

Challenge to thrive in the online world

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But no reason mainstream
media can't make it, says forum



Oon: Believes that the traditional media has the resources to adapt



Tan: Feels that credibility is the key to ensuring continued patronage



Dr George: Says some seek out alternative media for a 'spark of genius'

PETALING JAYA: There is no reason the mainstream media cannot be absorbed into the new media, but its main challenge would be to survive and thrive in the online world, a forum heard.

Media analyst Oon Yeoh said the mainstream media had the opportunity to make the most of the new media, given its resources, professionally-trained workforce, and the ability to produce professional content.

"These, coupled with user-generated content, can help mainstream media promote online media efforts in the long run," he said at the forum *The New Media: Trends and Opportunities at Menara Star* yesterday.

The event was organised by Star Multimedia and the Asian Centre for Media Studies.

However, Oon cautioned that this would take time given certain restrictions on the traditional media, including the Printing Presses and Publications Act, bureaucracy and structural line-up.

He said the mainstream media was moving towards the new media space but would face danger if it was unable to leverage the trend and capture the imagination of the online public.

"The traditional media need to look at not just repurposing their content online but to also place content not found anywhere else factored with user-generated content," he said, adding that new media could be a source of income.

He said those in the new media, especially bloggers, must be genuine and open to criticism and not filter comments.

"Don't use ghost writers. A blogger's opinion must be his or her own and not professionally written by another," said Oon, who has his own website.

Institute of Policy Studies senior research fellow Tan Tarn How said maintaining credibility was important to ensure continued patronage.

"Most Singaporeans feel that newspapers can be trusted and don't feel they need to find the truth elsewhere. That is why the Internet does not play an important role, unlike in Malaysia," he said.

"If the Malaysian press is unable to shake off the shackles of government control, then at least negotiate for a credible press."

Tan said that although the Internet was easily available in Singapore there was heavy online censorship, even during election campaigns, compared with Malaysia, which had freer access.

Dr Cherian George from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, said the difference between mainstream and alternative media was that the former was at the centre of political, economic and cultural power, while the latter had a margin function of it.

The media researcher said highly-professional media risked becoming elitist, but that an amateur approach could mean lower reliability and sustainability.

"Mainstream media is hard to beat when it comes to getting regular and reliable output, but some turn to the alternative media for a spark of genius," said Dr George, who is acting head of the university's journalism division.