The description “Overall, Singapore is like that overachieving friend who always seems to have everything under control, even if it means sacrificing a little spontaneity and fun” can be extended to Singapore’s media landscape.

Singapore’s media landscape can be broadly categorised into traditional media (broadcast and print media) and online media. The two primary players in traditional media are the Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) and MediaCorp. While under the guise of being private companies, these two companies are linked to the ruling party and owned by a state investment agency **(BBC, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15966553)**. Newspaper editors are supposed to understand Singapore’s national interests and how to safeguard them naturally as members of the SPH (George C, 2002). The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act enacted in 1974 gives the government the authority to choose the members of a newspaper company’s board of directors (George C, 2002). On top of that, the Broadcasting Act enacted in 1994 also regulated the operation and ownership of broadcasting services. It controlled what kind of content could be broadcasted as well. By regulating the ownership of broadcast companies as well as the content broadcasted, the government had control over broadcasted media. This essentially gave the Singapore government “freedom from the press” (George C, 2002), which aptly fits the description “seems to have everything under control”. This control over traditional media can also be seen as “sacrificing a little spontaneity and fun” that are often associated with a free press.

The online media landscape however, can be seen as a little more spontaneous and fun. The main difference between online media and traditional media is that the government mostly does not govern what is posted online. In 1996, sites that addressed delicate topics such as politics and religion could be asked to register with the regulatory agency (George C, 2012). However, this was not to control the content that was being published, but rather for content creators to take ownership of the content posted on their websites (George C, 2012). This led to many “contentious journalism” websites taking off, such as the Online Citizen and Yawning Bread. In fact, it even drove change in traditional media. Alex Au’s photograph of a large opposition rally at a Workers’ Party rally during the 2006 election, posted on the Yawning Bread, had disrupted the common practice of not showing opposition rally crowds practised by traditional media publishers. In the 2011 election, the Straits Times published similar images, showing the shift in paradigms (George C, 2012).

While it seems that the government was losing its “freedom from the press” due to the internet, it began regaining some control with the introduction of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and  Manipulation (POFMA) act in 2019. POFMA primarily utilises “correction directions”, which require the author of a alleged falsehood to post a government statement alongside the original piece, so that readers can make their own judgements about the truth (https://eastasiaforum.org/2023/10/24/singapores-fake-news-fixer-risks-undermining-public-confidence/). Because of the vagueness surrounding what constitutes a “falsehood”, journalists express concerns about how the law violates their rights to free expression (<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/singapore-media-practitioners-voice-concerns-proposed-fake-news-law-030735076.html>). This can lead to greater self-censorship, (https://www.singapore-samizdat.com/p/pofma-anti-fake-news-law), and thus granting the government more “freedom from the press”.