Editorial:
Media Management

Welcome to the first issue of 2026 of the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal*. Issue 8.1, titled *Media Management*, includes two research articles that examine how media organizations and digital platforms in Southeast Asia are structured, governed, and strategically managed in an era of rapid technological change and evolving socio-political conditions. This issue foregrounds media management as a crucial area of inquiry for understanding how creative practices, economic imperatives, and regulatory frameworks intersect in shaping contemporary media industries. Many individuals have contributed to the successful completion of this issue. Special thanks are due to Associate Editor **Jonathan J. Felix** of RMIT University, Vietnam, and Assistant Editor **Jason Paolo Telles** of Monash College, Australia, for their continued and invaluable support.

Media management is an important field of study as media industries worldwide confront digital transformation, shifting audience behaviors, and intensified global competition. In Southeast Asia, these challenges are further complicated by cultural contexts, multilingual audiences, regulatory constraints, and market development. Media managers in the region must balance creative aspirations with economic sustainability while navigating censorship regimes, ownership restrictions, and the growing influence of global platforms. At the same time, regional dynamics such as ASEAN-driven digital integration, the expansion of streaming services, and the rise of hyperlocal and platform-native content demand innovative management strategies that reconcile global industry trends with local values and practices. Research on media management in Southeast Asia thus provides critical insights into how media enterprises remain relevant and socially responsible while shaping the trajectories of public discourse and cultural identity.

The first article, *Impacts of Ownership Structures on Profitability and Corporate Governance in Southeast Asian Media Firms* by **Huyen Nguyen** and **Phuong Hoang**, offers an economic analysis of media ownership in emerging Southeast Asian markets. Drawing on data from 132 publicly listed media and information technology firms across six countries, the study examines how ownership structures affect profitability and corporate governance. The findings reveal that insider ownership remains dominant in the region, while institutional ownership, though limited, emerges as a positive predictor of firm profitability and the appointment of external directors with financial expertise. Rather than confirming widespread concerns about institutional investors undermining media autonomy, the study suggests that such ownership can contribute positively to firm performance under existing regulatory conditions. By addressing a significant gap in media ownership research, this article provides important theoretical and practical insights for media managers, investors, and policymakers in Southeast Asia.

The second article, *Digital Influence: Moo Deng's Role in Thai Soft Power* by **Philipp Albert** and **Win Lett Shwe Yi**, examines how social media platforms function as instruments of media management and cultural influence. Using the viral rise of Moo Deng, a baby pygmy hippopotamus born in Thailand in 2024, as a case study, the authors explore how short-form video platforms such as

TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram can transform local, non-political content into powerful symbols of national soft power. Grounded in Joseph Nye's theory of soft power and supported by survey data from Thai university students, the study demonstrates how digital engagement with Moo Deng fostered emotional connection, cultural pride, and positive perceptions of Thailand's international image. The article highlights the strategic role of platform visibility, participatory culture, and institutional responses in amplifying viral phenomena. This illustrates how contemporary media management involves the coordination of digital narratives, audience engagement, and cultural diplomacy.

Taken together, the two articles in this issue underscore the breadth of media management research in Southeast Asia, spanning corporate governance, financial performance, platform dynamics, and soft power. They demonstrate that effective media management is central not only to the sustainability of media enterprises, but also to the ways media shape cultural meaning, public sentiment, and regional visibility in the digital world.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR
ALEXANDER J. KLEMM holds a Licentiate in English Studies and Film Studies from the University of Zurich and a PhD in Media and Communications from the European Graduate School. He is a full professor at Paragon International University in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where he serves as Director of the Office of Research and teaches courses in digital arts and design as well as business administration. His research focuses on the representation of Southeast Asian cultures and societies in Western print and audiovisual media. He has served as managing editor-in-chief of the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal* since 2021.
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