

## Former radio deejay refuses to pay SPH, campaigns for greater transparency

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Celebrity couple Jaime Teo and Daniel Ong in copyright tussle with SPH over articles about their cupcake business. ...

### UPDATE

Former radio deejay [Daniel Ong](#) is adamant he will not pay [Singapore Press Holdings](#) (SPH) in his ongoing copyright tussle with the publisher.

In his [latest Facebook post](#) on Saturday, the 36-year-old said he will not pay SPH the S\$214 "investigation fee" the company was charging him for legal costs incurred after he reproduced written articles about his successful cupcake business on his company website and Facebook.

"I am not contesting the copyright law!" he said in response to a *Straits Times* (ST) article published the same day, which he said kept "harping on copyright law, infringement etc".

"I'm refusing to pay because I hope this brings changes and transparency to this department of SPH... SPH! I'm asking for more transparency! Or new rules in your organization that make your editorial team provide a disclaimer every time they interview someone!"

An indignant Ong said SPH journalists should have informed him and his wife that they had to pay a licensing fee if they shared the published articles on their website.

This was after Ong and his wife [Jaime Teo](#) granted several interviews to *ST* and *The New Paper* who wanted to feature his successful four-outlet bakery business [Twelve Cupcakes](#). Teo, Miss Singapore Universe in 2001, has also appeared on the covers of SPH-owned magazines such as *Her World* and *Nu You*.

Earlier on Friday, Ong wrote in a lengthy [open letter to SPH](#) that he was speaking on behalf of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and celebrities in Singapore. He maintained that he and his wife "have never even heard about this rule...and really thought it was a mutual beneficial arrangement".

He also said SPH's ways of informing people of the need to pay licensing fees through workshops and notices in its articles were insufficient.

"9.5 in 10 people think something is wrong here, I am not alone," he said in his post which has since gone viral.

"Not everyone reads ST, my dear SPH... your 1/4 page ad informing companies to apply for licensing cannot be used here as notice already being served. Everyone missed it!" he posted.

"It's not all about the money," Ong added. "Imagine, if every article was paid for, wouldn't that compromise the integrity of the article? WHAT would then be real?"

"When we did all those interviews, there was no contract signed... no release letter... no verbal mentioned that we couldn't share it with our followers on Twitter/FB and our website. Does that mean we can also charge you for using our faces/quotes?" he said.

The copyright tussle came to light on Thursday after Ong [posted on Facebook](#) that he had received a bill from SPH stating he owed the company about S\$3,000 for republishing their stories without permission.

After he offered to remove the articles from Twelve Cupcakes' Facebook page and website, he was told that he still had to pay S\$214 for the "investigation fee" incurred by legal costs.

"Where's the mutual benefit here? They write about us, we help spread the word about the article, they get more readers and readership, everyone happy, no? SPH then writes [to] us to say we need to pay!," said Ong, in a Facebook note on Thursday night.



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"Did you know? Business owners are not allowed to share stories about themselves on their websites unless they pay... Stalls/cafes can't photocopy and then put it at their stalls or signboards... unless they pay," he added.

### **EXPERTS SAY...**

Singapore Management University's (SMU) law professor Saw Cheng Lim told *Yahoo! Singapore* that SPH does have a case and can stake a copyright claim against Ong.

"Even though Daniel has allowed the journalists to do a write-up on his business etc, the copyright in the published article still belongs to SPH (as employer of the journalists) and not to Daniel. Daniel merely contributed the basic ideas and information surrounding his business, but it was the journalists who compiled all the information ... into a full-blown feature/story which was subsequently published by SPH," he said.

However, SPH should make a compromise on the \$214 investigation fee, as a sign of goodwill, if Daniel has taken the necessary steps to remove the articles.

"What does SPH hope to achieve by doing this, expect to make more enemies out of its readers? I believe that copyright owners must be able to distinguish between genuine cases of ignorance of the law and those copyright pirates who make a living/profit from engaging in copyright-infringing activities on a regular basis," Prof Saw said.