



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE

**Centre for Information
Integrity and the Internet**

Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

What's IN-cubating?

JANUARY TO MARCH 2026



Prof Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Director, IN-cube

Thank you for reading our newsletter for the first quarter of 2026. I am writing this from Brussels, where I am spending two months of my ongoing sabbatical leave. My stay here as Senior Fellow at the Brussels Institute for Advanced Studies (BrIAS) gives me the space to reflect on the projects we've done at IN-cube as well as to also think about our upcoming initiatives. I am grateful for this opportunity for some introspection, especially as we celebrate IN-cube's fifth year.

In January, we started our fifth anniversary celebration with our AI Media Summit, the culmination of my AISG grant that examined public perceptions of communicative AI. The summit emphasized to me that we're now indeed in the age of AI and many industries are in the midst of transformation, making it all the more important for us to critically examine AI and its implications on communication and information processes. This is why in the next iteration of our annual State of the Media and the Internet Survey (STIMS), we will be focusing on studying AI use in Singapore. We hope to roll out the survey in April.

In this newsletter, we will also share with you new milestones from our IN-cubators, including new grants and publications that we hope you will find useful. If you have any suggestions or ideas for collaboration, please let us know.

Thank you very much and I hope you enjoy reading this issue of What's IN-cubating?

LATEST NEWS UPDATE!



AI Media Summit: IN-cube 5th Anniversary Symposium

A look back at IN-cube's fifth anniversary summit, where researchers and practitioners explored how AI is reshaping media, communication, and public trust



New Publication

Highlights from IN-cube's latest publications, featuring new research on trust, algorithms, digital harms, influencer advertising, misinformation, and political engagement.



Media Interview

Recent media appearances by IN-cube researchers on AI trends, deepfakes, misinformation, and the challenges of navigating today's digital information environment



Influence for Impact in Southeast Asia 2026 (i-SEA Fellowship Program)

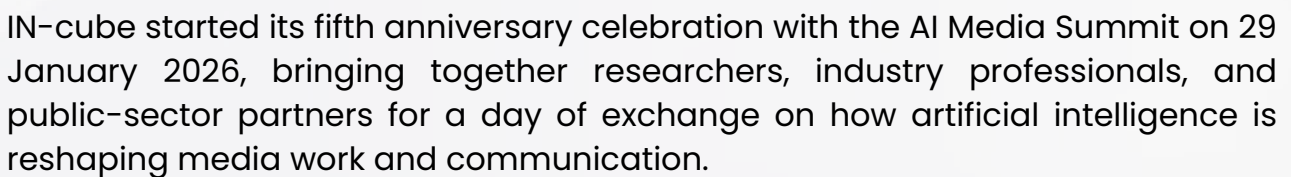
An update on the second edition of the i-SEA Fellowship Programme and its mission to nurture student creators as champions of information integrity across Southeast Asia



New Grants

New grant awards supporting IN-cube research on online scams, influence campaigns, and socio-emotional harms in human-AI interactions

IN-cube 5th Anniversary Symposium

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt, stands behind a wooden podium. He is gesturing with his right hand while speaking. The podium features a sign that reads "PARKROYAL ON BEACH ROAD SINGAPORE". A small screen is visible on the front of the podium. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

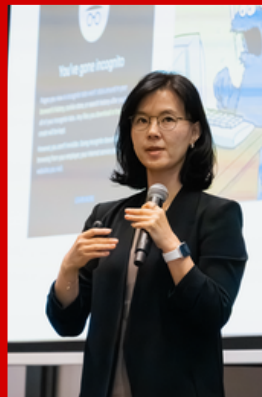
AI MEDIA SUMMIT

IN-cube 5th Anniversary Symposium



The summit featured presentations and discussions spanning key areas including journalism, advertising, public relations, social media, and public trust. Across these themes, speakers explored both the opportunities and tensions emerging from AI adoption, from how media professionals are integrating AI into workflows, to broader questions about credibility, ethics, and the future of communication in increasingly automated environments.

Beyond sharing research findings, the event also created space for conversation across sectors. By bringing together academic researchers with practitioners and policy-facing stakeholders, the summit highlighted the importance of collaborative dialogue in responding to rapid technological change. This cross-sector exchange reflects IN-cube's broader mission to produce research that not only contributes to scholarship but also informs practice and public understanding.



AI MEDIA SUMMIT

IN-cube 5th Anniversary Symposium

Prof Edson Tandoc, Director of IN-cube, described the summit as an ideal way to begin the Centre's fifth anniversary celebrations, noting that innovation is not only about new tools, but also about reimagining how people create, communicate, and collaborate. The summit thus served both as a celebration of IN-cube's achievements over the past five years and as a forward-looking platform for discussing the evolving role of AI in media and society. For more details, click [here](#) to read the full report



NEW PUBLICATIONS



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Living in the Trust Nexus: Investigating the Interplay of News and Government Trust on Individuals' Subjective Well-Being in Singapore

[Zhang Hao Goh](#) ✉ [Edmund W. J. Lee](#)

First published: 11 February 2026 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.70066> | [VIEW METRICS](#)

Living in the Trust Nexus:

Investigating the Interplay of News and Government Trust on Individuals' Subjective Well-Being in Singapore

IN-cube also celebrates a new publication co-authored by Dr. Zhang Hao Goh in Asian Politics & Policy. Titled “Living in the Trust Nexus: Investigating the Interplay of News and Government Trust on Individuals’ Subjective Well-Being in Singapore,” the study examines how trust in the news and trust in government interact to shape individuals’ subjective well-being in Singapore’s liberal-authoritarian media system.

Using IN-cube's survey data, the article proposes a trust-nexus framework to better understand how these two forms of trust work together rather than independently. The findings suggest that the positive effects of news trust on emotional and social well-being are stronger when government trust is also high. The study further shows that this interaction is especially pronounced for psychological well-being among those with higher social media news consumption.

This publication contributes to ongoing conversations about media trust, governance and public life, and highlights the importance of understanding how communication environments influence well-being in contemporary societies. Read the full publication [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Algorithmic Kaleidoscope:

The Floating Algorithmic Self and Self Discrepancy of Recommendation System Users



IN-cube Assistant Director, Assoc Prof Hyunjin Kang, who is the lead of the Online Privacy and User Psychology Lab, and Prof Edson Tandoc Jr. co-authored a new study that explores how recommendation systems shape users' sense of self in digital environments. Led by Ge Jiayi, a PhD student at WKWSCI, the research finds that users experience an "algorithmic self" that is fluid and evolving, shaped by how platforms reflect fragments of their identities back to them.

The study offers new insight into the psychological effects of mismatches between users' actual selves, ideal selves, and algorithmically curated identities across platforms. Read the full publication [here](#)

Beyond persuasion Knowledge:

Examining the roles of visual appeal, visual congruence, and social proof in influencer advertising



Co-authored by IN-cube's Digital Advertising and Consumer Psychology Lab lead and Assoc Prof Chen Lou, this study examines how different visual cues shape audience responses to influencer advertising. The findings show that visual congruence and social proof play important roles in strengthening engagement, while also offering useful insights into how influencer content can remain transparent yet still foster authenticity, resonance, and stronger consumer connection. Read the full publication [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Fake News Has a New Author, Can You Spot the Lie?

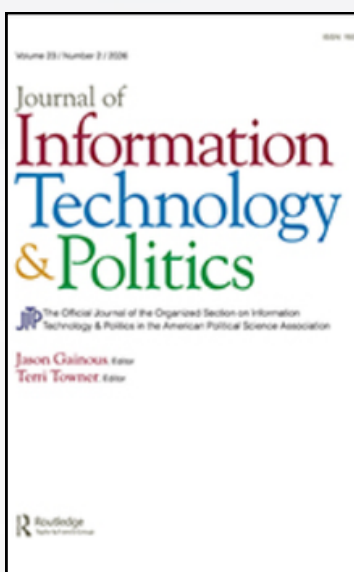
Media Cues and the Detection of AI-Generated Health News Through the Lens of the Media Evocation Paradigm



Assoc Prof Benjamin Li, lead of the Fatigue in Communication and Technology (FATCAT) Lab, investigates how source credibility, content style, and communication channel influence people's ability to detect AI-generated health misinformation. Focusing on the growing challenge of generative AI in health communication, the research offers practical implications for strengthening public resilience against health fake news and for designing more effective communication strategies in AI-mediated contexts. Read the full publication [here](#).

The interplay of culture, cognition, and political engagement in the reporting of disinformation:

A multi-country analysis



IN-cube Social Media and Political Engagement (SHAPE) Lab head, Assoc Prof Saifuddin Ahmed, published a new study that addresses an important gap in misinformation research by examining how people report disinformation, rather than only how they encounter or believe it. Drawing on data from eight countries across Asia and the United States, the research shows how political engagement, cognitive ability, perceived accuracy, and cultural context shape reporting behaviour, offering cross-national insights with both theoretical and practical relevance for combating disinformation. Read the full publication [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATIONS

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Navigating News in the Age of AI: Smart Media's Influence on Political Learning

[Get access >](#)

Saifuddin Ahmed ✉, Muhammad Masood, Jaeho Cho

International Journal of Public Opinion Research, Volume 38, Issue 1, Spring 2026, edaf071, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edaf071>

Published: 24 February 2026

Navigating News in the Age of AI:

Smart Media's Influence on Political Learning

Assoc Prof Saifuddin Ahmed also published a new study that examines how receiving news through AI-based smart media such as Siri and Alexa shapes political learning. The findings show that the impact of smart media is not always positive and depends greatly on who individuals discuss politics with. People who engage in political discussions with close friends and family tend to know more, while those whose discussions occur more with weaker social ties may know less. The study also finds that these patterns are stronger among individuals with higher levels of trust in AI. Read the full publication [here](#).

Compounded marginalization in social media politics:

How religious and gender identities shape online harassment and the cost of political engagement

In this new article, Assoc Prof Saifuddin Ahmed examines how political participation on social media can expose users to unequal risks of harassment. Focusing on India, the study finds that people who use social media more frequently for political engagement are more likely to face online harassment, with the burden falling especially heavily on religious minorities, particularly minority women. The research further shows that while social media use alone does not necessarily make political participation feel more costly, experiences of harassment can make engagement more emotionally and socially difficult, revealing how digital political spaces can deepen existing inequalities. The full article is published in *New Media & Society* (online first, 2026)

MEDIA INTERVIEW

With Saif Ahmed



IN-cube continued to contribute to public conversations on emerging media and information issues through media engagements featuring IN-cube's Social Media and Political Engagement lab head Assoc Prof Saifuddin Ahmed. In a Business Insider feature on the viral rise of the AI agent OpenClaw, Assoc Prof Ahmed explained that the trend reflects a broader shift towards social learning, where people adopt new tools by watching others use them rather than by understanding the technology itself. He also noted that while such hype can accelerate adoption, it carries the risk that interest may fade if the product's value is not sustained.

Assoc Prof Ahmed and Prof Tandoc were also interviewed by Channel NewsAsia on the spread of misinformation surrounding false claims and AI-manipulated footage related to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In the interview, Assoc Prof Ahmed highlighted how wartime uncertainty, limited public appearances, and viral claims about manipulated footage can fuel rumours, while also warning that it is becoming increasingly difficult for everyday users to distinguish deepfakes from authentic content. He advised audiences to verify the source, look out for visual or audio irregularities, and check whether credible news outlets have confirmed dramatic claims before sharing them.

Through these interviews, IN-cube's research continues to inform wider public understanding of how digital trends, AI technologies, and misinformation shape today's information environment. Click [here](#) for the full Business Insider article and [here](#) for the full Channel News Asia article

INFLUENCE FOR IMPACT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 2026

I-SEA Fellowship Program



IN-cube also began the year with preparations for the second edition of the Influence for Impact in Southeast Asia (i-SEA) Fellowship Programme, a continuing collaboration between Nanyang Technological University and Temasek Foundation. As a regional initiative, i-SEA aims to build a network of student content creators across Southeast Asia who can serve as champions of information integrity in their respective communities. Applications for the next run of the fellowship will open soon, and details will be announced publicly in due course.

The response to the inaugural call was highly encouraging, with the programme receiving over 400 applications from talented student creators across the region. This strong interest reflects both the growing importance of ethical digital content creation and the demand for initiatives that equip young creators to navigate misinformation, media responsibility, and public trust in a rapidly evolving online environment.

INFLUENCE FOR IMPACT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 2026

I-SEA Fellowship Program



Building on IN-cube's broader mission to strengthen information integrity, the fellowship is designed to support emerging creators through learning opportunities focused on ethical storytelling, media literacy, misinformation, media law and ethics, and AI in storytelling. By investing in young voices from across Southeast Asia, i-SEA seeks to foster a community of creators committed not only to creative excellence, but also to positive social impact.



NEW GRANTS



Professor Edson Tandoc received two new grants from the Centre for Advanced Technologies in Online Safety (CATOS) and the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF). These awards will support new research on online scams, propaganda, and influence campaigns, further strengthening IN-cube's efforts to address urgent challenges in today's digital information environment.

One of the funded projects, Susceptibility to Computational and Automated Manipulations (SCAM), explores why individuals become susceptible to online scams and how public resilience can be strengthened through targeted interventions. The project aims to analyze scam strategies, develop a Scam Susceptibility Scale, and design practical tools such as a gamified intervention to help users better recognize and resist manipulative tactics. The second project, Slow Drip Campaigns, examines how repeated, seemingly low-level narratives may gradually shape attitudes and beliefs over time.

NEW GRANTS



Assistant Professor Zhang Renwen has been awarded a grant from Google Asia Pacific for the project, "Developing a User-centered Framework for Socio-Emotional AI Harm Assessment." The project seeks to identify and mitigate the social and emotional harms arising from dynamic human-AI interactions, contributing to more responsible and human-centred AI design.

The grant will support the development of assessment frameworks, open-source datasets, and audit protocols to guide ethical AI development and governance. It also builds on ongoing work by Zhang Renwen and her Social Well-being, Empathy, and Emerging Technologies (SWEET) Lab on the long-term effects of AI companionship and conversational AI on well-being, mental health, and relationships.

About IN-cube

IN-cube stands for Centre for Information Integrity and the Internet, a research centre at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. It aims to contribute to promoting information integrity in online spaces, especially in an era of misinformation and disinformation, through timely, rigorous, and relevant research that links academics, policymakers, industry players, and the public. Learn more about IN-cube [on our site](#).