

The Founding of ABAC-KSC Internet Poll Research Center

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Abstract- ABAC Poll was founded in the year 1996. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman initiated the idea, proposed and got approval from Rev. Bro. Dr. Prathip Martin Komolmas who was Au President at that time. Bro. Martin kindly appointed Prof. Srisakdi the Founding Chairman and Prof. Srisakdi served in that position from 1996 until 2008 when Bro. Martin became the Chairman. Prof. Srisakdi also proposed and got approval from Bro. Martin for Mr. Noppadol Kannika who was an instructor in marketing research to be Director of ABAC Poll. Later, Prof. Srisakdi became the major advisor of Mr. Noppadol in his Ph.D. program in Computer and Engineering Management at Assumption University. This paper presents the birth of ABAC Poll from Bangkok governor election in 1996, the Founder's experience in opinion survey, the establishment of ABAC Poll in November 1996, administration of ABAC Poll from 1996 to 2008, ABAC Poll resources utilization, ABAC Poll services, some frequently asked question about ABAC Poll, ABAC Poll achievement, and the future of ABAC Poll.

Keywords- ABAC Poll, Srisakdi Charmonman, Internet Poll, Bangkok Governor Election.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet was born in the US in the year 1979 with two nodes connecting University of California at Los Angelis (UCLA) and Stanford University. Then the network was expanded to 4 nodes by connecting to University of Utah and UC Santa Babara, and expanded further all over the world. Prof. Srisakdi got to experiment with the Internet early in the life of the Internet when he was the Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Science at the University of Missouri in Columbia in 1968-1973. He had a teletype terminal on his desk to be connected to the Internet by dial-up telephone.

In the year 1996, there were some opinion surveys carried out via the Internet in the US. With the support of Bro. Martin, Assumption University Council approved Prof. Srisakdi's request that Au required all students to use the Internet. To promote the Internet, Prof. Srisakdi proposed and Bro. Martin approved the use of Internet in conducting opinion survey in the election of Bangkok governor in the year 1996. Personal computers were taken from Assumption University to locations in Bangkok and connected to the Internet at AU.

Prof. Srisakdi announced to the public the result of Internet poll and field survey that Dr.

Bhichit Rattakul would get more votes than all the other candidates combined and the prediction was true. So, ABAC Poll was born and continues to be one of the top poll organizations in Thailand. Sample of ABAC Poll presentations are shown in the References [1-27]. Dr. Santithorn and Dr. Firouz played key role in Internet Services at AU.

Presented in this paper are the birth of ABAC Poll from Bangkok government election in 1996, the Founder's experience in opinion survey, the establishment of ABAC Poll in November 1996, administration of ABAC Poll during the years 1996 to 2008, ABAC Poll resources utilization, ABAC Poll services, some frequently asked questions about ABAC Poll, ABAC Poll achievements, and the future of ABAC Poll.

2. THE BIRTH OF ABAC POLL FROM BANGKOK GOVERNOR ELECTION IN 1996.

In the Bangkok governor election in the year 1996, Prof. Srisakdi proposed and Bro. Martin approved the project to take computers from Au to shopping centers and communities in Bangkok. The computers were connected to the Internet at Au with Au students conducting the opinion poll according to good survey standards. For example, if a group of five persons became interested in using the Internet to express their opinion. All five were allowed to do so but only one sample would be used and four discarded. If a kid wished to express his opinion, he would be allowed but the result discarded because he was not in the voting age.

From 22 candidates, the result of Internet poll and field survey suggested that Dr. Bhichit would get more votes than the two popular candidates, namely, Chamlong Srimuang and Krisda Arunwongse na Ayutthaya, and all the other candidates combined. Prof. Srisakdi announced the prediction to the public and the newsmen said Prof. Srisakdi was either mad or drunken to make such a prediction.

On the election day of 2 June 1996, Prof. Srisakdi proposed and Bro. Martin approved

the setup of a "Vote Tabulation Center" at A-Building of Assumption University with hundreds of Internet terminals. Students were sent to all vote counting stations in Bangkok. The results from each and all stations were reported to the Center by mobile phones. When updated results became available, TV and other newsmen reported them to the public.

The final votes came out according to Prof. Srisakdi's earlier announcement. Dr. Bhichit got the highest votes of 768,944, Khun Chamlong the second highest of 514,401 votes, and Khun Krisda the third at 244,002 votes. The fourth was 20,985 and the fifth was 1,081 votes. Dr. Bhichit got more votes than all the 21 other candidates combined. So, ABAC Poll was born as the most accurate poll organization in the Bangkok governor election in the year 1996.

3. THE FOUNDER'S EXPERIENCE IN OPINION SURVEY

From the accurate result of Prof. Srisakdi's announcement of the Internet and field survey of Bangkok governor election in 1996, the public questioned what kind of experience he had. Prof. Srisakdi's students helped in explaining that in addition to being the top computer man of Thailand, Prof. Srisakdi was also the very first "Professor of Applied Statistics" in Thailand. He was the Chairman of the Data Processing Department in the Faculty of Applied Statistics at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in the year 1974. As a matter of fact, he was also the President of the Faculty and Staff Association, as well as the Chairman of the Computer Coordination Committee. NIDA has been conducting opinion surveys long before several other universities in Thailand. Opinion poll is a part of statistics. Therefore, he is not a newbie but a real professional from a highly respected institution like NIDA which is well renowned. With a highly respected Chairman of ABAC Poll, it can be expected that the survey result would not be ordinary. In addition to the Chairman, ABAC Poll also has Mr. Noppadol Kannikar, who was earlier

an instructor in marketing survey, as his right-hand man in the position of Director. Later, ABAC Poll sent Mr. Noppadol and other staff members to be trained in the US. Mr. Noppadol was also given a scholarship to study for Ph.D. in Computer and Engineering Management with Prof. Srisakdi as the major advisor at AU.

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ABAC POLL IN NOVEMBER 1996

From the success in the Bangkok Governor Election on 2 June 1996, Prof. Srisakdi proposed the establishment of ABAC-KSC Internet Poll Research Center (ABAC Poll) as a part of the Institute of ABAC-KSC Technology and Training under the supervision of the Vice President for Planning and Development. Bro. Martin kindly agreed and appointed Prof. Srisakdi Chairman of ABAC Poll, in addition to his earlier positions of Chairman of the Institute of ABAC-KSC Technology and Training, and Vice President for Planning and Development.

The purposes of ABAC Poll approved by Bro. Martin from Prof. Srisakdi's recommendations in November 1996 are:

- 1) To promote and maintain international standards in social contributions of Assumption University.
- 2) To provide academic services to society by distributing useful information from survey results.
- 3) To provide training for students and researchers from Assumption University and other educational institutions in social researches and to produce research results according to the requirements from both government and private sectors.
- 4) To provide guidelines for interested parties to study from research projects carried out by ABAC Poll and to promote and maintain international standards for academic excellence of the university.

ABAC Poll conducts three types of research, namely, Exploratory Research, Descriptive Research, and Causal Research. Data collection is carried out from both primary and secondary sources. ABAC Poll always

select appropriate research methodology suitable to each project such as face-to-face interview, telephone interview, postal-mail survey, and IT-related survey such as using e-mail and the Internet.

5. ADMINISTRATION OF ABAC POLL 1996-2008

During the early years of ABAC Poll, there were not many administrators in addition to Prof. Srisakdi and Mr. Noppadol. The Center was administered as a small organization which was efficient and effective.

ABAC Poll has the policy to support academic freedom in conducting opinion survey to distribute useful information to the public, government organizations and private enterprises. The Director reports to Prof. Srisakdi in his position of Chairman of ABAC Poll. Prof. Srisakdi, in turn, reports to Bro. Martin, the President of Au, and later, to Bro. Martin who became President Emeritus, and Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghirun, the President.

The list of administrators of ABAC Poll became:

- 1) Rev. Bro. Dr. Prathip Martin Komolmas, President Emeritus
- 2) Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghirun, President.
- 3) Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman, Chairman of ABAC Poll.
- 4) Dr. Noppadol Kannida, Director of ABAC Poll.

The other administrators include four Deputy Directors, head of Research Centers in the Northern region, the Northeast region, the Central region, the Southern region, and Bangkok region, and the head of the Internet and Computer section.

The staff members of ABAC Poll include statisticians, Internet and computer specialists, foreign affairs staff, marketing staff, clerks, and secretary. In addition to a few dozens full-time staff, there are more than 1,200 temporary staff under the cooperation of various universities such as Chingmai, Khon Kean, Chula, Songklanakarin, and etc.

6. ABAC POLL RESOURCES UTILIZATION

ABAC Poll tries its best to economize on the three main resources, namely, personnel, budget, and time. However, ABAC Poll would also try to produce the highest benefits to its customers, society, and Au.

For human resource, ABAC Poll employs 1-2 supervisors for 10 pollsters. The main duty of the supervisor is quality control. Trainings are provided for all pollsters.

For financial resource, the allocation depends on factors such as sample size, number of questions, access to the population, time constraint, and etc.

7. ABAC POLL SERVICES

There are five types of services:

- 1) Political survey, such as election survey, government performance survey, etc.
- 2) Social problem survey, such as drug-related survey, crime survey, corruption survey, children and female problem survey, old age survey, etc.
- 3) Economic, business, and marketing survey, such as consumer purchase behavior survey, economic index survey, investment survey, and etc.
- 4) Entertainment and sports survey, such as rating survey of movie stars, singers, athletes, songs, radio programs, TV programs, and etc.
- 5) Survey method and development. In conducting every survey, there would be a team of statisticians and quality control specialists to study the methodology and propose further development.

8. SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ABAC POLL

The top four questions and answers are:

- 1) *Would you stop conducting surveys because it may effect the decision of the voters?*

The answer is that surveys are conducted in all advanced countries. A survey is similar to looking in the mirror in which everybody

does. If you do not look in the mirror everyday, you would not know how you look and would not know whether or not you should make some improvements.

- 2) *How to make a survey respectable?*

A survey is respectable or not depends on:

- The quality and experience of the pollsters.
- The methodology used.

- 3) *What are the main types of sampling and sample size?*

The two main types of sampling are Non-probability Sampling and Probability Sampling. Example of Non-probability sampling is radio survey which is not reliable.

In Probability Sampling, if an appropriate methodology is used, the result would be accurate. Consider testing chicken soup, if you stir the soup well and get every ingredient in a spoon, the result of testing would be accurate. If you take only one ingredient in a spoon, the result of testing from that spoon would not be accurate.

- 4) *What are recommendations to the public in reading a poll.*

For example, in political poll, the public should ask the following questions:

- Who pay for the project?
- What sampling methodology?
- Were questions appropriate without e.g. leading question?
- What method was used in data collection?
- What time period?
- Analysis and conclusion?

9. ABAC POLL ACHIEVEMENTS

There are two main types of poll conducted by ABAC. They are sponsored poll and public poll. ABAC Poll conducts about 30-40 sponsored polls per year, including marketing polls sponsored by private organizations and opinion surveys sponsored by government organizations. The income from sponsored polls has been about 30 million baht per year. A percentage of the income is used to conduct public polls.

Starting from the election poll of Bangkok governor in the year 1996 which was very accurate, subsequent election polls have also been accurate.

The second example is Bangkok governor election in the year 2000. ABAC Poll was the only one to predict that Samak Sundaravej would get over one million votes while all other polls predicted that he would get 700,000 to 800,000 votes and ABAC Poll was accurate.

The third example is the countrywide election of the House of Representatives on 6 January 2001. The result indicated that ABAC Poll was more accurate than other polls. The deviation from the real result for each poll were:

- ABAC Poll 6.0%
- Mahidol Poll 15.8%
- Dusit Poll 16.2%
- Nation Poll 26.3%



Figure 1. ABAC Poll Seminar on “Drugs Suppression Activities”, 25 July 2005.



Figure 2. ABAC Poll Seminar on “Dangers to Female”, 10 November 2005.

Sample photographs of ABAC Poll activities are shown in Figures 1-7.



Figure 3. ABAC Poll Seminar on “Measures Against Smoking”, 11 November 2005.



Figure 4. ABAC Poll Seminar on “Roles of Mass Communication in Development of Political Affairs”, 17 November 2005.



Figure 5. H.E. Somchai Wongsavat, Permanent Secretary of Justice (Later Prime Minister) with Prof. Srisakdi, Chairman of ABAC POLL.



Figure 6. H.E. Purachai Piamsomboon, Deputy Prime Minister with Prof. Srisakdi, Chairman of ABAC POLL.



Figure 7. President Emeritus Rev. Bro. Martin, President Rev. Bro. Bancha, ABAC POLL Chairman Prof. Srisakdi, and participants at a seminar conducted by ABAC POLL in May 2008.

Sample poll results are listed in the Reference [1-27].

10. THE FUTURE OF ABAC POLL

The field survey part of ABAC Poll will continue to be carried out by the team with Dr. Noppadol.

The Internet survey will probably be carried out by a new team Prof. Srisakdi is recruiting. Searching Google for “Internet Poll”, over 20 millions entries were found as shown in Figure 8. These entries will be studied and some selected methods and software will be implemented in ABAC Internet Poll Center to be established later.

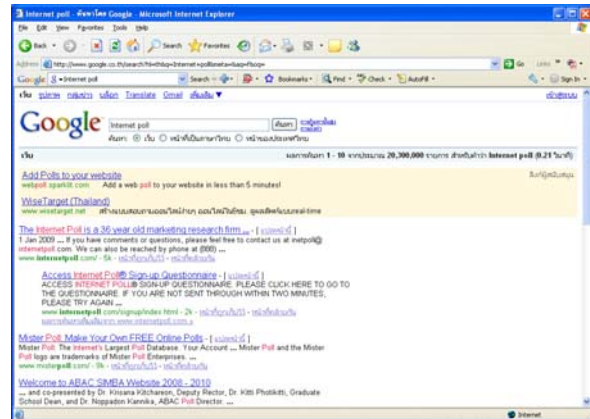


Figure 8. Searching “Internet Poll” and found over 20 million entries.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Prof. Srisakdi was the first Professor of Applied Statistics at NIDA and that was in the year 1974. When he joined Assumption University part-time in 1976 (and full-time since 1997), he came up with the idea of using the Internet to conduct opinion survey. He proposed the idea to Bro. Martin and got approval to use the Internet in addition to field survey in the election poll of Bangkok governor in the year 1996. The result was highly accurate. Therefore, he proposed and got approval from Bro. Martin to establish ABAC-KSC Internet Poll Research Center with he himself as the Chairman of ABAC Poll and remains in that position until the year 2008 when Bro. Martin became the Chairman of ABAC Poll. Prof. Srisakdi still believe in using the Internet for opinion survey. There are over 20 million entries from searching “Internet Poll” in Google. Therefore, Prof. Srisakdi will probably promote Internet poll and make it respectable in Thailand.

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