

BELIEFS AND BUSINESSES: EXISTENCE AND VALUE OF CURRENT RELIGIOUS MAGAZINES

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the relationship of value and utilization of religious magazines by exploring and studying the compositions of current Buddhist magazines published in Thai between April to September 2019. The study is qualitative in nature, relying on document analysis and content analysis of the selected magazines. The result shows that there are 39 issues, most of which contain folk Buddhism. The visible difference in content between amulet magazines and animist magazines is found in their compositions, i.e., amulet magazines, which mainly deal with small Buddha images and amulet, is composed of color pictures, monk and amulet pictures, amulet advertisement, myths and stories followed by news and activities, coupons, souvenirs (free posters and sacred objects), while animist magazines concern stories of sacred things containing lucky numbers, myths and mysterious stories, monk and amulet pictures, horoscope, amulet advertisements, novels, and coupons respectively. Pictures, souvenirs and coupons are interestingly important compositions in both types of magazines. The compositions of animist and amulet magazines reflect a cycle related to amulet traders, collectors and gamblers. The magazines are the platform providing spaces for advertising beneficial to magazine producers, temples, sacred place and object owners. It is also a great way for amulet buyers and gamblers in pursuit of fortune and relevant information. They are thus still an effective instrument used to encourage religious beliefs and concerning businesses for the specific groups of people.

Keywords: Religious magazine; animist; amulet

Introduction

Print media has great potential in presenting information, news, and knowledge relating to Buddhism and beliefs for Thai people. The history of Thai religious magazines began at the end of King Rama III when Dr. Dan Beach Bradley published Christian and various books (Prakobpol, 1987). This was before the emergence of Buddhist publications reserved for kings and high-ranking masters. The first Thai magazine was published in 1844 as a result of the advancement of printing technology which paved the way for many of the other print media that has influenced Thai people for centuries (Panaram, 2004). However, in this age of technology, many print media outlets have shut down due to the competition of new media that is expanding rapidly and the shift of readers' behavior as the popularity of online media increases every year. Nielsen Company (Thailand) Co., Ltd. revealed that advertising spent in Thai magazine businesses decreased and the largest decrease could be seen in 2015. This has led to the closure of many famous Thai magazines (Thaipublica, 2016).

Nevertheless, some religious magazines still survive, and new magazines have been emerging. They are available at kiosks, bookstores, and convenience stores nationwide. Despite the finding that Thai people have old consumption characteristics and some have a limited ability to access online media (Kittijaroenwong, 2018), apart from the popularity among older generations, these types of printed magazines have some essential compositions for readers that cannot be found in online media. According to Frank Luther Mott (1968), magazines contain collections of stories for reference and research. Each age, they present different kinds of content and adapt to changes in society, culture, and readers' behavior (Chantip, 2012). The animist and amulet magazines sold on newsstands are currently diverse and are expanding the awareness of readers. In addition to various stories, there are souvenirs that are attached with the magazine. These magazines are, therefore, reflecting the needs of society in the context of current Buddhism in Thailand.

Therefore, the purpose of the research is to analyze the relationship of value and utilization of magazines by exploring and studying the compositions of current religious magazines between April - September 2019. The hypothesis

is the composition of magazines in physical format comprising illustrations and accompanying complimentary souvenirs of sacred objects and coupons plays an important role in supporting the sales. These are used in buyers' activities in seeking fortunes. In other words, the compositions reflect information exchanged and activities done in the group of the people. The beliefs and sacred objects are the subject of making businesses go well.

Literature Review

Concepts of magazines and marketing strategies

Magazines, as broadly defined by Joseph Dominick (1996), are periodical publications, usually with a paper cover, containing miscellaneous articles and often with illustrations or photographs. They play a role in Thai society by providing information in the form of alternative and radical media to people with similar interests for interaction and participation. Magazines respond to specific needs of a particular group in comparison with newspapers. They focus on interests that vary according to the complexity of the society. The important thing that affects the success of a magazine is the ability to reach a specific target audience. In attempting to attract readers' attention and maximize their engagement, a careful step of planning and layout designing is required. (Wanliko, 1997).

E-magazines are not always successful in this age. According to Jarin Kittijaroenwong (2018), failed E-magazine businesses stem largely from an unviable business model. Companies were found to be seeking revenues on their E-magazines solely on subscription, while using the same content as the printed edition. This led some subscribers to copy and reproduce the content through posting on file-sharing and BitTorrent websites, directly affecting the sales of the printed version. In addition, the limited growth of E-magazines in Thailand can be attributed to limitations in technological infrastructure and limited computer and internet efficacy of users.

At one point, magazines marketing through conventional media grew continuously because of their distinctive features (Hirunrak, 1987), such as defining target audience, design and price, intervals, and print quality.

According to Wishanu Suwannapern (1993) a magazine is referred to as mass media with meticulous production processes. This includes systematic production, writing and editing manuscripts, advertising management, creating a magazine membership system, and conducting research on readers' needs. A magazine is considered a type of product in the form of print media with market value. The production and distribution of magazines needs a marketing strategy in order to manage products to meet the needs of customers as much as possible. "Marketing mix", which consists of the 4P's principle (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion), is the heart of the production process, managing all types of magazines and helping to increase the sales (Seri Wongmonta, 1999).

Research on Thai religion and belief magazines

There were some qualitative research articles on mass media and Buddhism dissemination in 1994 and some quantitative research articles on amulet and superstition magazines in 2007. These reflect the changing characteristics of both types of magazines and their situation over the past 10 years. There are many magazine titles, most of which are gradually closing down. To compare the past and present situations of these magazines, the following important issues of the relevant researches must be closely studied:

1) Orathai Panaram (2004) conducted a research on mass media and Buddhism dissemination by surveying and studying the content of all types of Buddhism dissemination in printed media in those days. The researcher was particularly interested in the study of Buddhism magazines. One significant issue of research is the emergence of the first Buddhist magazine during the reign of King Rama V, namely, Dharmachaksu and Dharmasombat of Mahamakut Buddhist University. Dharmachaksu was first published in 1894 and it is still being published today, whereas Dharmasombat has ceased publication. From the presentation of the information, the names of the published magazines with the content of Buddhism have been presented. According to a survey of the magazines in Orathai's research, it was found that magazines in the conservative and reform groups are now out of print, whereas some remaining ones have reduced the volume of publications such as Dharmachaksu which have been published for 103 years and have now been

reduced in volume and distributed by the publisher only. Some editions have been adapted to online magazines on the website opening as a free access medium, such as Sathīra Dhammasathān's Sāvīkā magazine. As for some superstition magazines, there are still a number of publications in the current newsstand. This issue will be presented later in the article.

2) Alongkot Boonsiri's survey research (2007) showed that there were as many as 63 amulet magazines in that year. All headings of magazines were listed in the research, with a top 10 list of magazines summarized as the most read by the readers, namely: Namo, Datchanee Phra Krueang, Guarantee Phra Krueang, Lan Po, Maha Po, Phimniyom, Saksit, Phuttho, Amata Phra Krueang, and Kao Phra Krueang. The columns that readers paid attention to most included the history of amulets, history of monks, amulet legends, amulet defects, amulet molding, and amulet prices. From the study, most of the readers were males, aged 31-35, and have careers in trading or doing personal business. These readers were satisfied with the large amount of information especially regarding the sacredness of amulets.

3) Wikhanesuan Tagong's survey research (2007), showed that there are a number of superstition magazines listed in the top 6 magazines that readers are most fond of reading and subscribing to, namely, Rueang Phee, Rueang Renlab Namchoke, Susan Phee, Yon Roi Kam, Phalang Deva, and Lap Setthi. An important factor to make the reader decide to read those articles are the idioms used in writing, as well as useful and diverse content. Other readers' favourite columns include narrated stories, numbers for gamble (lottery), merit and sin, fate, and zodiacal fortune telling. From the survey, it is found that 51.8% of the readers were males aged 30-39, Buddhists, and mostly freelancers. Most readers were interested in stories from real experience because they are new and different. The research also showed an overview of the readers' satisfaction with the content that meets their needs.

Though the research in 2007 provided information on the satisfaction and needs of readers of the amulet magazines and superstition magazines, it did not study the causes and the value factors that affect the existence of these magazines. As the composition and content of the magazine and its relationship to existence in the form of print media are valuable and useful to readers, this

research aims to find the answer to the current situation of the magazines and the reason why animist and amulet magazines are still in the form of print media and is sold today.

Methods

The study is qualitative in nature, relying on document analysis, and content analysis of the surveyed magazines. Both leading and general bookstores from April to September 2019 were surveyed and proceeded with the methods as follows:

1. Magazine titles in bookstores, on the website, and online social media according to the database of all 385 Thai magazine lists in 2015 published on Thaipublica website were gathered. Only religious magazines were selected to explore the status of the magazines that still exist.

2. In this study there are 39 issues of Thai religious magazines were found: Amata Phra Krueang, Buddhagaya, Buddha Jakra Phra Krueang, Chum Num Phra Krueang, Guarantee Phra, Geji of Siam, Ittirit, Khon Rak Phra, Khon Len Phra, Kampee Phra, Klang Phra Krueang, Kot Haeng Kam, Kon Duang Dee Kon Mee Duang, Lan Po, Lap Thawee Koon, Lap Setthi, Lek Saksit, Mae Nak, Mahassajan (Miracle), Patihan Koon Lap, Phee 48, Phra Geji, Phra Tha Phra Chan, Pha Pai Phob Phra, Pim Niyom, Phra Krueang Buddhakhun, Phra Kruang Online, Phra Krueang Aphinihan, Plaek, Rueang Duang Maha Choke, Rueang Renlab Namchoke, Roo Than Duang Roo Than Huay, Susan Phee, Sue lae Phra Krueang, Sudyod Phra Krueang, Trimurati, Tamnan Rueang Luea Chuea, Tamnan Siam, and Yon Roi Kam. All religious magazines were published in Thai during April to September 2019. After that, the magazines were classified into content types.

3. The data and content analysis from the compositions of the physical format was conducted such as: contents, illustrations, advertisement (including accompanying complimentary souvenirs of sacred objects and coupons), then summarized, and research findings were discussed.

Results

According to the research, there are 39 religious magazines related to Buddhism and folklore and having different focuses. Based on the main content, they can be categorized into two groups, which are amulet magazines (22)¹ and animist magazines (17)². Amulet magazines mainly deal with small Buddha images and amulets for collectors, while animist magazines contain stories of lucky numbers, lottery winners, and sacred things believed to bring luck to fortune seekers.

The survey also shows that the number of amulet magazines in today's market has decreased by 35 percent compared to that in 2007 according to Alongkot Boonsiri's research (2007) while animist magazines have seen a slight decrease in numbers according to Wikhanesuan Tagong (2007) as four out of six animist magazines still remain on newsstands. Seven old magazines are still being published and six newly released magazines (including myths, supernatural stories, lucky numbers, and lottery hinting magazines) are currently for sale. In addition, a magazine for the modern generation with Buddhist beliefs has been introduced, titled "*Kham Huang Mahannop*" or in its English name "*5000s Magazine*", produced by a non-profit organization.³ In short, some of the old magazines have been closing down and three new amulet and six animist magazines have been launched. Both types of magazines contain the following compositions (See Figure 1):

¹ Amata Phra Krueang, Buddhagaya, Buddha Jakra Phra Krueang, Chum Num Phra Krueang, Guarantee Phra, Geji of Siam, Khon Rak Phra, Khon Len Phra, Kampee Phra, Klang Phra Krueang, Lan Po, Mahassajan (Miracle), Phra Geji, Phra Tha Phra Chan, Pha Pai Phob Phra, Pim Niyom, Phra Krueang Buddhakhun, Phra Kruang Online, Phra Krueang Aphinihan, Sue Lae Phra Krueang, Sudyod Phra Krueang, Tri murati.

² Ittirit, Kot Haeng Kam, Kon Duang Dee Kon Mee Duang, Lap Thawee Koon, Lap Setthi, Lek Saksit, Mae Nak, Patihan Koon Lap, Plaek, Phee 48, Rueang Duang Maha Choke, Rueang Renlab Namchoke, Roo Than Duang Roo Than Huay, Susan Phee, Tamnan Rueang Luea Chuea, Tamnan Siam, Yon Roi Kam.

³ The magazine is not included in the research since it can be categorized neither as an animist nor as an amulet magazine, but it is mentioned in the discussion.

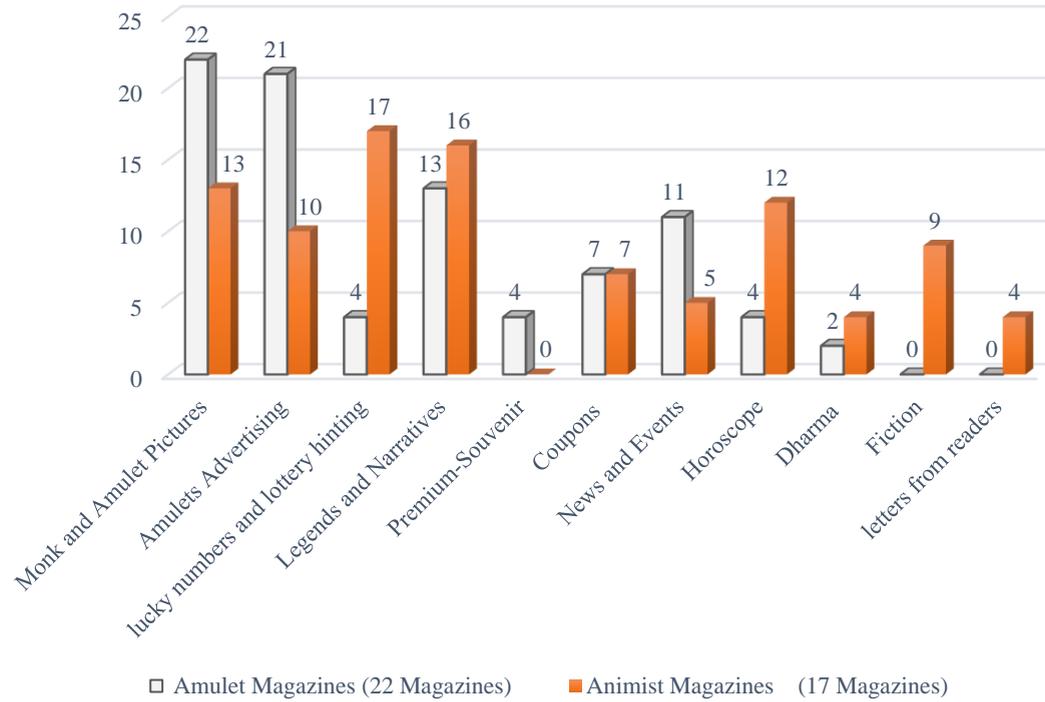


Figure 1: The Compositions of Current Religious Magazines

According to Figure 1, both types of magazines focus on different main objectives, even though each aim to continually attract a larger audience. The research shows that amulet magazines contain more amulet pictures and advertisements than written articles, while animist magazines focus on lucky numbers (lottery hinting, legends, and narratives) rather than pictures. According to the 4P's principle (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) (Wongmonta, 1999), each type of magazine has its own strategies of product management to meet the needs of its customers. The portion of each type's composition points to different content, regular customers, and utilization, despite lying closely on the same bookstall and offering the accompanying complimentary souvenirs of sacred objects and special coupons. The magazines have different target audiences: amulet magazines aim at collectors who need specific information about amulets; animist magazines mainly aim at gamblers, lottery players, mysterious story lovers as ghost stories, and various beliefs in gambling for seeking fortune. They thus have different compositions: amulet magazines contain more colour pictures than animist magazines, with larger sizes, sharp and clear pictures, high-quality and durable paper, high-quality posters of sacred objects and monks, and premium souvenirs of consecrated sacred objects, and provide specific information on old amulets that are important standards, while the animist magazines focuses on myths and narratives to add more value to the holy objects and places. The detail of each type is given next.

1. Amulet Magazines

The research reveals that content most often found are monk and amulet pictures, advertisements, legends and narratives followed by news and events, coupons, premium souvenirs (posters and sacred objects), horoscope, lucky numbers (lottery hinting), dharma, and Buddhist teachings. The most attractive feature is their larger size, sharp and clear picture, high-quality and durable paper, high-quality posters of sacred objects and monks, and premium souvenirs of consecrated sacred objects. The content in amulet magazine can be characterized as follows:

1.1 Amulet magazines are knowledge-based. Information on amulets is shown in large colour pictures. Amulet masters explain the difference of the

authentic and old amulets, how they are characterized, and how they are priced. The oldness and authenticity are guaranteed according to worshippers' acceptance. Important information, history, and narratives are also accompanied to confirm the sacredness and magical power.

1.2 They contain advertisements from various locations usually shown in catalogues to promote amulet businesses either owned by the magazines themselves or other networks such as amulet masters, amulet shops, amulet centres, Thai temples, and those who would like to advertise or sell their amulets.

1.3 They also contain various information about famous monks and miracles. Readers can stay updated on current news and events such as amulet contests, social news of people in Thai amulet circles, merit-making, and Phuttha Phisek Ritual (Ritual of image consecration).

I found that the most common compositions in amulet magazines are pictures of famous monks and amulets which are important components for the readers to obtain information for studying, comparing, and verifying according to the accepted standards set by amulet masters. Pictures in magazines, which are in the form of print media, are useful to the readers and make them worth buying. In addition, they regularly provide readers with a special sizes, clear colour posters of famous monks, rare amulets in the middle page, premium souvenirs of consecrated sacred objects, and discount coupons. While amulet magazines benefit readers in many ways, magazine producers are able to generate advertising revenue. Amulet magazines play a significant role in amulet business, as they are large medium in terms of advertising, buying and selling, ordering, and promoting amulet markets and centres.

2. Animist Magazines

The research shows that content most often found in animist magazines are lucky numbers: lottery hinting, legends and narratives, followed by famous monks and amulet pictures, horoscopes, amulet ads, fictional writings, coupons, news and events, Buddhist teachings, and letters from readers. Unlike amulet magazines, animist magazines do not offer premium souvenirs due to the lower production cost. The souvenirs come in the form of coupons on the corners of the pages. The readers can either cut them and send back to the magazine to

receive lucky numbers (lottery) or present them to get amulets at a special price. The content in amulet magazine can be categorized as follows:

2.1 Mysterious legends, ghost stories, holy objects, and various beliefs in gambling.

2.2 Guidebook on gambling, lucky numbers by lottery masters, and guideline of seeking fortunes.

2.3 Myths, legends, beliefs and stories on lucky numbers - lottery hinting, ghosts, laws of karma, superstition, stories from readers, sacred objects ads, stories on amulets, newsletters from temples, and short stories. This type of magazine is most commonly found on newsstands today.

Animist magazines have many distinctive features such as lucky numbers, lottery hinting guides, various myths, legends and stories suggesting sacred places to seek fortune, stories on how sacred objects can bring fortune and success, and real experience from lottery winners. This aims to give more hope and confidence to gamblers and to guarantee the correct interpretation of lucky numbers given in the magazine. In addition, the magazines provide opportunities for readers to share their real stories on ghosts and sacred things and they will receive compensation if their stories get published. Readers can also share their opinions on the content of the magazines by sending in letters. This creates readers' engagement and continuous support for magazines.

3. The value of animist and amulet magazines: relationships of compositions and utilization

Amulet magazines are a good source of knowledge and information for readers. Firstly, they serve as a guide for studying and authenticating amulets according to standards and rules set by Thai amulet industry. They provide basic information and analysis for amulet investment including basic factors such as fabricant, rite, material used, antiquity, rareness (demand-supply), experience, popularity, and worthiness. Therefore, amulet magazines are important sources of reference and supporting information for the confirmation of authenticity. Secondly, they serve as catalogues displaying products and services related to amulets such as advertising, consignment, purchasing, and collecting. Amulet collectors can also stay updated on news and events such as amulet contests. Thirdly, high-quality posters of famous monks and amulets help readers to

decide what to collect and purchase. Amulet magazines are a self-sustained medium that attract wide audiences and a business network medium creating large markets, encouraging sales and purchases between consumers and operators. They are, therefore, beneficial to many groups of people, including producers, readers, educators, buyers, consignors, amulet traders, investors, collectors, and worshipers. This is in line with the needs of Thai consumers in various societies. According to Nattapol Yurungruangsak (2011), amulet trading in Thai society has developed into collecting, exchanging, selling, and purchasing, leading to continuous growth of amulet markets. One important factor that motivates and creates great popularity of amulets is amulet magazines, which act as a medium with great potential to attract readers who can acquire and access information and knowledge on amulets in the form of print media, while online media still has limited information.

Animist magazines are collections of legends, legends and beliefs which provide knowledge entertainment, create devotion to sacred objects, build hope and confidence, and ease worries among gamblers and lottery players through lucky numbers and coupons at the magazine corners which can be exchanged for special numbers or can be used to receive discounts when buying an amulet. In addition, they also play a role in building close relationships with Buddhist temples through sections suggesting places to seek fortune and updating news and events on merit-making. The most important feature is that they provide space for readers to share supernatural stories from real experiences in response to personal needs and support the faith and curiosity of other readers. This is consistent with Wikhanesuan Tagong (2007)'s research on factors in deciding to read the animist magazines. The main reasons why they attract readers, apart from the variety of contents and the ability to engage readers through exciting stories and works of fiction, are that they provide knowledge and entertainment for those who are interested in mystery. Research participants view that reading the magazines is a way of learning religious teachings, such as rule of karma, rebirth, and supernatural power. The magazines thus play an important role in helping propagate the religious beliefs in their society which reflect through knowledge, experience, and worthiness of magazines.

However, the study shows that the composition and content of both magazines relate to each other and this sometimes makes it difficult to classify

them into different types. As both magazines have content and compositions relating to beliefs about amulets and sacred things, their advertisement sections are about products related to businesses in faith, such as amulets, buddha image amulets, and worshipping sacred objects, all of which are accompanied by various stories that support such beliefs and help add value to the advertised products under the belief business in magazines.

Discussion

Part 1: Magazine-Business Relationship

The results of the research indicate that the religious magazines relate to two significant business types, namely, amulet exchange and gambling. The latter includes state lottery and illegal lottery which is also popular among Thai people. Both types of magazines drum up business by presenting stories or advertising products, i.e., amulets, which are connected to businesses of individuals, as well as temples or sacred places for pilgrimage, as a method of building confidence to help them manage the uncertainty in gambling. The connection leads to the purchase of amulets as well as invitations to participate in rituals and worship of sacred objects for blessings at various temples and religious sites. The magazines are used as a tool for advertisement and public relations and this is how the animist and amulet magazines get involved in helping create business communities of faith, creator groups, sales groups, and leasing groups. Consequently, most of the magazines have the characteristics of commercialized Buddhism which is reflected through the composition of the magazines, such as pictures of famous monks, sacred objects, myths, and stories. The composition is used in accordance with the purpose of an advertising campaign. Amulet magazines contain this content the most. Animist magazines have the most lucky numbers in lottery, myths, and legends, according to the magazine's guidelines, which focus on the pursuit of fortune. The magazine is associated with amulet business to boost confidence for lottery buyers. There are some magazines trying to cover all content related to the beliefs of people for the diversity of the content, such as giving lucky numbers and providing short horoscope columns summarized at the rear section of the magazine. According to Rice (1985), superstition is an important aspect of

consumers' management of the uncertainty which consumers are facing and helps them release their worries about any uncertainty in trying their luck. This is in consistent with the findings of Theeranuch Pusaksrikit and Siwarit Pongsakornrunsilp (2014) which reflected that lottery consumers and gamblers used the information from faith magazines as a method of building confidence to help them manage the uncertainty in gambling. One of the methods that boost the gamblers' confidence is the possession of auspicious objects which are believed to enhance fortune. Such beliefs come from the stories of real experience told by amulet owners who made a fortune. These kinds of stories published in amulet magazines are considered influential media and are believed to be true, as magazines can dominate the thoughts and beliefs of the readers. The circumstances of the readers being easily convinced has created the sagging values suggested by the media, which is in line with the concept of Media Literacy Analysis by John Pungente (1989).

The common characteristics of animist and amulet magazines with mythological compositions and stories of various amulets is one way to attract the desire to own amulets. In amulet magazines, information about amulets related to value is given, such as authenticity, antiquity, and rareness, while new generation amulets attract buyers by holding short mythological stories behind them. Animist magazines mainly use long myths and legends to attract readers and create the need to acquire one.

Currently, a new generation of amulets has been created and advertised in many animist and amulet magazines to support the beliefs of some Thai people. According to Sukanya Sujachaya (2013), amulets in animist magazines are presented as fortune bringers. Myths have been created as an inspiration to generate products using characters and magic from many types of stories including those from Jataka stories, mythological tales, folk tales, and local true stories by creating new interpretations and beliefs. This leads to large production of many sacred objects such as the Rāhu amulets (the wealth creator model), whose magical stories stem from various sources. Rāhu was originally a symbol of bad omen but it is now interpreted as positive signs resulting in more production in many forms. Rāhu is associated with Buddhism and perceived to be a deity and bodhisattva and a symbol of auspiciousness that brings good fortune and wealth. Animist magazines still therefore rely on the suitable

business of belief allowing them to remain in the position of being a gambling guru. I found that new animist magazines promote themselves by featuring Rāhu stories, as they are becoming a popular trend. Example can be seen in the 5th issue of *Raeng Sattha* magazine in September, 2017.

Despite the fact that amulet and animist magazines both focus on myths and narratives to add more value to the holy objects, amulet magazines contain more pictures than stories and provide specific information on old amulets that are important standards. More options have been given to readers as some magazines are produced by the same producers. This will trigger an increase in price and values of amulets according to Likhithammarojn and Kiatabthew (1999). They stated that Thai people collect amulets as they would like to be a part of current trends and regard them as valuable assets rather than something that fulfils their lives with spiritual and religious virtues, resulting in enormous cash flow in the amulet business.

Amulet magazines are therefore considered as a medium for amulet business operators and worshippers. The content in the magazines then tend to focus on trading and investment as well as selection of popular amulets for speculation. According to Nattapol Yuruengruangsak (2011), some people wear amulets to show off their wealth. This is inconsistent with Douglas Holt's theory that most readers are purchasing amulets to increase their value of identity and raise social status. Animist magazines offer a variety of stories to add value to sacred objects and to support the benefit of the good fortune they bestow. Some believe that having a sacred object in possession will bring them good fortune and will help build up their confidence and relieve anxiety about the lottery. As I found in the research, animist magazines are found at most local newsstands, because they are more popular among locals. Moreover, animist magazines that hint lucky numbers are often found at lottery retail shops. This is beneficial to both shop owners and lottery buyers.

Part 2: The Importance of Amulet and Animist Magazines in the Form of Print Media

In the digital age, many types of print magazines have been converted to digital versions. However, printed versions are interestingly necessary for a new open religious magazine in Thailand, as in case of “*Kham Huang*

Mahannop” or in its English name, “*5000s Magazine*”, published together with e-book version. The magazine tends to be completely digital after being recognized and followed by many readers, like Sathira Dhammasathān's *Sāvikā* magazine. Some Buddhist magazines, such as “*Lokthip*” and “*Lokleelup*”, were converted to online versions and sold on the *Ookbee buffet* application, but it was not as successful as predicted. They were shut down in 2014. This can be assumed that this type of magazine does not belong online. This is inconsistent with the assumption of Jarin Kittijaroenwong (2018) that old generation consumers prefer traditional print magazines because of limitations of the consumers’ online media skills. Alongkot Boonsiri (2007) found that majority of amulet magazine readers are males, aged between 31 and 35, and, according to Wikhanesuan Tagong (2007), a majority of superstition magazines readers are males aged between 30 and 39. Nowadays, these groups of readers are the older generation who still support the printed versions of magazines.

However, new information regarding Thailand Internet User Profiles in 2018 from the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) has been disclosed. Thai people spend an average of 10-11 hours a day using the internet. The Generation Y population, aged between 18 and 37, spend the most time on the internet, while Generation X and Baby Boomers spend 8 hours a day. This reflects that, nowadays, the older generation consumers have more Internet skills and can access many forms of online media such as YouTube, Facebook, Line, Messenger, and Pantip forums, causing the decline in print media consumption. Therefore, print magazines need to create something different to attract more readers (Pirasilp, 2016).

One of the strengths is the widespread fame of the print magazines among the people. Many amulet magazines belong to famous amulet masters, such as Khun Samer Ngiungam, widely known as Pong Suphan. Having won the Fan Pun Tae quizshow, Pong Suphan has shared his professional expertise in two magazines, “*Buddhagayā*” and “*Amataphrakreung*”, the most well-known and widely accepted amulet magazines. Likewise, the animist magazines, which suggest the popular trend of lucky numbers, holy places, or magical powers of sacred objects, show how past statistics of their information were accurate, successful, and worth following. This is important for them, for there are some fortune tellers and famous influencers in social media offering

lucky numbers at no charge. To attract the readers, these magazine titles often have interesting meaning expressing luck and prosperity such as Kon Duang Dee, Kon Mee Duang, Lek Sak Sit, Roo Tan Duang Roo Tan Huay, Lap Tawee Koon, and Rueng Renlab Numchoke. Lucky numbers hinted in magazines can be copied and passed on to others, or placed on lottery stalls.

In this digital age, however, online media plays a role in helping enhance marketing strategies to improve sales and maintain business. Social media is a useful platform for magazine producers to sell and promote their magazines. Facebook pages, for example, are an effective way to promote the magazine to the public, and at the same time, create public relation plans and marketing activities. In addition, magazines may be produced in digital forms to be an alternative version for risk diversification. At the present, media channels transform themselves in order to reach people easier and allow them to receive information more conveniently by the Internet. As a result, amulet and animist magazines in print format should create a unique identity and promote themselves in online media so that they can survive. According to Sathon Tantraphon (2016), this adaptation is the key amid the digital age, for magazines must have enough quality to fulfil the present lifestyle of the Thai people. The future of the magazines thus depends on the consumer group as well.

Publications are still in great demand among many Thai readers today. The main reason is that they hold the value of preservation particularly for the amulet collectors. According to Aurapin Khamson (2016), a large group of audiences in Thai society are still accustomed to reading traditional magazines. To this group of people, paper records make collections that display reliable information and images. Paper can be preserved for a long time as personal property and can be passed on, if needed. Unlike with paper, online media depend on electronic gadgets and are considered exposed to a risk of disappearing from their servers. The value of print media does not deteriorate with the era because people are still attached to the use of paper as evidence and print media is used for preserving and inheriting beliefs in Thai society. This corresponds to the opinion of the sample groups in Wikhanesuan Tagong's research (2007). It can be concluded that the magazines still play a part of being a reserved area for specific groups, reflected the groups' belief through the current naming of the magazine head, such as the Khampee Phra, Klang

Phrakreung, Amata Phrakreung, and Chumnum Phrakreung. These names indicate how knowledge in this branch transfers for the purpose of conservation, upholding long traditions on the grounds of holiness. Due to the popularity of the old amulet magazines, some are highly valuable and can be resold at a high price. Some copies are several times higher than the cover price. As surveyed on Kaidee website, a famous website for secondhand sale, there are many advertisements selling old amulet magazines. Likewise, there are also many webpages that serve as a market place to trade the old magazines, such as Phra Nakhon Book, Kru Siam, and Chayantee. This shows high demand of the old magazines that contain information used as reference to amulets.

Conclusion

Between April and September 2019, there were a total of 39 titles of animist and amulet magazines occupying the most spaces on newsstands, despite the shutting down of other magazines. Thirteen of the magazines have been shut down after the 2015's Thaipublica database of Thai religion and belief magazines research, while nine new titles have been launched. The number of existing and newly launched magazines indicates some value in components of classical magazines. This research explored and studied the compositions of current religious magazines in order to analyze the relationship of value and utilization of magazines. With content and composition, the magazines can be classified into 2 types: amulet and animist. Amulet magazines feature pictures of a famous monks, sacred objects, and amulet ads, focusing on providing information on amulets and advertisement to open markets for worshippers and collectors; whereas animist magazines feature lottery hinting, myths, and narratives to attract readers by associating sacred objects with myths and suggesting methods of seeking fortune and gambling to boost the gambler's confidence. Both types of magazines feature content of amulets or sacred objects and attract readers by supporting myths and narratives, resulting in the need to acquire them and to seek fortune in various religious places. They also serve as a small trading platform with space for advertising beneficial to magazine producers, temples, or sacred objects business operators and readers. The religious magazines make connections among amulet creators, sellers,

lucky number gives, amulets, and sacred site experts who persuade readers to make merit and participate in rituals in various places.

Myths and narratives, amulet pictures in amulet magazines, discounts and lucky number coupons, souvenirs of sacred objects in animist magazines, re-issued magazines, complementary souvenirs, special edition magazines, and campaigns serve as tools to attract readers; this is what online media fail to do. I found that the value of magazines exists in their source of information, including rare and diverse pictures of amulets, significant information from amulet experts, legends or stories from writers, high-quality amulet pictures, and authentication techniques, all of which are useful for business operators and collectors. Pictures of sacred objects from magazines are put on display at homes or shops to be shown and worshiped. Animist magazines are collections of legends, stories, and beliefs provided to readers to satisfy their curiosity about mysteries and sacred things. These magazines are therefore still being supported by some readers who prefer the physical feel of paper as they can possess the magazine. Print magazines can also be kept for re-reading, duplication, copying, and forwarding, and are available for reading in several shops. This is how animist and amulet magazines play their roles and how they are beneficial to a group of readers.

Recommendations

As the world becomes technologically advanced, the behaviour and the needs of readers change. What is interesting is the viewpoint, behaviour, and needs of readers compared with Buddhist magazines and current beliefs. According to John Morrish, 2001, the process of collecting data through research to explore the needs of readers today is one very important way to develop a magazine to meet the demand of target consumers. To get a clearer answer, researchers should focus on qualitative research such as observation, interview, and discussion among consumer groups in each region where magazines are still popular. The article is particularly helpful for my thesis on Narratives of Rāhu in modern media: creation and roles in Thai Buddhist context in terms of data collection. I learned that sacred objects are given more value through stories behind them. In addition to the Rāhu stories, there are also

many sacred stories, which can be used as case studies to better understand the phenomenon of beliefs about sacred things in the context of Thai Buddhist society, which reflects the relationship between modern media and Buddhism today.

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