

## Think-Share-Discuss

### Google focuses on Thailand and its digital potential

(<http://youtu.be/iHBEJOAet2E> , <http://youtu.be/esNSqbnHPbk>)

By Jon Russell Jun 16, 2011

This morning I posted an interesting interview with the head of marketing for Google in Thailand, Pornthip Kongchun, in which she discusses the company focus on Thailand and, most notably, that is planning to open an office in Bangkok at some point this year.



Google has been particularly noticeable in Thailand this month with its dedicated Thailand team – who are stationed in Singapore – having launched a national campaign which has seen facetime on national TV, mentions within the print press and appearances at a couple of notable events, one of which was their own.

Rumors of a Google office were pretty strong last September, suggesting that there were far more important markets in Southeast Asia for Google to focus before Thailand. Indeed Google did then open its second Southeast Asia office in Malaysia.

So while I was right, on one hand, that other markets were such a priority, I certainly did not expect that Google would be quite so focused on building an operations in Thailand...and it is worth exploring why.

I was lucky enough to sit down and discuss this, and other topics, with Google Thailand recently and the company clearly sees Thailand as a market with huge potential to develop. Which explains why it is looking to get in – both in terms of an office and its national campaigns – early to be a part of the growth.

With no 3G and limited internet access – reaching around 20 million of the 65 million population – Thailand could easily be seen as a digital laggard, but I like, and very much share, Google’s view that it is a work in progress, with much potential.

This is true when you observe the rapid progress of Facebook which is now a major part of Thailand’s internet scene – capturing 10 million users with growth rates that have consistently made Thailand one its fastest growing markets -, it is true when you observe how active (the currently niche group of) people with smartphones are in Thailand and when you assess the digital awareness and interest of people here.

**Right now Google Thailand is in the middle of its Better Web Better World campaign. This includes their TV commercials around “The Web Is What You Make It” which is essentially a Google Chrome awareness campaign but, Google Thailand assure me, the real aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the benefits of the internet.**

Google told me that some have raised questions around the company use of traditional media to promote the internet, but I fully support the approach.

Sometimes offline is the best way to push online.

With internet penetration rate so low, traditional media – with its greater collective reach – can push the message beyond the current boundaries online, and is a good approach to reaching current non/non-regular internet users. In reality, of course, one TV advert isn’t going to sky rocket Thailand internet penetration rate, but it is a long process and campaign and TV appearances – which includes a Thai up with Thailand’s hugely popular Woody Milintachinda – helps increase awareness of the benefits of the web.

**Question: Do you believe that Google Thailand’s “Better Web Better World” campaign is to raise awareness of the benefits of the Internet?**