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Journalism & Media Management in Vietnam in the Post-Soviet Context: Opportunities, Challenges and Achievements¹

Abstract. This article analyzes the development of journalism and media management in Vietnam in the post-Soviet context, specifically from 1991 to the present. Characteristics of journalism and media management in Vietnam are discussed along three major phases: the pre-Doi Moi [Renovation] period when journalism was primarily considered a weapon for class struggle and was heavily influenced by the Soviet model; the transitional period post-Doi Moi during which journalism became a public forum in response to citizens' information needs, and the digital transformation era marked by the proliferation of social media. The article then delves into notable opportunities, challenges, as well as prominent achievements in Vietnam's current journalism and media management landscape.

Keywords: Journalism management, media management, Vietnam, Doi Moi.

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Журналистика и медиаменеджмент во Вьетнаме в постсоветском контексте: возможности, проблемы и достижения²

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируется развитие журналистики и медиаменеджмента во Вьетнаме в постсоветском контексте, в частности, с 1991 года по настоящее время. Особенности журналистики и медиаменеджмента во Вьетнаме рассматриваются в рамках трёх основных этапов: период до политики «Дой Мой» (Обновления), когда журналистика рассматривалась в первую очередь как орудие классовой борьбы и находилась под сильным влиянием советских канонов; переходный период после «Дой Мой», когда журналистика стала общественным форумом, отвечающим информационным потребностям граждан; и эпоха цифровой трансформации, отмеченная распространением социальных

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сетей. Далее в статье рассматриваются значимые возможности, проблемы, а также выдающиеся достижения в современном ландшафте журналистики и медиаменеджмента Вьетнама.

Ключевые слова: Управление журналистикой, медиаменеджмент, Вьетнам, «Дой Мой».

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1. Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought an end to a political-social structure that for decades influenced a number of countries, Vietnam included. One major result of this disruption was the change in attitude and functioning of several media institutions and systems, notably the state press system which had been considered one of the hallmark features of Soviet-style socialism. From 1945 until the Doi Moi reforms, Vietnamese journalism was shaped under this system. The press was used as a vehicle for propaganda, tightly controlled by the Party and the State, serving and facilitating politically fighting class struggle wars. But after the promulgation of the Doi Moi policies in 1986 which aimed at transitioning to a socialist-oriented market economy, Vietnam started to change some of their approaches in the field of journalism and communication. Journalism was no longer a one-way propaganda channel, but gradually became a dialogue channel, an information source, and communication medium between the state and citizens. This change was much needed and made in sync with social demands and public opinion.

Simultaneously, globalization and the rapid development of information technology in the digital age have created new pressures on the traditional model of press management, requiring strategic adjustments in media and public sphere management strategies.

In this context, the article poses the following research question: How has Vietnam adjusted its journalism management model to adapt to globalization, digitalization, and systemic changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union? From this, two research sub-questions are formulated: (1) In what direction has Vietnamese journalism and media developed during the transition from the Soviet model to a modern communication model? (2) What are the opportunities and challenges for Vietnam's journalism and media management in the post-Soviet era?

This article consists of the following main sections: The first part provides an overview of relevant studies on journalism management models in the post-Soviet era. The next part then presents research findings based on the three aforementioned

historical phases. The discussion section focuses on analyzing the current opportunities and challenges in journalism management, followed by several achievements. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key findings and suggests directions for future research in this field. The article uses documentary research and observation methods to analyze journalism and media management in Vietnam in the post-Soviet context.

2. Literature Review

There has been some notable research about journalism and media management in Vietnam. One of them came from Nguyễn Thế Kỷ, who wrote about the leadership and management of journalism in Vietnam over 25 years of Doi Moi reforms from 1986 to 2011 [Nguyễn Thế Kỷ 2012]. A journalist focused on identifying emerging issues in journalism management and proposed solutions to foster the growth of Vietnamese journalism while still maintaining effective oversight [Đỗ Quý Doãn 2015]. Several other authors zoomed into the role of the state, discussing the state's management of media activities in Vietnam [Nguyen, Bui 2019]. Another scholar when examining modern journalism and media, also touched on the management of journalism and media in Vietnam [Tạ Ngọc Tấn 2020]. A scholar laid the foundation for studying “media management” models in Vietnam, specifically analyzing the transformation of press agencies from a state-subsidized model to one of autonomy, creativity, and technological application [Đặng Thị Thu Hương 2021]. National conferences, such as the seminar “Media management in state agencies” emphasized the importance of two-way governance, or state-citizen cooperation, in policy communication [Thu Hương 2022]. Minister of Information and Communications highlighted the need to “create a favorable environment” for journalism to develop in a sustainable, professional, modern, and humane manner in the digital age [Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng 2023].

In terms of theoretical frameworks, there has been substantial research on the information society by Daniel Bell (1973), Masuda (1980) and in participatory culture by Henry Jenkins (2006). Some other scholars explored the characteristics of social media in the digital age and showed a review of recent research on online news production [Mitchelstein, E., & Boczkowski, P. 2009]. In the context of post-Soviet dynamics, the Russian media model was analyzed by Vartanova (2012).

Changes in journalism and media management in Vietnam have been facilitated by the Party and the State, and the transformation has also been acknowledged by scholars and international organizations. This process represents a shift from a “control model” to one based on “regulation-service-facilitation” [Nguyễn Thế Kỷ 2012: 234–237]. The concept of “governance” proposed by the World Bank and UNDP has also been clearly reflected in documents related to journalism and media management, promoting transparency in press activities. Party resolutions and government directives, including Resolution 52 on the fourth industrial revolution [Communist Party of Vietnam 2019], or Decision 362 on press planning [Prime Minister 2019], have demonstrated the Party and State’s efforts to change governance thinking from a top-down, subsidized model to a more proactive approach focusing on support, regulation, the use of technology and market dynamics.

Russian scholars have noted that Vietnam has not only achieved economic success but has also made significant progress in human rights; the media particularly plays a crucial role in increasing transparency and citizens' access to information [Uhalov and Lukin 2024]. Additionally, comparative studies on post-Soviet media in Russia such as those by Uhalov D. and Lukin A. have provided a theoretical foundation for comparing journalism and media governance models in Russia and Vietnam.

In summary, this literature review outlines key research contributions from both Vietnam and abroad, ranging from theories of the information society and social media to specific studies on journalism and media management in Vietnam, also including perspectives from Russian scholars. However, no study to date has directly addressed journalism and media management in Vietnam in the post-Soviet era and the specific opportunities, challenges, and achievements emerging in this context.

3. Results

3.1. Before 1991: Subsidized, one-way journalism management

Until 1991, Vietnam's press system functioned within the boundaries of a subsidized, centralized, one-way communication system akin to Soviet-style socialist state media. Journalism was comprehensively state-controlled. All media outlets had to be overseen by a controller, which in this case was the Party, state administrative bodies, political-social organizations, or professional unions. Under this media management model, journalism was likened to a "weapon of class struggle" that fought against enemies of socialism, fiercely disseminating Marxist-Leninist ideology and the policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

In the context of war and post-war reconstruction, the Vietnamese press served not only as a propaganda tool but also as a means to organize actions, boost public morale, and reinforce the socialist ideological system. Journalistic content was dictated by directives established in the form of Resolutions and Instructions from the Central Party Committee Propaganda Department and ministerial-level press management bodies.

Content control extended beyond topic orientation and also encompassed directives on presentation style, language usage, and political symbols. Consequently, journalism during this time did not function as a "public forum" but rather as a top-down channel of communication — a platform where the audience could only receive one-way information.

Regarding organization, the press system followed an administrative structure. Each province or city had a local Party newspaper, and broadcasting institutions were clearly classified. At the central level, major newspapers like *Nhân Dân*, *Quân Đội Nhân Dân*, and *Tạp chí Cộng sản* were responsible for orienting opinions at a national level. Editorial boards, reporters, and press managers were trained according to political and ideological standards, with loyalty to the revolutionary ideals being the top recruitment criterion.

Theoretically speaking, Vietnam's press model during this period aligned with the "Authoritarian" and "Soviet Communist Press Models" [Siebert et al. 1956]. These models were characterized by subordination to state power, viewing the press as a tool for political and ideological education.

During this phase, the press was effective in building trust in the ruling ideology, reinforcing political loyalty, and shaping socialist citizen archetypes. However, the management model also had significant limitations in terms of information closure, lack of pluralism, and underdeveloped professional journalism skills, all of which highlighted the need for reforms during the Doi Moi era.

3.2. Post-Doi Moi: The press as the people's forum and its role in social life

Since the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1986) with its spirit of “Facing the truth, assessing the truth correctly, speaking the truth clearly”, the press began undergoing significant transformations. This marked a shift from top-down propaganda journalism to a more open, pluralistic, and critical media environment aimed at serving the public and supporting socio-economic development.

The 1989 Press Law, for the first time ever, affirmed that journalism was “an essential mass communication tool in social life,” not merely a “mouthpiece of Party organizations, state agencies, or social organizations” but “the people’s forum.” By the 2016 Press Law, the word “People” in that phrase was capitalized, underscoring the position and role of the People in journalism.

While the 1989 Press Law stated that “the State creates favorable conditions for citizens to exercise their freedom of the press and freedom of speech in the press,” the 2016 Law emphasized right from Article 1 that “this Law regulates the freedom of the press, freedom of speech in the press for citizens, and press activities” [National Assembly 2016: 1].

In addition, official legal documents all emphasize that the Vietnamese press operates under the leadership of the Communist Party and within the framework of state law. This provides a legal foundation for the press to expand its responsibilities and enlarge the scope of content to be covered. The press has increasingly offered multi-dimensional perspectives on both domestic and international events. Mainstream media outlets such as *Tuổi Trẻ* (Youth), *Thanh Niên* (Young People), and *Công an Nhân dân* (People’s Police) began to reflect more diverse public sentiments and concerns. The press’s role in oversight and social critique grew stronger. High-profile cases such as the cutting down of 6,700 trees in Hà Nội (2015) and the Formosa environmental disaster in Hà Tĩnh (2016) serve as prime examples for this. Journalism uncovered violations, prompting public outcry and timely government intervention. Strong reactions from the press created public pressure that subsequently forced the government to disclose roots of the problems and to implement corrective actions. Journalism became a true forum for public debate with numerous articles, reports, and literary works connecting Party—State perspectives with public opinion.

Doi Moi era journalism sought to meet the reasonable needs of the readers via the provision of a wide variety of content and types. It shifted away from one-sided propaganda and was written in a more balanced, even penetrating way touching all kinds of issues on daily life, production, economic and social management, culture and education, even down to corruption and policy mistakes, with a critical attitude. Subsequently, the quality and depth of material provided on journalism also significantly improved.

Under Doi Moi, journalism and media management in Vietnam have taken a dual model: the press serves as not only an ideological instrument of the Party but also a platform for the People; it remains politically-driven while accommodating new market-driven forces. Ownership of the press is still monopolized by the State. Media control is implemented through a hierarchy: The Central Propaganda Department (now the Commission for Propaganda and Mass Mobilization) gives ideological guidance and monitors the press and journalism; The Ministry of Information (now the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism) demands state control; and the Vietnam Journalists Association acts as the state-socio-political-professional representative of journalists.

3.3. Media governance in the digital context

In the context of globalization and the fourth industrial revolution, Vietnam's journalism is undergoing significant transformations, reflected in the notable increase in the number of press and media agencies and the diversification of media formats.

According to Vietnam News Agency as of December 21, 2023, Vietnam had 6 major multimedia agencies, 127 newspapers, 671 magazines (including 319 scientific journals and 72 literary and artistic journals), and 72 radio and television stations. The total number of personnel working in journalism was approximately 41,000, with around 16,500 people in radio and television broadcasting [Vietnam News Agency: 21.12.2023].

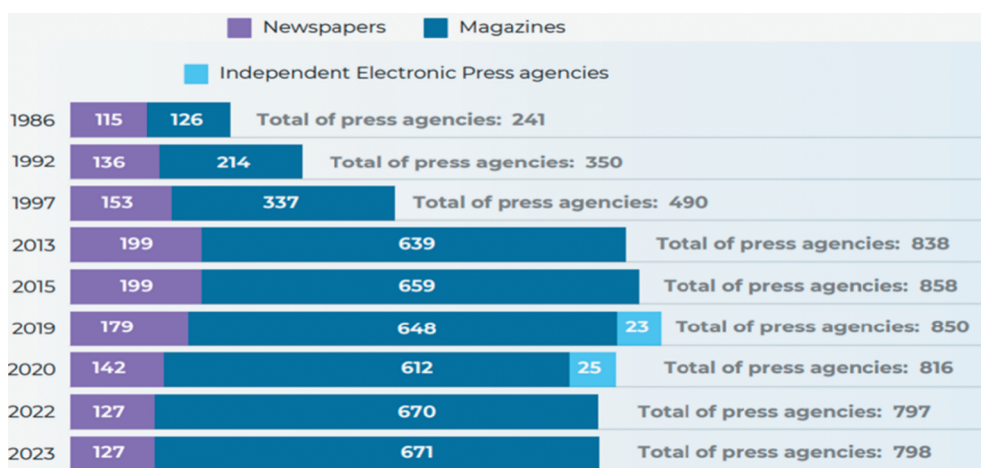


Fig. 1. Number of press agencies by year.

Source: Vietnam Media Landscape Report 2023—2024.

One of the key shifts in Vietnam's journalism management has been a change in mindset, from “managing as you develop” to “developing and then managing” and more recently — “management that promotes development.” This shift has been institutionalized through legal frameworks such as Decree No. 72/2013/ND-CP on the management, provision, and usage of Internet services and online information, as well as the 2016 Press Law, the 2016 Law on Access to Information, and more recently, the 2018 Cybersecurity Law.

On April 6, 2023, Deputy Prime Minister Trần Hồng Hà signed Decision No. 348/QĐ-TTg approving the Strategy for “Digital transformation of journalism to 2025, with orientation to 2030”. The online world has the potential to increase public reach and enable interaction but at the same time there are many challenges in this domain. The commercialization of journalism contributed to sensationalist and clickbait content, copyright infringement, and political incorrectness.

AI is creating a wave of innovation in the media industry. According to a survey by the Vietnam Journalists Association in 2023 up to 81.7 % of domestic journalists have used AI tools for certain steps such as drafting, editing, transcription, fact-checking, and research. However, the application of AI also comes with legal and ethical challenges, such as determining copyright, controlling misinformation, and protecting privacy.

Alongside journalism management is the governance of social media. In the current context of globalization and international integration, non-state actors, in addition to the state, also participate in social governance. Social media in Vietnam is growing rapidly: in 2024 according to the sources, Vietnam had 72.70 million social media users as of January 2024, equivalent to 73.3 % of the total population [Digital 2024...: 23.02.2024]. The public are no longer just consumers of information but also creators and disseminators of content.

This shift sets new demands on media governance system. The cyber world is a world full of risks, especially the dissemination of fake or less accurate, accusatory,

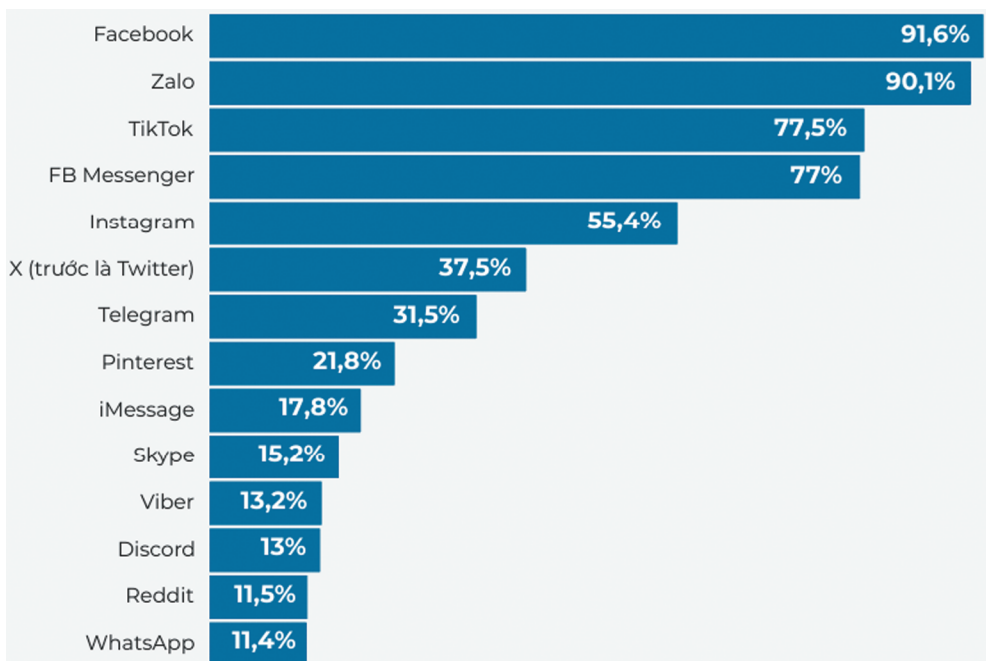


Fig. 2. Most commonly used social media platforms in Vietnam, by percentage of the population using Internet.

Source: Vietnam Media Landscape Report 2023—2024.

instigative or deceitful information & non-traditional risk. These are not only factors that threaten social stability, but they also undermine the public's trust in the mainstream media and government institutions.

This shift sets new demands on media governance system. The cyber world is a world full of risks, especially the dissemination of fake or less accurate, accusatory, instigative or deceitful information & non-traditional risk. These are not only factors that threaten social stability, but they also undermine the public's trust in the mainstream media and government institutions.

To tackle these challenges, Vietnam formed “the model of non-traditional security disaster management cycle” includes five elements: prevention, reduce losses, resilience, response, and recovery. Internet companies with cross-border platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are obliged to cooperate with Vietnamese authorities in addressing violations of state laws, and apply control measures for contents in accordance with the country's legislations.

Journalism must assume a leading role in guiding public opinion in this hybrid media space. Accurate, timely information from mainstream journalism can significantly reduce the spread of fake news and reinforce the state's role in creating a healthy media environment. The Vietnamese government has also developed official social media channels to interact directly with citizens, such as the Facebook pages of the Government, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Public Security, contributing to more effective communication of policies.

4. Discussion

4.1. Opportunities

Digital transformation in journalism and media in Vietnam offers clear opportunities for both regulators and media agencies.

First, rapid advances in information technology, particularly the Internet and social media have provided new avenues for the rapid and flexible supply of information and access to various audiences. The ecosystem of digital media, online newspapers, social networks, video clips and podcasts help Vietnamese journalism to take the path of internationalization matching global trends and standards and helps to raise the competitiveness with international journalism.

The second is that the country has been increasingly integrated into the world economy, as well as continued media cooperation with developed countries — especially after Vietnam joined new-generation free trade agreements — have provided opportunities to learn advanced management models, technological transfer and to standardize the process of journalistic production towards international press standards. Media exchange schemes, training collaboration and the involvement in regional and global journalist networks serve the formation of journalists, editors and media managers.

Third, the interest for national digital transformation of the expanding government through the “National digital transformation program to 2025 with orientation to 2030” also has opened a debate about prioritizing journalism as a sector that requires

significant investments, especially in building big data platforms, artificial intelligence, and digital content management technology.

4.2. Challenges

The digital transformation has plenty of challenges for media management in Vietnam.

It is not easy to moderate information in a digitally ubiquitous world, especially with the proliferation of fake news, misinformation and harmful content. With cross-border platforms, such as Facebook or YouTube, or TikTok, it is hard for authorities to keep information spaces healthy, as well as to keep the right of citizens to access information.

A further challenge is the tension between the call for modernization of media governance and the administrative, subsidy driven system of many the press organizations. The existing framework still retains post-subsidy model of journalism which is serving interests of political and social bodies and has reduced independence and freedom in governance and content management of journalism. Experiments in financial autonomy, equitization or converged newsrooms are haphazard and unfinished.

Meanwhile, the scattered media and social media as well as semi-official media force against the media landscape have raised legitimacy and effectiveness questions for mainstream journalism. By competing for eyeballs, ad dollars and public attention, some media have turned into mere purveyors of sensationalism and commercial pabulum, not watchdogs observing their social and civic roles of public guidance, cultural critique and civic education.

4.3. Achievements

Despite these difficulties, Vietnam has achieved significant progress in media and journalism management over the past two decades.

First, the legal framework for journalism has been continuously updated and improved, creating a relatively comprehensive legal corridor for press activities in the digital age. The 2016 Press Law and its guiding documents clearly have defined the roles, rights, and obligations of media agencies and journalists, demonstrating the State's commitment to building a transparent and healthy press environment.

Second, the scale and quality of Vietnamese journalism and media have grown significantly. Under the leadership of the Party and State, revolutionary journalism has strengthened its role as a sharp ideological tool and a vital bridge between the government and the people. The media system reflects diverse aspects of life as well as enhances political awareness and cultural values. The press increasingly serves as a forum for the people. Since the Doi Moi reforms (1986), journalism has truly become a democratic space where people can express their thoughts, aspirations, and constructive opinions.

Third, journalism is pioneering in technology application and digital transformation. Many media outlets have invested in technology, built converged newsrooms, and used AI in content production and distribution. Multimedia journalistic products and personalized user experiences are becoming increasingly common.

Fourth, restructuring and improving management efficiency. Press agencies are being streamlined and reorganized for efficiency. Media governance thinking has shifted from subsidizing to supporting, regulating, and promoting the use of technology and markets. In the digital era, Vietnam's media governance has adopted concrete strategies to curtail disinformation and strengthen the credibility of mainstream media. "*Factcheckvn*, a fact-checking channel launched by the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) on TikTok, was honored as an information channel with social impact at TikTok Awards Vietnam 2020". It is a part of the VNA's fake news project named "*The fight against fake news — Creative ideas and Effective solutions*" that also includes an anti-fake news song in 15 languages and a training campaign for students...The project was named Best Project for News Literacy within the Asian Digital Media Awards 2020, organized by the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)" [Vietnam Pictorial: 28.12.2020]. Ministry of Information and Communications issued a *Handbook on preventing and fighting fake news and false news in cyberspace* (2022) providing users with tools to recognize and jointly act against misinformation.

Fifth, innovation in journalism and media education. Training institutions are reforming their curricula to become more professional and modern, equipping future journalists with political knowledge, diverse skillsets such as data journalism, digital content production, digital media governance, and technological adaptability.

5. Conclusion

Vietnam's revolutionary press, with 100 years of development since the launch of *Thanh Niên* Newspaper, has matured and become a key force on the ideological and cultural front.

The post-Soviet context marked a fundamental shift in Vietnam's media development and governance strategy. Today, Vietnamese journalism continues to vigorously promote the Party's and State's policies, counter false narratives, fulfill supervisory and social critique functions, and fight corruption and waste. However, new challenges have emerged, one of which is the commercialization trend leading many outlets to chase vulgar, sensationalist content that diverges from their core mission. Misinformation, unverified reports, and political insensitivity remain problematic, as do copyright violations, particularly in online journalism. Moreover, the explosion of social media and AI has fundamentally changed how information is produced, distributed, and consumed. Current laws and governance models are not always timely or comprehensive enough to address these trends.

To overcome these challenges and foster healthy media development in the digital era, new and modern governance methods are essential. Key solutions include improving journalism-related institutions and laws, especially for online journalism and social media, to ensure coherence, scientific rigor, clarity, and strong enforcement. Journalism should be treated as a special commodity, and the press should shift from being a mere "news deliverer" to a content ecosystem capable of production, leadership, and monetization.

In conclusion, Vietnamese journalism must boldly innovate in mindset, structure, technology, and personnel to adapt to the digital age. This demands close coordination among the Party, the State, media agencies, training institutions, and the whole society to build a professional, modern revolutionary press that serves national development and meets the growing information needs of the people.

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