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Summary Of Proceedings

By

Virgilio Labrador
CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS, CONVERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

June 23-25, 1994
Bangkok, Thailand

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

This report summarizes the proceedings of the Conference on "Communications, Convergence and Development" held in Bangkok, Thailand from June 23-25, 1994. The conference was organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) in cooperation with Council of Mass Communication Faculties of Thailand.

The objectives of the conference were to review and assess recent trends in communications in the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for socio-economic development; to provide an update on the latest developments in communication technologies and their applications in various areas of development communications; to highlight case studies and examples of specific responses to the changes in the communication environment; and to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences and to facilitate networking among mass communications professionals and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

The honourable Terdpong Chayanand, Minister in charge of communications attached to the Prime Minister's office of the Kingdom of Thailand inaugurated the three-day conference. International experts and scholars spoke on various issues on mass communications and development in the Asia-Pacific region.

Two hundred participants and speakers from twenty-seven countries of Asia, Europe and North America comprising journalists, academics, researchers and communications professionals attended the conference. Seventy-five participants were from the host country,
Thailand, of which sixty were from the academe. The participation of Thai academics was facilitated by the contribution of the Asia Foundation which enabled the organisers to offer Thai academics a substantial discount on the regular registration fee of US $ 250/. AMIC's local conference partner, the Council of Mass Communication Faculties of Thailand, sent invitations to over 100 communications scholars, of which sixty academics actually registered to participate.


(see Appendix A for the conference programme, Appendix B for the list of participants).

Overall, the discussions were comprehensive and stimulating. The conference noted that the communication environment in the Asia-Pacific region is constantly changing. Computers, telecommunications and broadcasting are converging. New communication technologies are developing at a rapid pace. However, policies are unable to keep up with the developments in technology. The conference also noted that the potential applications for the socio-economic development of the region of the new communication technologies.
However, the potential uses of the new communications technology for development have been largely untapped.

The Thai participants from academe particularly noted their appreciation for the conference content which provided an important regional perspective to the changes in the communications field. The conference also provided a vital opportunity for Thai academics to meet both practitioners and academics from other countries and benefit from the sharing of insights and experiences.

Evaluation

Overall, the participants rated the quality of the programme very highly. On a scale of one to five, where five is the highest, 25 per cent gave the overall value of the conference a 5, while sixty percent gave it a 4 and the rest a 3. The participants likewise gave very high ratings to the presentations and discussions. 12 percent gave the overall quality of the presentations a 5, 44 percent gave it a 4, 33 percent gave it a 3 and the rest gave it a 2 (no one gave it a 1 rating).

The conference was generally regarded as a success in meeting its objectives. The participants particularly noted the opportunity for networking and to keep abreast of the emerging trends and developments in the communication field. The conference provided a forum for the discussion of very important issues. Some of these issues have been given good coverage in the Thai media (see press clippings).

Follow-up

The participants generally expressed that the AMIC annual conference is a very useful activity that should be continued. Follow-up seminars were suggested on the conference sub-themes. All the respondents of the evaluation form suggested topics for future conferences and seminars. Among the suggestions include seminars on media, PR in the Year 2000, communications ethics in Southeast Asia, comparative national communication policies, asian
reporting, cross-cultural communication and health communications, communicating children's and youth issues, among others.

Conclusion

On the whole, the conference achieved the objectives it set. In-depth discussions on a very important issues of concern to the region. Follow-up activities were identified for action.