions i.e. some are interested in interacting with the political figure, while others intend to directly attack political figures. The diversity of user-generated content suggests that there is a wide spectrum of political opinion on SNSs. Political figures' ownership of their SNS pages has allowed them to filter their followers and their comments.

7.3. Storage of interaction challenging the regulation of election campaigns on SNSs

When discussing the experience of candidates and public relations personnel in using SNSs for election campaigns, interviewees raised a few major concerns with regards to regulating election campaign content on SNSs. There were doubts in judging whether voluntary contributions of Thai celebrities to candidates' SNS pages should be viewed as endorsements of candidates' images. Difficulties arose in deciding if active followers who crowdsource on candidates' SNSs during the election campaign should be considered as campaign staff of candidates. Furthermore, it seems to be a challenge to stop followers interacting with election campaign content when the campaign has come to an end to comply with election campaign rules. These issues are associated with the interaction and storage features that Baym (2010) proposes. The storage of campaign content on SNSs as well as the level of interaction by followers on SNSs have made regulating election campaigns on SNSs complex. The changes in the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel during the election campaign seem to also challenge candidates using SNSs under general election campaign rules. This section examines the concerns related

to political public relations issues that candidates and personnel experienced when using SNSs during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign.

7.3.1. Celebrity endorsements

As stated in Chapter 2, the notion of 'celebrity politicians' has been apparent in United States and United Kingdom politics, where celebrities have become politicians or politicians have associated their image with celebrities to strengthen their image (Barron, 2015; Street, 2004, 2012). However, this research found that the notion of 'celebrity politicians' is very restricted in election campaigns in Thailand, particularly on SNSs, as Staff Member A expressed his concerns below.

> There is one regulation saying that it is forbidden to use celebrities, especially in the entertainment industry to help get votes. It seems that we meet many in the entertainment industry, writing that is writing their own comments saying that if they vote they will vote for Number (X) because of this and because of that. They write on their own personal Twitter and Facebook accounts. Will the Election Commission interpret that we are behind them or we suggested that they write? We will be giving a speech in Suan Lum and we are inviting people to come and listen to the policies. Everyone is willing to come. The question is, if a celebrity happens to take a photo and posts on Instagram and that star who posts a photo on Instagram has about 20,000 followers, will the Election Commission interpret that we are using celebrities to campaign for us. We do not take the photo that they posted, but they come and take a picture of our candidate, they come to listen to us, listen to our policies, then they post it themselves saying that they come to this event.

(Staff Member A)

Celebrities in the entertainment industry are voters in the election. One of the concerns raised by Staff Member A was that if a celebrity gets involved in a candidate's campaign by attending a public campaign speech or by sharing content on SNSs in relation to the candidate's campaign, will the Election Commission consider such action to be the candidate *employing* the celebrity as part of the candidate's campaign? With reference to the opinion of Street (2001 cited in Barron, 2015), politicians who use celebrities in the entertainment industry to support their image were 'borrowing' the popularity of relationship, trust, and admiration to associate it with their image. Hence, celebrities interacting on SNSs about a candidate's campaign could be viewed as taking advantage of the celebrities' image for the benefit of the specific candidate. Celebrity involvement could allow a candidate's campaign to reach more SNS users, which is another way to expand the digital vote-canvassing network, with an attempt to influence voters' voting decision.

As interaction on SNSs is stored and the social cues of the celebrities' identity are revealed on SNSs, the storage of interaction on SNSs can be used as a tool to track celebrity involvement in candidate's campaign and the way in which celebrities endorsed a candidate's image on SNSs. Arguably, there is nothing wrong if celebrities get involved in candidate's campaign based on free will, but difficulties arise in knowing whether the celebrity was paid. Celebrity participation in an individual candidate's campaign can also be perceived as beneficial to that candidate's image only while other candidates struggle to gain such advantage.

Nevertheless, the key problem with this rule is still the fact that there is no clear explanation and judgement on public figures such as celebrities in the entertainment industry to use their own SNS pages cannot get involved in a candidate's campaign in Thailand even though there is a clear statement stated by the Election Commission on which types of public figure are not allowed to be involved in campaigns. Also, with reference to the roles of and relationships between candidates and their personnel, this raises the question of who should be responsible for celebrity interaction in candidates' campaigns on SNSs.

7.3.2. Crowdsourcing

Chapter 6 showed how candidates gave prominence to encouraging followers to interact with their SNS pages. Another major concern seemed to be with followers getting involved in crowdsourcing or designing visual images in relation to the candidate's campaign, where the images were then posted on SNS pages for further interaction to occur, raising the question if such followers should be considered as the campaign staff of the candidate.

> We will let our supporters make billboard/sign by themselves and take a photo. Some people make a sign as (product) and write Number (X), and they send a photo for us to see. The issue is will the regulator say that counts them as campaigners because they are the people who made the sign. We said they are normal supporters. They have a regulation that there can be no more than 500 campaigners per candidate. There are many of our supporters doing this. It's like the question whether sometimes we have to ask our supporters to stop. We do not know how the regulator will interpret that everyone is a supporter voter by free will – don't know.

> (Staff Member A)

The Election Commission announced on 26 December 2012 that the limit on the number of campaign staff assisting one candidate is 500. Candidates have to report the names and total number of people helping the candidate in the election campaign and provide a copy of their Identification Card to the

Election Commission for the Bangkok gubernatorial election, at least five days in advance [32]. Staff Member A was anxious about followers designing visual images for candidates and posting them on SNSs. As one of a candidate's campaign strategies on SNSs was to encourage supporters to raise awareness of the candidate's number by designing or capturing things which contain the candidate's number, supporters have been playing an active role in showing their support and creativity in this, which raises the question of whether these followers are considered as campaign staff working for the candidate during the election campaign. In further investigation of M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages, what was interesting about these two candidates' Facebook pages was that M.R. Sukhumbhand posted images that were designed with his supporters, as shown in Figure 7.1 (below). M.R. Sukhumbhand also acknowledged his followers' names by tagging them on Facebook while there was no evidence of this on Pongsapat's Facebook page.

Figure 7.1: Examples of visual images created by M.R. Sukhumbhand's followers. M.R. Sukhumbhand's posted these two images on 14 February (left image) and 28 February 2013 (right image) (ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013l, 2013o).

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[32] cited from "เปิดสนามเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าราชการกรุงเทพมหานคร (วันอาทิตย์ที่ 3 มีนาคม 2556)… [Open the field of the Bangkok gubernatorial election (Sunday 3rd March 2013)…]," n.d.).

As shown in Figure 7.1, M.R. Sukhumbhand's supporters participated in his campaign on Facebook by designing images related to M.R. Sukhumbhand's campaign, and these pictures were posted on M.R. Sukhumbhand's Facebook page by his staff. From the perspective of the candidate at the centre of the election campaign on SNSs, if candidates initiated and continuously encouraged followers to design images relating to candidate's campaign, it could be said candidates implicitly perceived followers as digital vote-canvassers, as argued in Chapter 6. When candidates post the visual images designed by followers on their SNS pages, the visual images could increase the spreadability of candidate's campaign on SNSs. This information was posted and remained stored as evidence to show that the candidate initiated the participation. In this case, it could be said that the candidate had to take the responsibility for considering followers to be part of their digital vote-canvassing network.

Arguably, like the discussion on celebrity participation, it could be said that there is nothing wrong if followers are designing and posting visual images related to candidate's campaign and if they were doing this voluntarily, meaning that the candidate did not initiate or show any support for such acts. These are active followers who are consuming campaign content on SNSs and at the same time are creating content in relation to the candidate's campaign. This way of showing support is similar to writing a message to express an opinion about the candidate's campaign and posting it on the candidate's or a follower's SNS page. Regardless of whether the candidate asked followers to do thus, they would still do it if they are willing to show their support in this way. However, Chapter 5 argued that visual images are more spreadable than textual content, so visual images are more conspicuous in election campaigns on SNSs. When visual images are published on SNSs, they are stored and can be used as evidence when Election Commission examines crowdsourcing issues.

7.3.3. Terminating election campaigns on SNSs

Another regulatory issue of SNS campaigns in the 2013 Bangkok Governor campaign concerned making the election campaign on SNSs come to an 'end.' Staff Member A raised this concern, which was supported by the Facebook posts made by both M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat found in content analysis as shown below:

> There is a regulation issue. There are regulations: we can do this; we cannot do that. Even the regulator is still confused. Suppose that we have to stop campaigning 24 hours before the election, and suppose on our fan page one person shares something, is he wrong? We have to ask the Election Commission if this is wrong. This is an obstacle because the regulators are not doing this, we have to be the ones to announce to our voters and supporters that they cannot do this. For us,

we will close all our pages 24 hours before the election, all activities, and we will disable everything. But here we are afraid of the things that people share, or what they write to each other and this is something that we are careful of. This is a personal issue, and they are at risk. But the Election Commission has to make an announcement. This is an obstacle. Should the Election Commission make an announcement? Because there will be a lot this year and everyone is using forward mail, now there is beginning to be forward mail coming to me. Many groups and parties forward mail on that night or 24 hours before the election. Is that right or is that wrong and who is at risk?

(Staff Member A)

Figure 7.2: Announcements made by the public relations personnel of M.R. Sukhumbhand (left) and Pongsapat (right) to officially end the election campaign on SNSs on the evening of the day before the election, posted on 2 March 2013 (พงศพัศ พงษ์เจริญ [Pongsapat Pongcharoen], 2013m; ม.ร.ว.สุขุมพันธุ์ บริพัตร [M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra], 2013m).

On the evening of 2 March 2013, the final day of the election campaign, both M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's public relations personnel made announcements on the candidates' Facebook pages that they were terminating the election campaign, as shown in Figure 7.2. M.R. Sukhumbhand mentioned that he would stop publicising any information until 12 midnight on 3 March 2013. M.R. Sukhumbhand asked readers not to 'Like/Comment/Share' in order to follow the rules of the election. Pongsapat in particular referred to the rule as stated by the Election Commission, that every candidate must end their campaign by 18:00 on the day before the election. Also, Pongsapat said the candidate, political party and campaign

team will not be liable if anyone breaches this rule. Therefore, in order to avoid this problem, they are making an official announcement as proof that they informed the public.

The official announcement made on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages to end their election campaign on SNSs and the way in which Staff Member A quoted above stated his concern on this issue shows that ending the election campaign at the stated time is enormously serious. There was an official date to start the election campaign (21 January 2013), and there was also an official date and time to stop it (2 March 2013, 18:00). There are a few key problems with ending election campaigns on SNSs. Firstly, followers might think that there is nothing wrong with interacting continuously online because interaction or discussion about candidates' campaign on SNSs after the official end of the election campaign can be viewed similarly to face-to-face conversations. However, problems arise when interaction and discussion on SNSs is stored as evidence of the interaction, the content, participants and time. Secondly, from followers' point of view, terminating the election campaign could be considered a sudden act. Followers have been continuously receiving, interacting and spreading campaign messages from candidates' SNS pages. Hence, they might feel it odd that the campaigns to come to an end after a last-minute announcement. This raises the question of whether SNSs should be an exception to the official end to the election campaign as SNSs are highly decentralised platforms of communication where a large number of voters and followers are connected.

Finally, it seems clear that only the Election Commission, candidates and their public relations personal or campaign staff were aware of this rule. The Election Commission enforces this rule while candidates and their public relations personnel were responsible for candidates' activities during the election campaign. Posting a message to end election campaign activities on M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's Facebook pages implies that some followers might not be aware of this rule. There is also the question of how many voters would see this rule, taking into consideration that Facebook news feeds are constantly replaced by new news feeds on SNSs user's timeline (Dubrofsky, 2011). It is also debatable to what extent followers would understand or obey such rule. Also, it is unknown who would be liable if interaction on SNSs occurred after the official end of the election campaign.

Pirongrong (2001) argues that regulating internet content in Thailand is not a 'stand-alone value' in the context of children using the internet inappropriately e.g. chatting with stranger, and different sectors are involved and responsible for monitoring children using the internet. From here it could be said that regulating campaign content on SNSs is also not a 'stand-alone value.' It should be made clear who is

liable for unexpected violations of the rules stated by the Election Commission. Political parties, candidates and their staff were trying show responsibility while using SNSs to disseminate and receive messages during the election campaign. However, even if candidates followed the stated rules as announced by the Election Commission, there might be other acts performed by voters or competitors that are related to the candidate's campaign, which can put a candidate's campaign at risk. Chapter 6 noted that the role of public relations personnel and their relationship with candidates and digital vote-canvassing networks seems to be problematic, taking into consideration of the various complexities of election campaigns on SNSs found in this section. Public relations personnel appear to be at risk in ensuring that the operation of candidates' SNS pages does not breach any election campaign rule. If political figures managed their own SNS pages, they would be fully responsible for the operation of their SNS pages.

Based on the three issues examined in this section (celebrity participation, crowdsourcing and interaction occurring after the official end election campaign), it could be said that regulating election campaigns on SNSs was something new in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election. The interaction functions of SNSs challenge with the unclear rules and the objective of terminating the election campaigns on SNSs. Regulating election campaigns seems incompatible with how SNSs function as SNSs users interact and spread campaign content on their own volition. In other words, election campaign rule was not specifically defined for candidates to campaign on SNSs. As candidates' SNS networks expanded during the election campaign, the candidate was not in control of how and when each follower would interact on SNSs in relation to the campaign content posted by the candidate. Thus, the Election Commission might need to develop explicit rules for campaigning on SNSs. The storage feature of SNSs was a major concern as it can be used to track interaction based on who interacted, how they interacted and the time that they interacted, and this information can be used to show SNSs users breaching election campaign rules.

Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to discuss the challenges of political public relations on SNSs in Thai political communication and during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. It was found that having SNSs as another channel of political communication and election campaign, there are issues concerning the potential contribution to the emergence of deliberative democracy on SNSs in Thailand. In reviewing Thai politicians' experience of using SNSs to communicate directly with followers,

the decentralisation of political communication on SNSs can deepen the political polarisation in Thailand as political figures have their own channel of communication to build direct and close relationship with followers to manipulate their followers. At the same, interaction on political figures' SNSs page is a way to develop deliberative democracy. Some followers challenge political figures' image by setting up SNSs accounts to write unconstructive criticism on politician figures' SNSs page, which political figures and public relations personnel work to moderate comments and stirrers in order to maintain political figures' images and minimise arguments among followers. In terms of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election in particular, difficulties arises when attempting to conform the candidate's social networking usage in relation to the rule of the election campaign. Problems associated with interaction on SNSs during election campaign were related to celebrity participation on SNSs, crowdsourcing and interaction occurring after the official end of the election campaign.

On the question of how SNSs challenge political public relations during political communication and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, this chapter argues that the features of SNSs have challenged political figures' image management, the dissemination of messages and internal operation on SNSs. Even though the decentralisation of communication on SNSs was a channel to establish and build relationship between the Thai political figures and followers, communication on SNSs for political purpose lays under the contestation of interaction and storage of content on SNSs, which political figures and public relations personnel constantly managed the SNSs page for political figures' interest. As interaction on SNSs is not restricted to time, interaction on SNSs can extend message to reach other SNSs users at anytime and anywhere.

The political mediation on SNSs in the third age of political communication in Thailand is still a new and developing channel of communication and management. Based on relationship between candidate and public relations personnel and followers, it is contentious to judge who is liable for issues associating with political public relations on SNSs. Although public relations personnel know how the emergence of SNSs in Thailand can be beneficial to election campaigns, the skills of public relations personnel cannot fully tackle the external factors affecting candidates' image and the dissemination of campaign messages during the election campaign within a set framework. What public relations personnel did was to safeguard the candidate's campaign by publicly acknowledging that they are aware of the election campaign rules, but they will not be responsible for what happens beyond their control.

Chapter 8 : Conclusion

This research set out to explore the operation of political public relations work on SNSs in Thailand, with a particular focus on Facebook as the platform of communication and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign as the context of study. This research used multimodal analysis to examine candidates' management of policy-related posts and their selection of visual images uploaded onto their Facebook profile picture and cover pages. This is to determine the patterns of communication between the candidates and their followers during the election campaign. Also, interviews with Thai politicians, candidates and public relations personnel of the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign were also conducted, seeking to further examine the management of the relationship between candidate, public relations personnel and followers, and to discuss the challenges of using SNSs for political communication and election campaign.

With reference to Baym's (2010) seven concepts of analysing media (interactivity, temporal structure, social cues, stored, replicated, reach and mobility), this research found that political public relations on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign consisted of the broad elements and activities of political public relations defined by McNair (2011) and Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011). The activities of information management, image management, media management and internal communication that McNair (2011) proposes, and the relationship management through purposeful communication and action that Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) offer, remained significant in exploring political public relations on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. When applying the political public relations activities to Facebook, McNair's analysis on four activities is not sufficient in understanding the way candidates and public relations personnel manage the visual images and campaign information on candidates' Facebook pages, but it is important to refer to relationship management that Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) offer. The relationship between candidate, public relations personnel, candidates' followers and followers' friends on Facebook is significant in interacting and spreading candidate's campaign and dealing with challenges that emerge in the digital vote-canvassing networks. Also, with regards to Rhum's (1996) definition of 'traditional' and 'modern', election campaigns on SNSs a modern way of campaigning that has developing in relation with traditional ways of campaigning in Thai political culture. Below is a summary of the findings of this research.

In terms of image management in political public relations on Facebook, M.R. Sukhumbhand's and Pongsapat's campaign on Facebook encompassed textual framing and visual framing, whereby both candidates balanced their individualistic image with their political party's image. Although in the Bangkok gubernatorial election, the image was focused on the candidate (Surapongse, 2002), M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat significantly associated their campaigns on Facebook with their political parties. M.R. Sukhumbhand portrayed an individual approach to implementing policy and acknowledged how politicians of the Democrat Party give credit to and supported his policy while Pongsapat communicated the policy approach of working with the government seamlessly. Nevertheless, with the use of Grabe and Bucy's (2013) framework to analyse both candidates' visual images on Facebook, both candidates' Facebook profile pictures were similar in portraying their individual images as ordinary people using Facebook to campaign and approach potential followers. There was no sign of candidates' Facebook profile pictures to symbolise their social status, education or career background. The visual image of both candidates' Facebook cover pages portrayed the broader aspects of the candidates' image and public recognition, which contain a mixture of statesmanship, ordinariness, popularity and the compassionate frame. Being party-based candidates, both had also framed their statesmanship image by using politicians of the same political party to endorse their campaign. Also, this research found that when adopting Grabe and Bucy's (2013) framework to analyse the candidates' Facebook cover pages, it was important to code signs related to a specific platform of communication, the type of election and culture. The management and integration of the different signs associated with the candidates' individualistic images and party-based images can increase the credibility and spreadability of the candidates' campaigns on Facebook, which enabled the candidates to relate and stretch their campaigns to voters who vote based on individual images and party-based images.

'Information management' was another element of political public relations on Facebook during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign and was associated with the management of candidates' policy-related agendas on Facebook as a way for candidates to develop a relationship with their followers by communicating their campaigns under the challenge of data movement of Facebook posts. M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used different tactics to engage and facilitate followers' interpretation of their policy on Facebook through the election campaign, attempting to make followers optimistic about their policy, as well as to encourage followers to interact and spread their campaign to other Facebook users. With reference to Baym (2010), this research found that the mobility and the temporal structure of Facebook allowed real-time synchronisation between candidates' offline campaigns with their Facebook pages, where M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used Facebook as a platform to centralise their election

campaigns. Textual content and visual images posted on both candidates' Facebook pages were a combination of their reports about offline campaigning and messages that candidates were communicating specifically to their followers. Also, as part of information management, M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat used their Facebook pages to centralise the activity of 'media management' in political public relations. Mainstream media can access candidate's campaign information directly from candidates' Facebook pages and followers also can get candidates' activities associated with mainstream media directly from candidates' Facebook pages. This reflects recognition of candidates by the mainstream media and to facilitate followers gaining a broader perspective of candidate's campaign by accessing another medium platform.

During the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, followers connected to candidates' Facebook pages consisted of swing voters, voters who were supportive of candidates' campaign, non-voters who were interested in candidates' campaigns, and Facebook users who intend to challenge candidates' images during the election campaign. Taking into consideration of the diversity of followers on Facebook, the composition and publication of candidates' posts were rephrased and developed throughout the election campaign. With reference to Boonlert's (2015b) finding on the voting behaviour of swing voters in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, this research found that candidates became more policy-orientated during the second half of the election campaign to correspond with voting behaviour of swing voters and the peak of the election campaign. A significant feature of information management on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign was, therefore, determining the most important phase and day of the election campaign to introduce and emphasise candidates' policy-related agendas on Facebook in order to manipulate voters' voting behaviour.

The establishment and development of digital vote-canvassing networks encompasses the relationship between candidates and public relations personnel in the backdoor operation and internal communication of candidates' Facebook pages, and the relationship between candidate, public relations personnel, followers and followers' friends on Facebook. These digital networks operated with the same objective as traditional vote-canvassing networks in Thai political culture, where the fundamental objective is to secure votes through the development of a relationship between candidates, but in the digital form the relationship is established with followers of candidates on SNSs. Also, even though the relationship was online, candidates still tried to establish an equal, individualistic, close and direct relationship with their followers on their Facebook pages, with the integration of the *phi nong* relationship, based on the way candidates communicated with their followers or interacted with offline voters, reflecting the candidates'

approachable and fraternal personalities. The ongoing posting of Facebook posts in the candidates' campaigns allowed followers to be more attached to them. Through the quality of *'connectedness'* and Facebook algorithms (Van Dijck, 2013), followers' interaction with candidates' campaigns could also expand and spread the digital vote-canvassing networks, enabling more Facebook users to be exposed to candidates' campaigns. New relationship is established between candidates and new followers as new followers connect to candidate's Facebook page, which means that candidate's image management and information management on Facebook has to take into consideration on new followers who might not have much information about candidates' campaign since the beginning of the election campaign. However, regardless of the strength or weakness of the relationship between candidates and SNSs users during the election campaign, there was nothing to guarantee that SNSs users would vote for the candidate on the day of the election.

While some have indicated the deliberative potential of SNSs, this thesis has found some limitations, which includes the way the open exchange of ideas is restricted or controlled. The operation of the candidates' SNS pages also encompasses the way candidates and their public relations personnel dealt with external factors challenging the candidates' campaign. The use of SNSs for political purposes has been challenged by the interaction and storage features of SNSs. Political communication and election campaigns on SNSs have been more anonymous as followers have hidden their identity. Due to the low barrier of entry to access SNSs, it has been easier for people who have access to SNSs to challenge political figures' images. The way followers comment about political figures can be misleading and regulation on inappropriate content was therefore necessary. Also, one cannot determine whether the election campaign rules allows crowdsourcing on SNSs and whether voluntary celebrity interaction on SNSs was appropriate during election campaigns. It was challenging to terminate interaction and the interchangeability of digital vote-canvassing networks. Thus, regardless of the trust that candidates gave to their public relations personnel, the professionalism and expertise of public relations personnel are still at risk of being liable for any unexpected issues that occur on candidates' SNSs pages. However, if candidates fully manage their own SNS pages, it is likely that they would be in control and take full responsibility for any decisions associated with their SNSs page. The regular political communication performed by Thai politicians' SNSs develops a relationship and accrues support from followers in the long-term, for the political purpose of gaining votes in the election.

This research has provided comprehensive information about political public relations using SNSs in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, based on internal operations, management of campaign

information, candidate image, the spreadability of content on SNSs through the relationships developed between the candidate, public relations personnel and followers and the risks and challenges of using SNSs for election campaigns. The political public relations activities offered by McNair (2011) did not occur independently, but each activity co-existed during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign on Facebook in order for candidates to develop relationship with their followers. SNSs as Thai political figure's own channel of communication are still fundamental for Thai political figures to maximise positive coverage about themselves in the mainstream media to communicate with Thai voters who do not follow them on Facebook, but at the same time, election campaigning and political communication on SNSs is also 'free media' in the way that users do not have to pay to register for an SNS account, but they would need to have the tools, skills and time to use digital technology. Election campaigning on SNSs requires the employment of public relations personnel who can give advice and also manage candidates' SNS pages during the election campaign. When applying McNair's definition of political public relations and activity of political public relations to SNSs, the relevance of political public relations on SNSs is still based on the management and operation of a political figure's or political party's SNS account, as a free medium, to communicate with followers in a way to construct a positive image of the politician or party.

Digital vote-canvassing networks on Facebook are developed through the relationships among Facebook users. The analysis of digital vote-canvassing networks in this research is based on Strömbäck and Kiousis's (2011) definition of political public relations as 'the management process by which an organisation or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals' (p.8). When M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat communicated on their Facebook pages during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, the campaign content, regardless of whether it was policy or non-policy-related content, was composed beyond the idea of advertising. The way they introduced their background and expressed their suitability as Bangkok governor allowed followers to know more about the candidates than the messages that voters got from candidates' campaign billboards and brochures. The management of campaign content through the ongoing publication of their policies and the continuous updates of their campaign schedules enabled followers to feel that they were part of the candidate's campaign based on the way they are engaged with the news feeds of the candidate's campaigns on Facebook and the way they further interact or spread candidates' campaign.

When election campaigning becomes less formal, communication between candidates and followers is similar to what Politician A expressed 'as if it was something spoken by a friend.' Such relationship between candidates and followers on Facebook is different from patron-client relations in Thai political culture in rural areas and it is also different from conventional image of political culture. Candidates campaigning on Facebook do not necessary meet the financial needs of followers, who might or might not be voters in the election. But the relationship between the candidate and followers was managed in a strategic way to keep each other up to date with policies and opinions within a short period of time during the election campaign. Furthermore, the relationship between politicians and followers for political communication on SNSs in general was also managed in a strategic way as followers know more about politicians than the politician's policies and political opinion. The relationships between candidates and followers on Facebook go beyond the Thai political culture of *phi nong* or sibling relationships mentioned by Sanit (1994). Candidates not only address followers as *phi nong* but the 'close' relationship between the two parties getting to know about each other on a regular basis during the election campaign. This relationship is developed for the purpose of election campaigning. After the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election, Pongsapat posted a message to thank everyone who voted for him and his Facebook page was inactive from then, whereas M.R. Sukhumbhand still communicated with his followers from time to time on Facebook, but not as often as during the election campaign. As a result of the relationship between candidates and followers, the campaign networks on Facebook were able to develop into larger networks if followers interacted or spread the candidates' campaigns.

Research contributions

This study had made a few noteworthy informational and methodological contributions to the research field of political public relations on SNSs in Thailand.

Firstly, this research serves as a base for future studies on campaign information content on SNSs during election campaigns. The results of multimodal analysis have revealed the management process and the integration of different types of content to establish momentum in election campaigns on SNSs, to develop a relationship with followers and to facilitate followers' understanding of their campaign. The framing analysis of visual images developed a flexible framework for semiotic analysis of visual images uploaded onto candidates' Facebook pages. Researchers should take into consideration different platforms of communication, elections, and cultures and the occurrence of overlapping frames in one visual image.

Secondly, this research enhances our understanding of the operation of Thai political figures' SNS pages, associated with the roles and management relationship among individuals connected to political figures' SNS pages that established and developed digital vote-canvassing networks. This knowledge is significant in maximising the spreadability of campaign messages through interaction among SNSs users.

Thirdly, findings in this research add to a growing body of literature on problems in regulating communication on SNSs for political public relations purposes in Thailand in response to the spreadable and interactive features of SNSs. This research raises awareness of the challenges that election campaign on SNSs can create with the risk of candidates being disqualified due to the lack of specific election campaign rules to deal with SNSs as an additional channel of election campaign communication.

Finally, the combination of research methods i.e. multimodal analysis and elite interviews, has also added to the growing literature on how exploratory research about political public relations on SNSs should be conducted, providing relevance in validating the above research findings. The quantitative results generated and presented have provided this research with an overall picture of data collected, while qualitative data further demonstrated the complexities based on issues and concerns raised by the interviewees. The interviewees interviewed in this research provided useful knowledge on their expertise, experiences and challenges of using SNSs for election campaigns and political communication in Thailand. The use of interviews in this study was an appropriate choice to explore into political public relations on SNSs in Thailand. The study of both political communication in Thailand in general and the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign in particular, verified and integrated data collected and produced in-depth analysis of the issues examined.

Limitation of this thesis and suggestions for future research

There were a few limitations in this research. Firstly, the sample of multimodal analysis was focused on the two main party-based candidates in the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election i.e. M.R. Sukhumbhand from the Democrat Party and Pongsapat from the Pheu Thai Party. During the election campaign, other independent candidates also made use of Facebook, and future research can examine independent candidates to gain a wider perspective of how they operate and manage their SNSs page to compete for power. Secondly, the data from the multimodal analysis of the two candidates' Facebook pages were not collected during the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign. This was due to the lack of knowledge in finding software or a research methodology that could download and capture the candidates'

Facebook posts. Only six months after the 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign, the researcher was introduced to Nvivo 10 by a Ph.D. friend. Nvivo 10 offers the NCapture tool to download interactions on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as a dataset. By the time researcher used Nvivo 10 to download the two candidates' Facebook pages, some content had been moderated or filtered, restricting the full access to candidates' Facebook pages, especially critical comments or questions which candidates might have deleted from their Facebook pages. Finally, the researcher only managed to interview one party-based public relations staff member in addition to other public relations personnel of independent candidates who were interviewed in this research.

This research did not examine whether election campaign or political communication on SNSs have direct impact on voting decision. Candidates use other media to campaign in additional to SNSs and followers receive campaign information on SNSs as well as other media. Thus, the study on the impact of communicating on SNSs on voting decision is rather unjustifiable. As stated by other scholars, political information on television remains to be the main source of political communication in Thailand (Nalinee and Brown, 2006; Pimonpan and Pirongrong, 2013). Also, this research did not go into detail to discuss about deliberative democracy and also did not go into detail to examine the outer layers of the digital vote-canvassing networks to find out the relationship between different SNSs users and the probability of SNSs users spreading campaign content further along the digital vote-canvassing network. Thus future research can use deliberative democracy as a concept to explore the interaction tools on SNSs and the strong and weak relationships among followers, particularly Twitter users. Nvivo 11 can produce social grams to represent Twitter users' relationship, which can facilitate research in this field to gain a better understanding of the expansion of digital vote-canvassing networks during election campaigns in Thailand. Interviews can also be conducted with followers to examine their views and motivation to use SNSs for Bangkok Gubernatorial election. Widening the scope of studying digital vote-canvassing networks could enhance our understanding of the plausibility of campaign messages reaching SNSs users who are not directly connected to political figures' SNS pages.

The concept of 'political public relations' remains significant in studying the use of SNSs in election campaigns. However, future research can consider integrating the concept of 'political public relations' with the concept of 'political marketing' in studying the operation of SNSs in election campaigns in Thailand. Political public relations activities on SNSs allow candidates to manage their human resources and campaign content on SNSs in order to utilise SNSs to their full potential. On the other hand, the model of political marketing proposed by Newman (1994) examines the exchange process between the

political leadership of the candidate and the votes of the citizens based on the research and polls done by the candidate and political party to formulate policy according to candidate's market/voter segmentation. Newman's model of political marketing integrates four components into a single political marketing framework, made up of 1. candidate focus; 2. the marketing campaign; 3. environmental focus 4. the political campaign. Newman used this framework to explain how the presidential candidates were marketing themselves in the 1992 Presidential election in the United States. In the Thai context, Nanthana (2006) used Newman's political marketing framework to analyse the Thai Rak Thai campaigns in the 2001 and 2005 general elections in Thailand, and Kalan (2005) suggests 'rebranding' the Democrat Party through the use of political marketing. The use of political marketing would enable future research on SNSs to examine how candidates and their policy teams determine the types and patterns of publishing policies on candidates' SNS pages and how the features of interaction and polls conducted by campaign staff are used to develop candidates' policies. The integration of political public relations and political marketing in studying SNSs would allow future research to examine both the development of the relationships in digital vote-canvassing networks and the strategic formulation of policy that candidates intend to market in order to establish an electoral tie with SNS users.

This thesis argues that the political public relations work carried out via Facebook during the 2013 election campaign consisted of a new and complex process of managing the coordination and dissemination of campaign content and visual images on Facebook, and managing human resources and relationships. With the primary objective of using Facebook as another platform for communication to reach and influence voters, the election campaign content posted on candidates' Facebook pages has to be as spreadable as possible to increase the interchangeability of the digital vote-canvassing networks and strengthen the probability of voters voting for the candidate. The construction of candidates' images and the publication of campaign content required careful management and integration of different signs in Thai archetypes and global images to portray party-based candidates from an individualistic perspective as well as from the political party perspective.

From the perspectives of political figures and public relations personnel, election campaign and political communication on SNS have an impact on the relationship between political figures and followers on SNSs based on the information and visual images that are posted on political figures SNSs page and based on followers interacting on the content. The establishment and development of relationship between the two parties leads to the possibility for political figures to gain votes or support on what political figures do. The development of relationships among people connected to the digital vote-canvassing

networks was integrated through the coordination and dissemination of campaign content on Facebook to enhance the electoral ties between candidates and voters, and for candidates and public relations personnel to confront the difficulties of using Facebook for the election campaign.

Election campaign and political communication on SNSs is still emerging in Thailand and has the potential to attract and motivate more political figures to use SNSs as additional channels of communication in the future. This research is significant in guiding political figures and public relations personnel to use SNSs mindfully and appropriately to maximise the benefits of SNSs in disseminating messages, constructing images through the development of digital vote-canvassing networks, and to be aware of the issues and concerns about the functions of SNSs that could possibility put them at risk. Management of content on SNSs is not sufficient to operate SNSs. But the management of relationship between candidate, public relations personnel, followers and followers' friends is also fundamental to digital vote-canvassing network.

Appendix 1: Results of 2013 Bangkok gubernatorial election campaign (percentage of votes gained by M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat)

	Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra		Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen	
คะแนนรวมทุกเขต (Total votes from every district)	1,256,349	46.26%	1,077,899	39.69%
คลองเตย (Khlong Toei)	22,060	49.08%	16,516	36.75%
คลองสาน (Klong San)	21,089	55.62%	11,088	29.25%
คลองสามวา (Klong Sam Wa)	35,051	43.40%	35,758	44.28%
คันนายาว (Khan Na Yao)	18,042	42.09%	19,137	44.64%
จตุจักร (Chatuchak)	38,766	47.74%	31,227	38.46%
จอมทอง (Chom Thong)	33,968	45.70%	29,458	39.63%
ดอนเมือง (Don Mueang)	28,092	35.46%	40,073	50.58%
ดินแดง (Din Daeng)	29,484	46.46%	25,297	39.86%
ดุสิต (Dusit)	17,386	37.64%	21,818	47.23%
ตลิ่งชัน (Taling Chan)	23,504	42.98%	22,704	41.52%
ทวีวัฒนา (Thawi Watthana)	20,559	49.53%	15,009	36.16%
ทุ่งครุ (Thung Khru)	27,081	47.87%	21,416	37.86%
ธนบุรี (Thon Buri)	28,279	49.23%	20,235	35.22%
บางเขน (Bang Khen)	37,591	40.06%	43,024	45.84%
บางแค (Bang Kae)	44,419	46.35%	37,430	39.06%
บางกอกใหญ่ (Bangkok Yai)	17,393	47.70%	13,046	35.78%
บางกอกน้อย (Bangkok Noi)	26,695	47.57%	20,510	36.55%
บางกะปิ (Bang Kapi)	35,581	49.96%	26,330	36.97%
บางขุนเทียน (Bang Khun Thian)	33,989	44.10%	32,378	42.01%
บางคอแหลม (Bang Kho Laem)	25,107	56.79%	12,977	29.35%
บางซื่อ (Bang Sae)	26,781	42.71%	27,070	43.17%
บางนา (Bang Na)	21,764	48.63%	16,651	37.21%
บางบอน (Bang Bon)	22,934	46.03%	19,731	39.60%
บางพลัด (Bang Phlat)	22,877	44.95%	20,244	39.78%
บางรัก (Bang Rak)	13,632	62.70%	4,824	22.19%
บึงกุ่ม (Bueng Kum)	33,679	45.76%	29,737	40.41%
ปทุมวัน (Pathum Wan)	13,242	55.26%	7,265	30.32%
ประเวศ (Prawet)	34,919	47.93%	28,514	39.14%

	Mom Rajawongse Sukhumbhand Paribatra		Police General Doctor Pongsapat Pongcharoen	
ป้อมปราบศัตรูพ่าย (Pom Prap Sattru Phai)	14,837	60.92%	5,890	24.19%
พญาไท (Phaya Thai)	17,254	47.41%	13,559	37.25%
พระโขนง (Phra Khanong)	23,346	50.86%	16,173	35.24%
พระนคร (Pra Nakhon)	15,074	53.69%	8,854	31.54%
ภาษีเจริญ (Phasi Charoen)	28,009	43.08%	27,327	42.04%
มีนบุรี (Min Buri)	28,744	44.75%	27,327	42.54%
ยานนาวา (Yan Nawa)	21,359	56.16%	11,148	29.31%
ราชเทวี (Ratchathewi)	14,841	48.34%	11,216	36.53%
ราษฎร์บูรณะ (Rat Burana)	17,625	43.07%	17,305	42.28%
ลาดกระบัง (Lat Krabang)	25,450	34.14%	39,007	52.32%
ลาดพร้าว (Lat Phrao)	29,690	47.18%	24,717	39.28%
วังทองหลาง (Wang Thonglang)	26,437	48.52%	20,645	37.89%
วัฒนา (Watthana)	19,877	61.70%	8,179	25.39%
สวนหลวง (Suan Luang)	29,803	54.21%	17,758	32.30%
สะพานสูง (Saphan Sung)	23,928	52.92%	15,599	34.50%
สัมพันธวงศ์ (Samphanthawong)	9,346	65.11%	2,752	19.17%
สาทร (Sathon)	24,600	60.08%	10,488	25.61%
สายไหม (Sai Mai)	30,424	34.62%	45,767	52.08%
หนองแขม (Nong Khaem)	29,232	40.34%	33,129	45.71%
หนองจอก (Nong Chok)	29,912	42.14%	32,168	45.32%
หลักสี่ (Lak Si)	23,981	42.70%	24,518	43.65%
ห้วยขวาง (Huai Khwang)	18,616	48.15%	14,906	38.55%

Source: Thai PBS (2013) *เลือกตั้งผู้ว่าฯมหานคร 2556 ผลเลือกตั้ง [BKK Election 2013: Election Result]*[online]. Available at: http://event.thaipbs.or.th/BKKElection/result.php?t=4#menu [Accessed on 29 February 2016].

(Transliterate of districts name cited from WIKIPEDIA: The Free Encyclopedia (2015) List of districts of Bangkok [online]. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_districts_of_Bangkok [Accessed on 29 February 2016].

Appendix 2: Image of 'Vote No' Campaign in Thailand 2011 General Election

Source: FACTorial: If voting could change anything it would be illegal. No choice in Thailand. (2011). Retrieved March 27, 2016, from https://facthai.wordpress.com/2011/06/21/factorial-if-voting-could-change-anything-it-would-be-illegal-no-choice-in-thailand/

Appendix 3: Grabe and Bucy's coding scheme for candidate's visual image

The Ideal Candidate   The ideal candidate frame was measured as visual manifestations of statesmanship and compassion, suing the following categories:

Statesmanship

- Appearances with elected officials or influential – people with power, status, and/or money – on the national or local level. Examples include prominent members of the business community, former presidents, and other well-known politicians but excludes military dignitaries.
- Visual linkages to patriotic symbols, including monuments, memorials, statues, the American flag, painting and photos of patriots military machinery, and living "heroes" such as Colin Powell or Norman Schwarzkopf.
- Visual linkages to symbols of progress and prosperity, such as Wall Street banks, NASA flight centres, or high technology manufacturing plants.
- Portrayal of an entourage, including security attachments, aides, reporters, motorcades, a campaign caravan, or police vehicles.
- Campaign paraphernalia such as posters, banners, buttons, signs, and other political adornments or clothing.
- Political hoopla, including raining confetti, streamers, balloon and related props.
- Formal attire, namely a dress suit in its full range from tuxedo and black tie to a conventional business suit

Compassion

- Visual linkages to children, especially interactions with young children and the holding, kissing or touching of babies.
- Visual linkages to family symbols, either through direct appearances with family members or indirectly via photographic references.
- Visual linkages to admiring women, including expression of awe, wonder, excitement, and approval through cheering and waving.
- Visual linkages to religious symbolism, including places of worship, religious figures, or symbols such as crosses, candles, or religious scriptures.

Three behavioral display categories were used to measure compassion, as follows:

- Affinity gestures without physical contact, including waving, thumbs up, fanning the crow, George W. Bush's three-finger "W" sign, a "V" for victory or peace, informal salutes, winks to the audience or camera, and tipping or waving a hat.
- Individual interactions with supporters not involving physical contacts, in other words, engaging and giving individual attention to people but not embracing them.
- Individual interactions with adult supporters involving physical contact, including hugging, embracing, shaking hands, and kissing.

The Populist Campaigner. The candidate's visual association with the plight of common people was coded in terms of mass appeal and ordinariness. In all, nine categories were used.

Mass Appeal

- Visual linkages with celebrities including movie stars, athletes, television personalities, and other well-known cultural figures.
- Visual linkages with large audiences, including images of supporters tightly packed into an event space, the candidate appearing amidst a sea of admiring faces, or portrayals of mass attendance of rallies.
- Visual linkages to approving audiences, expressed by applauding, waving, cheering, whistling, laughing, nodding approvingly, or toting/displaying campaign paraphernalia.
- Portrayals of interactions with crowds, including rope-line greetings, handshakes, grips, or touches without individualized attention or paused engagement with anyone in particular.

Ordinariness

- Portrayals of candidates in informal attire, including a shirt and tie without a jacket, or the candidate's shirtsleeves rolled up.
- Portrayals of candidates in casual dress, including khaki pants, slacks, jeans with long or short-sleeve shirt or sport coat, sweater, or wind-breaker.
- Portrayals of candidates in athletic clothing, including shorts, jogging gear, skiwear, golf slacks and shirt, a wetsuit, or other athletic attire.
- Visual linkages with ordinary people, such as visits to working-class communities or manufacturing plants.
- Portrayals of physical exertion, including athletic activities or physical work: chopping wood, serving meals at a homeless shelter, hunting, and so on. Expensive sports such as yachting, golf, and windsurfing were excluded because they suggest more elitist pastimes.

The Sure Loser This frame was measured with the following categories:

- Visual linkages to small audiences where few people are scattered around at campaign events, spaces are sparsely filled, and empty chairs are shown.
- Visual linkages to disapproving audiences, including instances of obvious jeering, booing, disapproving gestures such as thumbs down, posters with disapproving comments, protesting, frowning, or nodding off.
- Visual depictions of weakness, including illness, clumsiness (tripping, falling, stumbling), or displaying lack of coordination.
- Portrayals of defiant nonverbal gestures, including finger pointing or shaking, raising a fist in defiance, pounding on a podium, or similar displays.
- Visual depictions of inappropriate displays, including facial expressions and gestures that are incongruent with the associated news context

(Grabe and Bucy, 2013, pp.223-225)

Appendix 4: Song lyric of *Nakleng* Keyboard [เนื้อเพลง นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด]

นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด ต่อหน้าไม่กล้าบอก

In front of you I cannot say the truth

แต่ถ้ามีคีย์บอร์ด จะกล้าพิมพ์ออกไป

But if I have my KEYBOARD I can type what is true

นักเลงคนหนึ่ง ผู้ซึ่งเป็นกับเขา ซะเมื่อไร

A gangster like me, how could I make you fall my sweety

พูดความรู้สึก พูดความในใจ ต้องใช้แป้นพิมพ์

To tell how I feel I'm using a keyboard a keyboard gangster

จะพูดคำว่ารักคุณ ต้องต่อด้วยหน้ายิ้ม

I'm gonna tell you what I love you, follow with my smiley face.

จะพูดคำว่าคิดถึงคุณ ต้องใช้ปลายนิ้วจิ้ม

I'm gonna say that I miss you, typing is my fate

คุยได้ไหม ทำอะไรอยู่ครับ เมื่อเย็นรับประทานอะไรที่ไหน

Can we talk? What will you do? Haven't you eat dinner? Just like I do

หนังเรื่องนั้นสนุกนะ เพิ่งดูจบไป

The movie that you watched, is it fun too?

เข้านอนแล้ว ฝันดีนะ พรุ่งนี้ละคะ ต้องรีบต้องตื่นแค่ไหน

You gonna to sleep? So goodnight and when you wake up, you will be alright

พิมพ์เก่งจริง เรียกว่านิ้วมือมันตรงกับหัวใจ

I'm good at typing cuz my finger tell what's in my mind

นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด ต่อหน้าไม่กล้าบอก

In front of you, I can't say the truth

พอไม่มีคีย์บอร์ด น้ำตาแทบไหล

Without my tool, I cry like I do

แค่เพียงได้เห็นหน้าคุณ ที่เปื้อนรอยยิ้ม

Just I see your face that's full of smile

แค่นั้นผมก็เสียสมดุล เหมือนโดนเข็มทิ่ม

I'm losing my balance like I'm gonna die

เจอกันอีกแล้ว บังเอิญจริงๆ นะ
Oh we meet again, is it destiny?

พูดไม่เป็น เหมือนเป็นเช่นคนละคนกับที่พิมพ์เอาไว้
Unable to say anything, just like the other me.

ผมต้องไปแล้ว ไปก่อนนะ
I got to go, I need to go.

โกหกทำไมวะ จริงๆ ไม่ต้องไปไหน
Why am I lying, I just don't wanna show.

เธอไปแล้ว ได้แต่โกรธแค้นตัวเองในหัวใจ
And then you go, I can just be angry with myself.

นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด (นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด)
In front of you (in front of you)

ต่อหน้าไม่กล้าบอก (ต่อหน้าไม่กล้าบอก)
I cannot say the truth (I cannot say the truth)

แต่ถ้ามีคีย์บอร์ด จะกล้าพิมพ์ออกไป
Without my tool I can't type what is true

ต้องมีวันหนึ่ง (ต้องมีวันหนึ่ง) ชีวิตจริงไปถึงเส้นชัย
There'll be one day, I'll be reaching the goal someday

พูดความรู้สึก พูดความในใจ ไม่ต้องใช้แป้นพิมพ์
To tell how I feel everything in my mind, can you wait for me?

ไม่ต้องใช้นิ้วจิ้ม คุณรอก่อนได้ไหม
Can you wait for me? Can you wait for me?

Source:

Thai lyrics: Siam M Zone.com (2014) เนื้อเพลง นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด - แสตมป์ อภิวัชร์ เอื้อถาวรสุข [online]. Available at http://sz4m.com/t10050 [Accessed 12 August 2015]

English translation of lyrics transcribed from NowBreakfast (2013) *นักเลงคีย์บอร์ด แสตมป์ อภิวัฒน์ (English cover) กอบัว น้าหนวด [Nekleng keyboard Stamp Apiwat (English cover) Kobua Nanuat]*[video online]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fILFkHtFOLg [Access 12 August 2015]

Appendix 5: Coding scheme for pilot study

Type of post	1	Policy-related
	2	Non-policy related
	3	Others

Type of policy	1	Recycling
	2	Deforestation
	3	Pollution
	4	Nature disaster management
	5	Welfare
	6	Unemployment
	7	Poverty
	8	Privatisation
	9	Globalisation
	10	Inflation
	11	Infrastructure
	12	Housing
	13	Education
	14	Food
	15	Drinking water
	16	Healthcare
	17	Religion
	18	Others

Content of post	1	Introducing policy
	2	Relating problems in Bangkok to Bangkokians
	3	Predicting time needed to implement policy and solve problem
	4	Content relating to candidate's background and work experience
	5	Introducing candidate's style of leadership
	6	Providing public relation information relating to election campaign
	7	Persuading voters to vote for the candidate
	8	Forwarded links from other social networking sites
	9	Forwarded links from other mainstream media
	10	Persuading voters to vote in election
	11	Relating to political issue, political party or being independent
	12	Encourage interaction on candidate's page
	13	Showing concern for the future of Bangkok
	14	Giving hope on the future of Bangkok
	15	Others

Appendix 6: Coding scheme for actual study

Keyword used to search policy-related textual content: M.R. Sukhumbhand election campaign brochure

Pongsapat election campaign brochure

ทำงานร่วมกับรัฐบาลอย่างไร้รอยต่อ

ทำงานในหน้าที่ของกทม.
อย่างเต็มศักยภาพมากที่สุด
โดยประสานและสนับสนุน
การทำงานกับรัฐบาล
อย่างไร้อุปสรรค
ลดความซ้ำซ้อน
แก้ปัญหารวดเร็ว
ทำงานเปิดเผย โปร่งใส
ตรวจสอบได้จริง
เพื่อสร้างคุณภาพชีวิตที่ดี
และประโยชน์สูงสุดแก่คนกทม.
โดยมีนโยบายคืนความสุขดังนี้...

ซื้อสินค้าราคาถูก
ลดหนี้นอกระบบ
ใช้กองทุน
ชุมชนเมือง
ลดรายจ่ายสร้างรายได้

วางโครงข่ายจราจรและ
ระบบขนส่งมวลชนใหม่
คืนเวลาให้ภาคธุรกิจ
คืนความสุขให้ครอบครัว

แก้ปัญหา
อาชญากรรม
อัคคีภัย
เฝ้าระวัง
ความปลอดภัย 24 ชั่วโมง

ขจัดยาเสพติด
ให้หมดไปจากชุมชน
คืนลูกหลาน
ให้พ่อแม่

บริหารจัดการน้ำ
ไม่ท่วม ไม่เอ่อ ไม่ขัง
ท่อไม่ตัน
อีกต่อไป

ขยะหน้าบ้าน
เก็บทั้งวัน
กทม. สะอาด
สดใส
ไร้มลพิษ

ทางเลียบ
ริมเจ้าพระยา
ให้คน กทม.
ขี่จักรยาน เดิน วิ่ง
เพื่อพักผ่อนหย่อนใจ

จัดทางเท้าใหม่
สวนสาธารณะใหม่
สายไฟฟ้าลงดิน
สร้าง Green City

พล.ต.อ.ดร.
พงศพัศ
พงษ์เจริญ

9
พท พรรคเพื่อไทย

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Policy keywords extracted from M.R. Sukhumbhand and Pongsapat brouchure

Security	
Thai	**English translation**
CCTV	CCTV
ติดตั้งไฟ	Install light
สว่าง	Bright
ดับเพลิง	Fire extinguish
อาคารสูง	Tall building
แผ่นดินไหว	Earthquake
อุทกภัย	Flooding
ความเสียหาย	Damage
อาชญากรรม	Crime
อัคคีภัย	Conflagration
ระวัง	Careful/watch out
ปลอดภัย	Safe/secure
ยาเสพติด	Drugs

Water Management	
Thai	**English translation**
อุโมงค์ยักษ์	Giant tunnel
จัดการน้ำ	Manage water
ท่วม	Swamp
เอ่อ	To rise (water)
ขัง	Flooding
เตือนภัย	Alert/give warning
ระบายน้ำ	Drain water

Transportation/Infrastructure	
Thai	**English translation**
Monorail	Monorail
Light Rail	Light Rail
BTS	BTS (Skytrain)
แท็กซี่ (Taxi)	Taxi
เรือ	Boat
ค่าโดยสาร	Passenger fare
จุดตัด	Intersection
จุดจร	Rove points
ถนน	Road
จักรยาน	Bicycle
จอด	Park
จราจร	Traffic
ขนส่ง	Transport

Health Care	
Thai	**English translation**
ป่วย	Sick
ร่างกาย	Body
สูงอายุ	Elderly
สุขภาพ	Health
สาธารณสุข	Public health
กีฬา	Sports
ความสุข	Happiness

Environment	
Thai	**English translation**
สีเขียว	Green colour
สวนสาธารณะ	Public park
สิ่งแวดล้อม	Environment
ขยะ	Garbage
สะอาด	Clean
บำบัดน้ำ	Water treatment
สายไฟฟ้า	Electric cable
สายโทรศัพท์	Telephone cable
ห้องน้ำ	Toilet
ทางเลียบ	Along the edge
Green City	Green City
มลพิษ	Pollution

Education	
Thai	**English translation**
นักเรียน	Student
ภาษา	Language
โรงเรียน	School
วินัย	Manner
วิชา	Subject
ห้องสมุด	Library
หนังสือ	Books
เยาวชน	Juvenile
การอ่าน	Reading
การศึกษา	Education
ดูแลเด็ก	Look after children
วัยเรียน	Studying age

ASEAN	
Thai	**English translation**
ท่องเที่ยว	Travel (tourism)
วัฒนธรรม	Culture
อาเซียน	ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
ป้ายบอกทาง	Road signs

Economy	
Thai	**English translation**
โรงรับจำนำ	Pawn shops
สินค้า	Product
ราคา	Price
หนี้นอกระบบ	Unofficial debt
รายจ่าย	Spending
รายได้	Income
เศรษฐกิจ	Economy
ฟรี	Free

Appendix 7: Research information

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
Jalan Broga
43500 Semenyih
Selangor Darul Ehsan

RE: Interview Research Information on the Use of Social Media for Election Campaign in Thailand

Dear Khun …

My name is Mukda Pratheepwatanawong and I am pursuing a PhD at The University of Nottingham. My PhD research is exploring into the use of social media for political communication in Thailand.

As a result, I would like to ask for an opportunity to interview you and the people who are in charge of managing your social media page.

The interview will last about 30-45 minutes and it can be conducted anonymously. The information provided by you will only be used for the current PhD research.

It will mean a lot to my research if I can have an opportunity to interview you and your social media staff.

If you are interested to take part in the study or would like more information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on (researcher's telephone number or email address).

Yours sincerely,

Mukda Pratheepwatanawong

PhD Candidate

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

University of Nottingham, Malaysia campus

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
Jalan Broga
43500 Semenyih
Selangor Darul Ehsan

<u>ขอสัมภาษณ์ท่านเกี่ยวกับการใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ในการหาเสียงเลือกตั้ง</u>

เรียนท่าน …

ดิฉัน นางสาวมุกดา ประทีปวัฒนะวงศ์ นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัย นอตติงแฮม (University of Nottingham) และกำลังทำวิทยานิพนธ์ในหัวข้อ "การสื่อสารการเมืองไทยบนสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ (social media)" โดยมีจุดประสงค์ที่จะค้นคว้าและวิจัยถึงการใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ว่ามีผลอย่างไรกับการหาเสียงเลือกตั้ง ในปัจจุบัน

ด้วยเหตุนี้ ดิฉันจึงมีความประสงค์ที่จะขอโอกาสสัมภาษณ์**ท่าน** ซึ่งจะใช้เวลาในการสัมภาษณ์ประมาณ 30-45 นาที โดยผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ไม่จำเป็นต้องออกนาม และข้อมูลทั้งหมดจะนำมาใช้ในวิทยานิพนธ์ชิ้นนี้เท่านั้น

การช่วยเหลือของ**ท่าน**ในครั้งนี้ถือเป็นแรงสนับสนุนสำคัญของการทำงานวิจัยปริญญาเอก   หาก**ท่าน**มีความสนใจที่จะให้สัมภาษณ์ หรืออยากได้ข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับการสัมภาษณ์โปรดติดต่อมาที่ (หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ หรืออีเมล์ของผู้วิจัย)

ด้วยความเคารพและนับถือ

มุกดา ประทีปวัฒนะวงศ์

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Appendix 8: Interview questions

Part 1: Basic Information on Social Media Usage

ข้อมูลทั่วไปในการใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์

1.1.   When did you start using social media as part of election campaign?
คุณเริ่มใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ในการลงแข่งขันเลือกตั้งผู้ว่าในครั้งนี้ตั้งแต่เมื่อไหร่

1.2.   What form of social media do you use?
คุณเลือกที่จะใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ใดบ้าง

1.3.   Please rank the frequency of usage. Why?
กรุณาช่วยให้ระดับความถี่ในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ต่างๆและเหตุผล

1.4.   Please rank the importance of usage. Why?
กรุณาช่วยให้ระดับความสำคัญในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ต่างๆและเหตุผล

1.5.   How important was social media to you during the2013 Bangkok Governor Election campaign?
คุณคิดว่าสื่อสังคมออนไลน์สำคัญแค่ไหนในการลงแข่งขันเลือกตั้งผู้ว่า

Part 2: Establishing Candidate's Image

2.1.   What type of image did you intend to establish during the 2013 Bangkok Governor Election campaign?
คุณต้องการที่จะมีภาพลักษณ์แบบใดต่อสาธารณะชนในการลงแข่งขันเลือกตั้งผู้ว่ากรุงเทพมหานคร 2556

2.2.   How do you think your choice of image establishment and your intention to solve Bangkok problems will make voters wants to elect you?
คุณคิดว่าการเลือกที่จะมีภาพลักษณ์ของคุณพร้อมกับการแก้ปัญหากรุงเทพจะทำให้คนกรุงเทพตัดสินใจในการเลือกคุณอย่างไร

What was your intention of establishing such image on social media during the election?
เหตุผลในการมีภาพลักษณ์เช่นนั้น คุณตั้งใจที่จะให้ประชาชนเบนสื่อสังคมออนไลน์เข้าใจเกี่ยวกับตัวคุณว่าอย่างไร

2.3.   How did you intend to portray such image on social media? What did you post? What did you do?
คุณมีวิธีถ่ายทอดภาพลักษณ์อย่างไรบนสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ คุณโพสต์อะไรบ้าง และคุณทำอะไรบ้าง

2.4.   How do you see social media benefiting you to convey such image to the public?
คุณคิดว่าสื่อสังคมออนไลน์มีประโยชน์ต่อตัวคุณอย่างไรในการมีภาพลักษณ์ต่อสาธารณะชน

Part 3: Strategies of Communication:

3.1. Do you have any strategy of communication that you follow to communicate and establish your image on social media?

คุณมีกลยุทธ์ในการสื่อสารเพื่อมีภาพลักษณ์ในสื่อสังคมออนไลน์หรือไม่

Part 4: Public Relation Personnel

4.1. Do you have anyone helping you to manage your social media page?

คุณมีผู้ช่วยในการใช้สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ต่างๆหรือไม่

What is your relationship with your social media team?

ความสัมพันธ์ต่อทีมงานที่ดูสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ของคุณ

4.2. What are the routine jobs that are done between you and your social media team?

อะไรคืองานประจำของทั้งคุณและทีมงานที่ดูสื่อสังคมออนไลน์

4.3. What obstacles/threats/challenges do you face in establishing their image on social media during election campaign?

คุณเจออุปสรรคหรือความท้าทายอะไรบ้างในแต่ละวันในการสร้างภาพลักษณ์บนสื่อสังคมออนไลน์

Appendix 9: Research ethics forms/Participant consent form

ใบอนุญาตการให้สัมภาษณ์/Participant Consent Form

ผู้วิจัย / Researcher's name: มุกดา ประทีปวัฒนะวงศ์ / Mukda Pratheepwatanawong

- ฉันได้รับทราบรายละเอียดและจุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้ และยอมรับที่จะมีส่วนร่วมในการให้ข้อมูลเพื่อ งานวิจัยนี้ /The research project and research objective were explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- ฉันเข้าใจว่าฉันสามารถที่จะไม่ตอบบางคำถามในการสัมภาษณ์ครั้งนี้ / I understand that I can choose not to answer any questions during the interview.

- ฉันเข้าใจว่าฉันสามารถยกเลิกการให้ข้อมูลเพื่อการวิจัยในครั้งนี้เมื่อใดก็ได้ถ้าฉันต้องการ และจะไม่มีการ ลงโทษในตอนนี้หรือในอนาคตถ้าหากว่าฉันยกเลิกการให้ข้อมูล / I understand that I can leave the research project at any moment. I also understand that there is no penalty, now or in the future, if I stop participating.

- ฉันเข้าใจว่าข้อมูลที่ได้จากการศึกษานี้จะถูกตีพิมพ์เผยแพร่ต่อไป แต่จะไม่มีการระบุชื่อของฉันและผู้วิจัยจะ ไม่ใช้ชื่อและข้อมูลส่วนตัวของฉันในการตีพิมพ์ / I understand that information from the study can be published, but I will not be identified and the researcher will not use my name or personal information in the publication.

- ฉันเข้าใจว่ามหาวิทยาลัยจะเป็นผู้รักษาข้อมูลดังกล่าวไว้ / I understand that the university will keep the information.

- ฉันเข้าใจว่าฉันสามารถสอบถามผู้วิจัยเพื่อขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับการวิจัย และแสดงความคิดเห็นของฉัน ต่อผู้วิจัยได้โดยตรง โดยสามารถติดต่อได้ที่: The School Ethics Officer at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. /

I understand that I can ask for more information about the research and can make a complaint if I want. If I want more information, I should contact the researcher. I can also make a complaint about my part in the research. If I want to make a complaint, I should contact the School Ethics Officer at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

ลายมือชื่อ/Signature: ลายมือผู้วิจัย/ Signature of Researcher:

ชื่อ/Name: วันที่/Date:

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