

# Better Regulatory Tools in Protecting Children from Harmful TV Content in the Age of Media Convergence: Lessons from Thailand

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to find a scope of harmful content in Thailand and to develop a plausible regulatory model to handle such content against the backdrop of media convergence. The methods used in this study were document analysis, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with three stakeholder groups in Thailand's media circle, namely broadcasting regulators, representatives from civil society and academics, and current TV providers. The study showed that Thai TV providers prioritized violence, sex and nudity, and coarse language in classification of TV content, whereas humiliation and discrimination content did not get much attention. Both informative and restrictive regulatory tools in protecting minors against harmful TV content had some limitations i.e. lack of a standardized rating system, broadcasting time restriction non-applicable to TV-like services, and parents unaware of using tools as a guide in supervising children. Key recommendations are proposed for 'better regulation' in protecting minors against harmful TV content under convergence in Thailand: 1) keeping a balance between informative and restrictive regulatory tools while supporting media literacy, 2) developing a community of practice among related parties and 3) promoting a more comprehensive policy based on a multi-stakeholder approach.

**Keywords:** Protection of Minors, Broadcasting Content Regulation, Harmful Content, Content Classification

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## Introduction

Protecting children from harmful content in media has been a common concern at all levels of regulation, particularly in the face of digital technology which has made media reception more flexible than ever, because of media convergence phenomena (Verhulst, 1999; Lievens, 2010) which is most broadly defined as the blending of technological capabilities to deliver content (Lawson-Borders, 2006) and where media content flows fluidly across coexisting multiple media system (Jenkins, 2006).

Media convergence has a multidimensional effect particularly on audiovisual or televised services in particular. A variety of innovative TV services are introduced such as IPTV, web TV, mobile TV, and over-the-top TV whereby service providers deliver content through multiple devices and multiple distribution platforms in both linear and non-linear ways. Moreover, TV viewing habit of consumers has changed from traditional viewing of broadcast content to personalized and on-demand viewing across multiple screens. According to a 2015 Accenture Digital Consumer Survey, 87 percent of consumers nowadays are using a TV and a second screen together and a smartphone is the most frequent companion device especially for the 14 to 17 year-olds (Accenture, 2015). Another survey by Ofcom showed that viewing to traditional live TV is lowest among 16 to 24-year-olds in United Kingdom, accounting for just 36 percent of all their viewing across all screens including mobile and tablets. Also, they spent 20 percent of their time watching paid on-demand TV or films, and 14 percent viewing short online video clips on places such as YouTube (Plunkett, 2016).

Social concern on protection of minors is rising because children in a new media environment have increasingly moved from passive to active media users and are more potentially exposed to harmful content. The harmful content is simply defined, referring to illegal content, as the content that may harm vulnerable persons but is legal for adults to consume. The vulnerable persons are mostly referred to as children and young people who are in the process of forming attitude and behavior for a later life. In a regulatory context, most policy documents of the United Nations and European Union refer to minors as those under the age of 18. Likewise, most of social science researches describe an age category of minors by linking to their stage of cognitive development, for example, 3-6 years, 8-12 years or 13-16 or 18 years old (Lievens, 2010).

There are varieties of risks from harmful content to which children are exposed in digital media. Content-related harm includes violence, adult porn, hate speech (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011, p. 22), pornography and sexually explicit themes (de Haan & Livingstone, 2009, p. 5), swearing and offensive language, discrimination, substance abuse, suicide and self-harms, and body image issue i.e. anorexia and bulimia (Lievens, 2010, p. 55).

Among the varieties of content-related risks, the definition and scope of harmful content to be regulated in media differs across cultural backgrounds and attitude towards the young of each country. For example, in English society where conservative ideology is dominant, vulgar expressions and nudity are usually censored and sexuality is considered most inappropriate in media. It is believed that the lawmakers and a state-controlled supervisory body are responsible for deciding what is good or bad for children, while, in Spain, the freedom of an individual, including of the young, is considered more important, so instead of defining strict limits, Spanish child protection legislation aims to strengthen education and upbringing at school, to increase the information available to families, and to initiate positive trends (Büttner, 2017). This shows that there is no a single or universal set of harmful content; each country has to its own content standards according to local values and norms and local people need to apply those standards to their view discretion and in classifying content (Salomon, 2008: 43).

### ***Harmful content regulation***

Even though there is no definite scientific evidence on the effect of exposure to harmful content, a number of social science researches suggest that constant exposure to harmful content could adversely affect a child's development (Lievens, 2010, p. 37). As a result, policymakers justify the protection of minors against harmful media content as a goal of public interest by a 'precautionary principle' (Lievens, 2010, pp. 43-44). However, Regulating content for protecting minors seems to be an effort to reconcile child protection with the provision of content tailored to the needs of adults (Salomon, 2008:44). Therefore, it should follow the principles of proportionate equilibrium and must weigh between protection of minors and defense of decency of adults (Barata and Carbonell, 2011 cited in Office of NBTC, 2012).

Amidst the dynamic of converged media which blurred the line between television and television-like services (Ostergaard, 1998), broadcast media content regulation is also challenged, including the regulatory objective for protection of minors against harmful content. While TV program content classification is enabled by the program's story line or context, TV-like services showing trailers or clips lack such a function or editorial context, resulting in the difficulties in classifying content. Also, command-and-control regulation characteristic of statutory regulation by the state is not responsive to fast-changing media convergence environment.

Especially for the restriction of harmful, politically or socially undesirable content, Iosifidis (2011) explained that it is not straightforward task for contemporary policies to apply traditional content rules. He proposed that negative content regulation is restricting the distribution of certain types of information, text, sound or images and imposing advertising restrictions, together with positive content regulation. He also emphasized that "content regulation remains essential in the converge media age" (p.217) and suggested the need for a consistent

approach to determine objectionable types of material to be banned regardless of the type of delivery mode, with regulation tailored to fit the specific medium of transmission.

Realizing these challenges, many countries including the USA and EU members have attempted to develop more effective regulatory tools in protecting minors in the age of convergence. Two general approaches are a child protection approach by employing watershed and parental control system and a more adult viewing approach by providing information and ratings (Salomon, 2008: 43-44). More emphasis on self-regulation and co-regulation and on 'better regulation with better information and education' is also needed to tackle the challenges from media convergence (Byron, 2008).

### ***Development of Harmful Content Regulatory Practice in Thailand***

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), a converged and independent regulator, has been mandated to regulate Thailand telecommunication and broadcasting sectors since 2011. In response to media convergence, the NBTC adopted a layer approach to regulate platform and content issues separately by dividing broadcasting license into four types, namely infrastructure, network, service, and application. However, the NBTC's jurisdiction does not cover Internet TV; its authority is to regulate Internet service while audiovisual content on the Internet are regulated under the Computer Crime Act enforced by the Ministry of Digital Economy.

Prior to the NBTC establishment, the development of regulatory practices to regulate harmful content started with an age-based rating system initiated in 2006 by a state authority, the Public Relations Department (PRD), and involved participation from six terrestrial TV operators, media associations, and a civil society in developing a classification code of practice. Those terrestrial TV operators applied the code as a manual to internally classify their programs on a voluntary basis and also created a complaint system within their organization. Later in 2007, a rule on restriction of broadcasting time was introduced by the PRD with support from parents and civic groups, despite objections from most broadcasters (Karavamitr, 2009), the rule was eventually enforced in early 2008. Two months later, however, the rule became invalid owing to the enactment of the 2008 Broadcasting Act, which replaced the PRD with an independent broadcasting regulatory body. In the meantime, the terrestrial TV operators continued to use the rating system under a self-regulatory practice, using the code in their program classification.

Nevertheless, during 2000 to 2011, there was a regulatory vacuum in broadcasting services from the failure to set up an independent regulatory - the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) - after two rounds of selection in 2001 and 2005. The prolonged regulatory vacuum since 2000 led to a growing number of cable TV and satellite TV, a massive rise of new small, localized media, disarray in the use of airwaves and an increase of harmful content on TV services such as programs promoting superstitious and supernatural belief or presenting women's bodies as sex objects and dehumanization in regards to sexual relationship, according to Media Monitor's studies (2008, 2011). All these problems were left the responsibility to a new regulator - NBTC.

Soon after being established, the NBTC, with participation from related stakeholders, reviewed the code of practice for classifying content and issued a notification on the classification framework in October 2013. Currently, both free and pay TV service providers are obliged to employ the rating system to provide content information to viewers, but without content descriptors. According to the NBTC's framework, there are six classifications of content that is suitable for viewers of different ages. All TV programs are classified by three broad types of harmful content, which are 1) violence and misconduct, 2) sex, and 3) language. In classifying the programs, the rater considers the amount of harmful content, which comes in four hierarchical levels: none (0), mild and justified by story context (1), some and justified by story context (2), and explicit but lawful (3), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Content classification and labels of TV rating system in Thailand

| Content Label   | Content Classifications                                   | Categories and Levels of Harmful Content |     |          |
|---|---|--|-----|----------|
|   |   | Violence&M<br>isconduct                  | Sex | Language |
| <br>รายการสำหรับเด็กปฐมวัย<br>อายุ ๓ - ๕ ปี   | Suitable for viewers<br>at the age of 3 to 5 (pre-school) | 0  | 0   | 0        |
| <br>รายการสำหรับเด็ก<br>อายุ 6 - ๑๒ ปี  | Suitable for viewers<br>at the age of 6 to 12 (children)  | 0  | 1   | 0        |
| <br>รายการที่เหมาะสม<br>สำหรับผู้ชมทุกวัย   | Suitable for viewers at all ages                          | 1  | 1   | 1        |
| <br>รายการที่เหมาะสมกับผู้ชมที่มีอายุ ๑๓ ปีขึ้นไป<br>ผู้ชมที่มีอายุต่ำกว่า ๑๓ ปี ควรได้รับคำแนะนำ | Suitable for viewers<br>above the age of 13               | 2  | 2   | 1        |
| <br>รายการที่เหมาะสมกับผู้ชมที่มีอายุ ๑๘ ปีขึ้นไป<br>ผู้ชมที่มีอายุต่ำกว่า ๑๘ ปี ควรได้รับคำแนะนำ | Suitable for viewers<br>above the age of 18               | 2  | 2   | 2        |
| <br>รายการเฉพาะ<br>ไม่เหมาะสำหรับเด็กและเยาวชน  | Suitable for adult only                                   | 3  | 3   | 3        |

Most terrestrial free TV service providers have been familiar with the rating system since the beginning, unlike non-terrestrial free TV service providers. Notably, the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS), the only public service TV provider established under a media reform law in 2008, does not apply the rating system, but follow their internal rules on professional ethics mandated by Thai Public Broadcasting Service Act, B.E.2551 (2008) to provide protection of children from the program containing harmful content.

Together with the rating system, terrestrial free TV service providers are presently obliged under the NBTC's notification on broadcasting program scheduling issued in February 2013. The new measure stipulates that TV programs with the following rates - above the age of 13, above the age of 18, and adult only - to broadcast only in specific time zones, which are 8.30pm.-5am., 10.00pm.-5am., 12pm.-5am. respectively.

In conclusion, Thailand is currently employing both informative and restrictive regulatory tools to regulate harmful content and protect minors with different approaches between free and pay TV services. While free TV services are subject to quite stringent regulation, pay TV services are required with lighter regulation by the NBTC in protecting minors against harmful content as shown in Table 2. Although payTV service providers are obliged by the NBTC's rules to apply the rating system, a parental control system is employed on voluntary basis, depending on their policy.

Table 2. Regulatory practices in harmful content regulation in Thailand

| Tools  | Informative Approach                   |   |                    | Restrictive Approach  |                 |
|--|--|---|--------------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Regime                                 | Rating system   | Content descriptor | Broadcasting time restriction   | Technical tools |
| <b>Service</b>                                     |  |   |                    |   |                 |
| <i>Prior to the NBTC's rules (2006-2013)</i>       |  |   |                    |   |                 |
| Free TV  | Statutory regulation & Self-regulation | Content Classification code of practice, Internal classification by service providers | None               | PRD's rule on restriction of broadcasting time, valid only two months during the early 2008 | None            |
| Pay TV   | None                                   | None  | None               | None  | None            |
| <i>According to the NBTC's rules (2013 onward)</i> |  |   |                    |   |                 |
| Free TV  | Statutory-regulation                   | Content classification rules; Internal classification by service providers            | None               | NBTC's rule on restriction of broadcasting time   | None            |
| Pay TV   | None                                   |   | None -             | None  | Optional        |

Before the NBTC's rules, studies showed that limitations of the rating system are the lack of viewers' and parents' awareness and use of the tool. One study found that a TV rating perception of parents of elementary school student in Bangkok was at a medium level, with the least awareness on how the content classification benefited to them and their children (Pintoh, 2007) As for young people, another study found that 79.9 percent of the respondents aged 6-12 years old did not have any knowledge about the TV program rating system (Khorponprasert, 2010).

Since the beginning of the age-based rating system initiated in 2006, not only have state authorities and broadcasters played important roles in the development, but some public interest advocacy groups have put an effort to give feedback to the state authorities and the broadcasters to help develop the system. However, interactions among these three parties sometimes led to the conflicts from differences in each sector's ideology, namely authoritarianism, libertarianism and capitalism, and consumerism, respectively. (Karavamitr, 2009)

### Research Questions and Methodology

Obviously, media convergence has brought about diverse multi-platform TV services and consumption as well as difficulties in regulating harmful content of audiovisual media globally, including Thailand. It is essential to improve the regulatory framework for protection of minors in order to tackle harmful content in media convergence environment.

Therefore, this study aimed to find a scope of harmful TV content in Thailand and to enhance the understanding of viewpoints of Thai media regulators and TV operators regarding the types of content that is considered as a threat to the development of children. Understanding of these matters will help improve the regulation based on the same set of content standards. Also, the study intended to find a plausible regulatory model and relevant policy recommendations to handle such content against the backdrop of media convergence.

The methods used in this study were document analysis, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. The study examines legislations, notifications, orders, policy documents regarding harmful content regulation by the NBTC, together with studies and reports from state agencies, broadcasters, and academics. In addition, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were conducted with three stakeholder groups in Thailand's media circle which have been involved in harmful content regulation of the country: 1) NBTC commissioners who are responsible for supervising harmful content regulation on a TV platform 2) representatives from civil society and academics who have participated in a movement and policy advocacy on protection of minors in media since the beginning, and 3) nine current Thai TV providers (both free and pay TV) who are obliged under the

NBTC's rules on minor protection, together with one Internet TV service provider who increasingly plays an important role in content provision to the young in the digital age. Questions in the focus group and in-depth interviews included the actual process of harmful content regulation on NBTC and broadcasters consideration, limitations of the current regulatory tools, and recommendation for improving the tools to protect children in a media-converged environment.

## **Finding & Analysis**

### ***Scope of harmful content to minors in Thailand***

According to the NBTC's classification rules, the scope of harmful content to minors is categorized as 'three types of negative content or -3 type', which consists of 1) violence and misconduct, 2) sex, and 3) offensive language, and classified into four hierarchical levels from none (0) to explicit (3). The '-3 type' of harmful content are shown in Table 3.

*Table 3 Categories and scope of '-3 type' of harmful content, according to NBTC's content classification rules*

| <b>'- 3 types' of harmful content</b> | <b>Scope</b>   |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Violence and misconduct            | 1.1 Any misconduct leading to psychological violence to viewers such as depression, sorrow, tension, deeply affected, frightening, horror, etc.<br>1.2 Physiological violence to self, objects, others<br>1.3 Drugs, use of weapon and any misconducts conflicting to good moral and public order<br>1.4 humiliation and discrimination, violations of human dignity |
| 2. Sex                                | Improper sexual behavior and speech, sexual violations, sexual abuse, sex-based discrimination   |
| 3. Language                           | Negative, offensive, demeaning and profane speech  |

Additional scope of harmful content includes content regarding the supernatural, inciting to gambling, and counter to morality and Thai culture. Such content shall be classified as 'adult only' and restricted to broadcast after midnight. The fact that this kind of content is considered harmful to minors reflects a unique culture of Thailand, which is different from some other countries like the USA, the UK, and Australia.

In addition, based on the -3 types of content classification used by broadcasters to give proper age-rating labels for their TV programs, most of the broadcasters who were key informants in the study said they prioritized violence, sex and nudity, and coarse language in classifying TV content, respectively, respectively, whereas humiliation and discrimination content did not get much attention.

### ***Limitations of Current Harmful Content Regulation in Thailand***

Both informative and restrictive regulatory tools in protecting minors against harmful TV content have strength in terms of encouraging stakeholder participation, together with some limitations. Informants from three stakeholder groups of this study, which are the NBTC, TV service providers from various platforms, and the academics and civil society, reflected some common limitations of harmful content regulation of TV services in Thailand.

As for the regulatory tools, informants from TV service providers and the academics and civil society agreed that the description in the content classification rules was unclear and subject to interpretation of each rater, leading to inconsistent and underrated content classification. Some pay TV service providers were also new to the rating system and lack well-trained rating staffs. The academics and civil society who had monitored internal classification by TV service providers since 2006 felt uneasy with the error and increasingly conflicts with the broadcasters. Evidence of complaints filed by viewers to the NTBC regarding underrated content on TV in 2016

showed that TV series were most underrated, as seen in Table 4. Moreover, broadcasters likely initially classified their programs as suitable for viewers of all ages but were subsequently ordered by the NBTC to change the classification to suitable for viewers above the age of 13 or 18 after the complaint consideration. The reason behind the problem of content underrating is not only from the unclear rules, but it is also because suitable-for-all-ages program can be broadcast all day long and as a result can attract more advertising than program under other classifications which are restricted to show only in some specific time.

*Table 4 Number of complaints submitted to the NBTC regarding underrated TV content*

| <b>Rated by Broadcasters</b> | <b>Judged by NBTC</b> | <b>TV series</b> | <b>Game show</b> | <b>Talk show</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Suitable for all ages        | Suitable for 13+      | 5                | -                | -                | 5            |
| Suitable for all ages        | Suitable for 18+      | 5                | 2                | -                | 7            |
| Suitable for 13+             | Suitable for 18+      | -                | -                | 1                | 1            |

Informants from TV service providers and the academics and civil society also agreed that viewers' and parents' awareness and use of the ratings were still limited. Furthermore, the rating system of TV service is inconsistent with the rating system of films, which has its own code and classifying committee and different age-based content labeling. This may lead to confusion about the content information and a need for re-rating when the film is broadcast on TV. Signifying harmful content are therefore needed for further provision of content information to viewers.

Moreover, all informants expressed their concern over the limitations of the recent broadcasting time restriction issued by the NBTC as a compulsory measure for free TV service providers. Those from the TV industry argued that this tool was not applicable to non-linear TV services, an increasingly popular online service with a demand-pull nature, and the tool would adversely affect their business on reruns of popular programs that may contain harmful content in daytime during which most audiences were adults, not children. The NBTC was aware of these limitations but still considered the tool as an essential measure to provide minimum protection to minors in linear TV services. Similarly, academics and civil society asserted the necessity of the tool to be enforced in free TV services given their pervasiveness, unconditional access, and popularity among people in rural areas where broadband Internet penetration was relatively low. In addition, the use of both broadcasting time restriction and rating system has encouraged a shared responsibility between parents and service providers. The tool has remained disputed among the three parties, but the conflict is less serious when the tool was first introduced in 2007 because technological advance has enabled TV service providers to extensively circulate their services to consumers regardless of time and place.

However, the broadcasters and the civic group commonly agreed that time zone according to the NBTC's regulation did not correspond with recent TV viewing behavior of children and thus should be revised based on research.

While current regulatory regime in protecting minors against harmful TV content focuses on statutory regulation by the NBTC, the study found some criticisms on its enforcing mechanism. Informants from the academics and civil society were dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness of the complaint handling procedures, including delay, difficulty in complaint progress tracking, and failure to give adequate remedies. Yet, informants from the NBTC explained the process was delayed because some complaints regarding illegal and harmful content had to be thoroughly investigated. They also explained that during the first two years of its establishment, the NBTC's

focus was mostly on digital TV transition, frequency allocation, and drafting of notifications for all required areas of licensing and regulation.

Particularly, the enforcement of the NBTC's content classification rules is not yet clarified on who – each broadcaster, media association, or the NBTC - is responsible for handling complaints regarding the rating system and monitoring to ensure accuracy and consistency of the rating. In fact, informants from the public policy advocacy groups remarked that some TV service providers had offered a method for the public to file complaints, but the complainants preferably headed for the NBTC for it ensured them with direct sanction power toward the non-compliant broadcasters. Meanwhile, some civil society groups have actively monitored the rating system and attempted to raise parents' awareness, but they lack financial resources and can only work within their limit. As a result, there is no system of checks and balances to enable effective enforcement.

To sum up, limitations of the harmful content regulatory tools have continued since the beginning of its implementation and Thailand has been faced with growing challenges in regulating harmful media content due to changing technological environments and fierce competition in the broadcasting market. Additionally, the viewers and parents are perceived by the informants as lacking awareness and use of the tools, with increasing challenges from the technology that allows children to enjoy TV and TV-like programs anywhere and anytime on their own portable devices without parental mediation. Another challenge is aimed toward statutory regulation, which imposes restrictive regulatory tools to protect minors. Thailand has focused on statutory regulation, which is criticized for ineffective enforcing mechanism from its command and control nature such as inflexibility, complexity of the rules, and difficult enforcement. These drawbacks are becoming worse when the broadcasting industry undergoes changes along with the continually evolving technology. Therefore, improvement for an effective regulatory approach is required in Thailand according to the following recommendations.

### **Key Recommendation**

#### ***Key Recommendation 1: A balance of informative and restrictive regulatory tools, with promotion of media literacy***

This study recommends the imposition of a combination of informative and restrictive regulatory tools together with media literacy education as a non-regulatory tool in Thailand, so that the responsibility in protecting children from harmful content on screen is shared among three parties, which are the regulator, the services providers, and parents. While parents need to be aware and use the ratings and content descriptor to choose appropriate programs for their children, the services providers are held responsible for scheduling their programs appropriately and providing technical tools to prevent children from access to offensive or adult programs. Meanwhile, the NBTC should be responsible for monitoring compliance to the restrictive tools and standardizing the informative tools. For instance, it should support rater training, raise public awareness of the tools, and include inputs from regular public consultations and research in evaluating the regulatory tools. Also, all parties should collaborate on promoting media literacy skills among media users, especially children.

#### ***Key Recommendation 2: Developing a community of practice among related parties***

An improvement is also needed for each tool. The criteria for content classification should put more emphasis on humiliation and discrimination which the broadcasters have been found to mostly neglect. In addition, revised content descriptor should be supplemented to provide more information about harmful content and the ratings. Lastly, technical tools should be mandatory for Thai pay TV services, to impose conditional access measures on subscribers for protecting children, instead of light-touch measures enforced on a voluntary basis.

***Key recommendation 3 : Promoting a more comprehensive policy based on a multi-stakeholder approach***

TV-like services are increasingly popular in Thailand, both online re-broadcast program and made-for-online audiovisual services, but no clear regulatory framework for protection of minors against harmful content on such platforms has been designed. Moreover, a main state authority in charge of online content regulation is the Ministry of DE while audiovisual services in TV are regulated by the NBTC. In order to set some regulatory measures for those TV-like services available online, cooperation between the two agencies is essential. More importantly, from the point of views of academics and civil society, a central policy unit is needed in Thailand to coordinate endeavors related to the protection of minors against harmful content in the wide-ranging audiovisual services i.e. TV, films, DVD, online. On the other hand, the self-regulation in online services is still in its infancy.

To respond to the situation where traditional and new media coexist in a converged platform, regulation of harmful content on audiovisual services needs a comprehensive policy for protecting minors at the national level. Various government authorities should be involved in policy making i.e. the NBTC, the Ministry of DE, the Safe and Creative Media committee led by the Ministry of Culture, and other related government agencies i.e. the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Welfare. Moreover, a multi-stakeholder cooperation among the policy unit, the regulator, the broadcasting industry, parents, the academics and public interest advocates, and access or content providers in new media settings is essential for the development of a national policy on protection of minors and the establishment of a uniform classification system to provide better content information to viewers and the youth.

To be specific, the NBTC should seek collaboration with the Ministry of DE in regulating audiovisual services in the Internet such as Internet TV. Meanwhile, the Ministry of DE should consider supportive measures to self-regulation among online services providers. The regulatory framework should be based on a platform neutrality approach to not differentiate audiovisual services by their delivery or viewing modes but by their socio-cultural impact and content production/aggregation model. As for innovative TV-like services, light-touch regulation is required to benefit their development and competitive ability in international and local market (Lin &Oranop, 2013).

**Conclusion**

Media convergence is a global phenomenon that has contributed to various innovative TV and TV-like services, demand-pull consumption behavior, and situations where consumers becomeprosumerswho generate audiovisual content in online media. The changing media landscape has induced increasing concern over harmful content becoming more widespread, particularly to children. Therefore, a public policy goal in protection of minors is valid and needs more innovative regulatory tools. This study encompassed regulatory practices and limitations in Thailand regarding its tools and mechanism. It appeared that Thailand has been faced with growing challenges to harmful content regulation owing to the media convergence. The study pointed out some key recommendations for ‘better regulation’ to protect minors against harmful content on TV or audiovisual services in Thailand under the convergence, which included keeping a balance between informative and restrictive regulatory tools, creating a community of practice among related parties, and promoting a more comprehensive policy, based on multi-stakeholder approach, for protection of minors in a converged media environment.

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