

## THAILAND IN LAOS' NEWSPAPERS

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to display the news of Thailand in Laos. The Thailand's news as the data were grouped from the Vientiane Times Newspaper published in 2016-2017. This newspaper publishes in English, in addition, the news should be approved by the government agency. There is 65 news totally that are divided by its content into 5 categories; economic, tourism, art and culture, Lao-Thailand's relationship, and education and sport, respectively. The news about Thailand published on Laos' newspaper was interesting topics for Laos as they are involved to Lao society situations. The content analysis was employed to be a framework of this research. The finding was found that the economic issues were the most published in Laos including tourism economic. The research result is not only displaying what Lao people would like to know Thailand' society but it also implies what the news that the government prefer their people to know about Thailand.

**KEYWORDS:** Laos, Thailand, Newspaper, Vientiane Times, Communication, Mass media

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Lao and Thailand have long border line from the North to the South around 1,500 kms. There are 6 bridges across Mekong River as the main border area of them so people of both countries easier travel to each other in many ways; car, airplane, and boat. The relationship between Laos and Thailand was established again after announcing the Open-Door Policy (ODP) the government in 1980s. Before this time Lao closed their country for rebuild the new dimension in new regime and new motto 'Authority, Unity, Sustainable Development'. The Great Laos Change (GLC) in 1975 resulted to Laos closed from outside. And after 20 years latter Lao society has been changing in various way including media and newspapers. The figure 1 below is the map of Laos and Thailand along Mekong Subregion.



## Figure 1 Laos and Thailand in Mekong Subregion

The figure above displayed the area of the border between Laos and Thailand that have the Mekong River as the main borderline. The travelling convenient in the present let people know each other more than the past, in addition, they have the same spoken language and very similar culture (Chanthao,2017). This is one reason that Lao people would like to know what is happening in Thailand. In terms of the economy in Thailand, it also is linked to Laos people because Laos imports goods from Thailand especially customer products. It is not only the local trade but is the government's economic policies connected to Laos particularly Thailand government's investment in the Mekong-subregion countries. According to Schoenberger and Üllenberg (2009) states that most foreigner direct investment (FDI) is mainly from Thailand, China, Vietnam, Australia, India, Japan and Korea. In the present, the Thailand's government investment into Lao has been planned until 2021 that both countries will have increased the economic corporation (Srimalee,2017).

The newspaper is one mass media online that has an increasing importance for people can access the news and information from foreign countries especially the neighbored countries as Thailand and Laos. Laos as the important supplier who has exported an electricity to Thailand, however, Thailand economy has also significant influence on Lao economy (Thongphet and others,2015) including services and tourism.

In terms of economy involved to each other between Thailand and Laos lets the other sectors are related such as tourism, foreign relationship, culture, and local ceremonies. These issues will be selected to publish for Lao people and foreigner who are living in Laos. The selecting the news of Thailand to publish in the newspaper is concerned by the government agency, so this news should be permitted by the government that it has value for Lao people and society.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research. The news of Thailand that was published on the Vientiane Times Newspaper (VTN) in 2017 was the data. The purpose of this research is to synthesize this news and to explain that why this news was interested of Laos people. The news will be categorized according to its content. So, the content analysis theory was applied to be the framework for this research. The figure 2 below is the website of VTN as the data group.



Figure 2 Vientiane Times Newspaper Online

## 3.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

The research result will be presented in 3 parts; newspaper and mass media in Laos, the news of Thailand in newspaper as the main finding of this article, and Thailand's news and Lao society. The last parts will be sought what is the concerning point between the news of Thailand and Lao society in terms of country development.

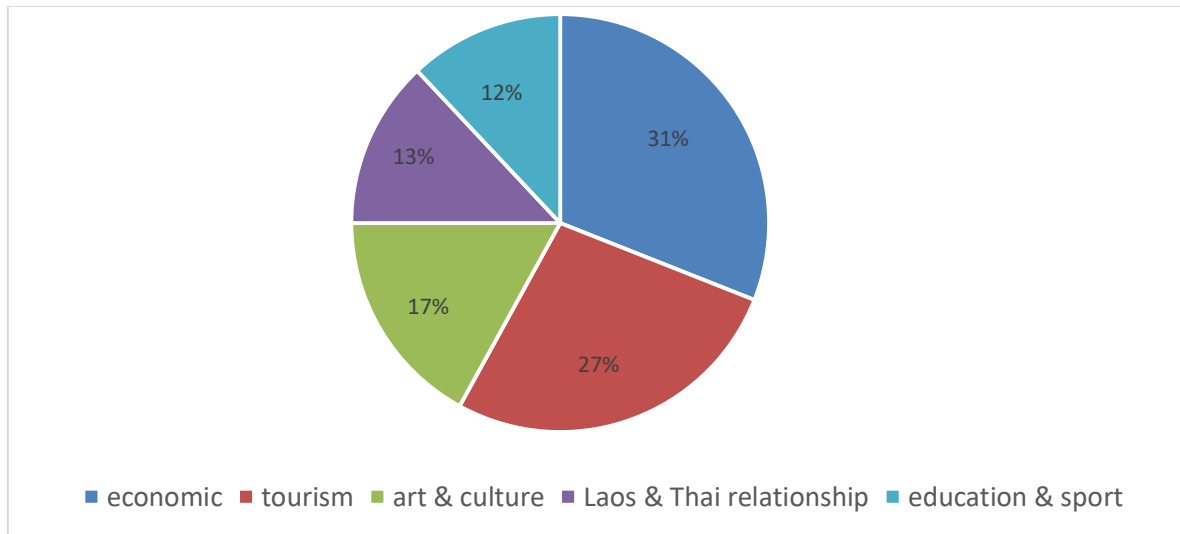
## **I. Mass media in Laos**

After 1975, Laos had declared an independence from France, all media were controlled by the government from the center in Vientiane capital. The Ministry of Information and Culture and the State Board of News Agency harness all of broadcast; television, radio, newspaper. It seems that radio was suitable media at the beginning of national building because most of the population speaks different languages, Lao, Hmong and French. The party used these languages in broadcast. In terms of press, the party had not allowed the private press companies until 1994 that the government established the official media by Committee of Information, Press, Radio and Television Broadcasting. After that has increasing newspaper such as Xing Prasason (the voice of the people), Khao San Pathed Lao (Lao new agency), Vientiane Mai (Vientiane News). This committee also accompanies the news in these newspapers. Chanthao (2016) examined the research finding that the country's name appeared in the first newspaper pages of Vientiane Mai, a popular newspaper in Laos, imply the foreign relationship between Lao's government and the countries by appearing frequency. China, Vietnam, and Thailand were often appeared as they were huge investment. The other news in the newspaper's first page are an important issue that the government demands their people to know.

Lao Press agency function the newspaper and magazine press in the present. The Vientiane Times newspaper (VTN) is a part of Lao Press in foreign language. The objective of the newspaper covers a wide range of domestic and international news and provides information reflecting government policy and socio-economic development in the Lao PDR and is agency of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. Most of the first page news provides about travel, business, feature, entertainment, world news, cooperation, opinion, technology, sport, and dining out. The foreign news mostly has been presented the cooperation between Laos and other countries and foreign company investment.

## **II. The news about Thailand in Newspaper**

VTN is the only international newspaper in Laos excluding French newspaper. There are not many each day in the first page of which press about Thailand. There is totally 65 news about Thailand in 2017. The news about economy is the most appearing in the newspaper followed by tourism, art and culture, Lao-Thailand's relationship, and education and sport, respectively. The summary of news' topic will be explained in the Figure 3 as follows;



**Figure 3 Issues of Thailand’s news**

The Figure 3 above was shown the percent of Thailand’s news issues that economic issue is the most that there are 21 news being 31 percent of all. However, the content of economic news is linked to other aspects such as tourism, relationship between Laos and Thailand as well. The example 1 below shown the economic news linked to the foreign relationship.

**Example 1 Economic news**

**EDL to repay Thailand debts with electricity**

Lao electricity officials expect to repay Thailand electricity authorities for debts incurred due to energy imports in previous years, with repayments having already begun. Laos has accumulated debts to the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) to the value of approximately 6 billion baht (more than 1.4 trillion kip). An official from Electricite du Laos (EDL) told Vientiane Times on Monday that EDL has incurred this debt over a period of time but that EGAT had not requested payment of the debt so far. EDL to repay Thailand debts with electricity.(27,Sept. 2016)

Laos had obliged to send electricity to Thailand as a creditor country. The news of this report is not reported Thailand’s economic situation but reported of Thailand business investment in Laos. The next example news also reported the Thailand’s investment in Laos.

**Example 2 Laos-Thailand business**

**Thailand franchisee of The Face Shop to open Laos store**

THE THAILAND franchisee of The Face Shop, a well-known South Korean beauty-store chain, is set to open its first overseas store in a joint venture with a partner in Laos Pithan Ongkosit, president of TFS (Thailand), distributor and licensed operator of The Face Shop in the Kingdom, said the company would open the Laos store this year. It will be the debut of The Face Shop in the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) market. Pithan said TFS was negotiating with LG Household & Health Care Co, a South Korean cosmetics and beauty giant and The Face Shop owner, on a plan to penetrate the Asean market together. (November

This news reported the co-operation between the beauty business of Thailand into Lao. The beauty business is going to grow up in Laos, as Lao people spend money to shopping at main cities in Thailand especially border cities of the Northeast region such as Udonthani and NongKhai, KhonKaen being near to capital Vientiane. Some international beauty chain businesses from Thailand, therefore, are expanding their business into CLMV countries including Laos.

The tourism news there are 18 issues being 27 percent of all news about Thailand. Mostly news reported about Thailand tourist travelling into Laos such a local direct flight from Thailand into Lung Pra-bang a world heritage city of Laos. Tourist Development Department (2016:11) of Laos Nation Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism displayed the number of tourists in 2016 that Thailand was number one or around 2.3 million being 52 percent of all.

**Example 3 Tourism news**

**Thailand nationals remain top of the list of tourist arrivals to Laos**

Thailand nationals have topped the list of tourists coming to Laos over the past decade, according to the latest government report. A recent statistics report for 2015 issued by the Tourism Development Department of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism shows that more than 2.3 million Thailand tourists out of a total of over 4.6 million tourists came to Laos last year (June 9, 2016)

The other topics of tourism were reported about Thailand-Laos people co-organizer the Buddhism ceremonies together particularly people living on opposite sides of the Mekong River such as long-boat racing ceremony on Mekong River.



**Figure 4 Long-boat racing on the Mekong River**

Art and Culture news there is 11 news being 17 percent of all news about Thailand. Art topic related the entertainment sectors particularly television and magazine of Thailand are popular in Laos. Globalization era and digital technology do provide Laos accessing Thailand entertainment media easier and quickly on mobile. Thailand entertainment therefore plays an important role into Laos. The entertainment news was mostly reported the co-project among both countries such a next example news.

**Example 4 Art and Culture news**

**Lao models take center stage in Thailand music video**

Lao models from First Modeling lao have teamed up with Thailand singers in the music video “MonhukSaolao” to reflect the beauty and charm of Lao women and share in a musical experience. Thailand singer Petch Saharat from Top line Diamond worked alongside Lao artists Sam Intharaphithak, TaiyAkard, Jear Pacific, Ola Black Eyes, Kinoy, Tee Oudalay and Ton Aniloud to make the joint music video.(January 14, 2016)

The similar language between Laos and an influence of the Thai entertainment industry into Laos contribute Thai’s media are popular in Laos. The folk music of the Northeast of Thailand and Laos are very similar so the example news above shows that there is a collaboration of folk music industry by using girl supermodel from Laos being an actress in the folk song music video of Thai singer for audience increasing from Laos.

The foreign news presenting the cooperation between Laos and Thailand there are 8 issues being 13 percent of all. Most news relating to cooperation building in terms of government sectors such as

using the resource in Mekong River. The next example news reported about building the bridge across Mekong River.

### Example 5 Laos-Thai relationship news

#### **Laos, Thailand plan to build more bridges across the Mekong**

Laos has proposed three additional Mekong River bridge links with Thailand as part of a joint project to foster closer ties between the two countries. The proposal suggests bridges be built to link the Lao and Thai provinces of Borikhamxay and Bung Karn, Saravan and Ubon Ratchathani, and Vientiane province with Loei province. Proposed construction of the fifth Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge linking Laos' Borikhamxay province and Thailand's Bung Karn province is now awaiting confirmation of a funding source while the survey and design have been completed, a Ministry of Public Works and Transport official said. Deputy Director of the ministry's Planning and Cooperation Department, Mr Phetsamone Viraphanh, told Vientiane Times on Monday that Laos had submitted a request to Thailand's Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) for funding. (September 13, 2016)

The example 5 above reported the progress of Mekong bridge building in 3 places under the cooperation of two countries for convenient travel and trading increasing particularly Mekong region logistic system. The other cooperation of them are the illegal subjugation such as drug, wood, and agricultural products.

The last category news is sport and education. Both issues are grouped because most news reported about cooperation in terms of sport competition and students exchange between Laos and Thailand. This category there are 7 issues being 12 percent of all. The news reported various issues of sports such as the cooperation between nation sports of both countries, in addition, the news reported the scholarship for Laos student to studies in Thailand and it also reported the cooperation of both governments for education development.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

In digital technology era in the present, news in each country plays an important role in other countries. Laos as a land lock country has border areas close to Thailand along the Mekong river. Both countries have similar language, culture, and religion, therefore, their people have contact and communication closely. Thailand as the most tourist and investment sectors in Laos has an influence into Laos variously domains. The international newspaper 'Vientiane Times Newspaper' report news under government agency press so the news in this newspaper is not only informed what is

happening in Thailand but it is also implied to what issues that Laos government preferring present Thailand and the world.

The first pages of this newspaper reported formal news from the government about the globe including Thailand. The news of Thailand presented on the first page mostly reported the cooperation between Laos and Thailand various dimensions such as the economy, tourism, art and culture, country's relationship, and sport and education.

Thailand's news on the first page of Vientiane Times news paper presented the two countries' cooperation. Some news is reported continuing, such as electricity export to Thailand, the construction of bridges over the Mekong river, the suppression of tax evasion, and meetings of government agency of two countries. These reports reflect the relationship and cooperation between Laos and Thailand than just reporting what is happening in Thailand. This news, therefore, implies how Thailand in Lao's point of view is.

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