



Research Article

MEDIA CULTURE IN JOURNALISM ACTIVITIES IN VIETNAM TODAY: PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Communist Review, Vietnam

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Received: June 14, 2022; Revised: July 15, 2022; Accepted: July 25, 2022

ABSTRACT

The more developed the society, the more influential the media is in the socio-political life of a country. In that context, media culture plays a critical role in orientating and leading journalistic activities towards values, prestige, quality, and effectiveness. With rich and comprehensive information content, the media and communication products of press agencies over the past time have timely, truthfully, and comprehensively reflected on political and economic life, culture, society, foreign affairs, and national security and defense at home and abroad, which were highly critical of society and a truly reliable forum for the people. However, besides the advantages, journalism activities have certain limitations. By the interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies and cultural sociology, the article focuses on clarifying problems of media culture, identifying the elements of media culture in journalism activities, proposing solutions for the currently arising problems to improve the media culture in journalism activities in Vietnam today.

Keywords: journalism activities; media culture; Vietnam

1. Introduction

The more developed society, the more influential the media is in the socio-political life of a country. In that context, media culture in journalism activities emerges as the orientation and leading journalistic activities towards values, prestige, quality, and effectiveness.

Media culture is not a simple combination between culture and media, but the connotation of the concept of media reflects the complex and delicate mutual transformation relationship between culture and media. Therefore, media culture is a cultural phenomenon, an element of culture, especially in this modern society. Although the concept of culture can be approached from a general or particular viewpoint, when it comes to studying media activities as a cultural phenomenon, it is possible to link and apply cultural knowledge to

Cite this article as: Nguyen Thi Kim Ngoc (2022). Media culture in journalism activities in Vietnam today: Problems and recommendations. *Ho Chi Minh City University of Education Journal of Science*, 19(7), 1175-1185.

clarify the nature as well as the constitutive elements of communication activities.

Suppose culture is “human cultural education,” “material cultural education,” making people and human society much better. In that case, the press is one of the means and ways for culture to perform its social functions, from cognitive, educational, and aesthetic functions to entertainment, forecasting, and communication ones. The press has not only provided knowledge to the public but also contributed to identifying the orientation of their political, ethical, and lifestyle ideas, fostered and spread aesthetic emotions, enriched and promoted their spiritual life, and directed the public to the values of truth, goodness, and beauty.

The above analysis and explanations prove that media culture is the value of information content gathered in the public’s perception, thinking, and feelings after a communication process. Media culture in journalistic activities is often recognized in such aspects as the culture of the press agency, the value of information, the culture of readers, and the media channels. Thus, the content of the media culture concept in journalism activities is the permeated values that permeate and are present in all elements of journalism activities, from the quality of information, the culture of reporters, and editors to the culture of information recipients as well as information transmission technology, etc.

The identification of the fundamental elements of media culture in journalism activities in Vietnam today contributes to providing scientific grounds for strategic planning, perfecting and supplementing policies that contribute to the better values of journalism and communication activities, and at the same time limiting the disadvantages and negative factors arising in the communication process.

2. Identification of the fundamental elements of media culture in journalism activities

There are many structural approaches to media culture. Upon the understanding of media culture as described above, the following elements are media culture: media product value, media subject’s culture, the culture of readers’ receipt and feedback of information, channels, and media messages.

2.1. Media product value

The information must comply with such minimum principles as accuracy, objectivity, and fairness: In journalism activities, information is the connection between the media and the public. Media culture is the quality and effectiveness of communication based on its impact on society to promote the movement of all areas of social life. The message conveyed may either be noble, humane, serving the public interest, or uncultured, unethical, serving the interests of a group of people with ambitions for their own political and economic power. Therefore, media culture is reflected in the fact that the information provided by news agencies, newspapers, and mass media provides the public not only current information but also must adhere to such principles as accuracy, honesty, soundness, objectivity, fairness, publicity, transparency, and correct social orientation.

The objectivity and soundness of information ensure that the information content accurately reflects the actual events and processes. This is the supreme principle, demonstrating the quality of information and creating the effectiveness of journalism activities. Accurate, true-to-life information is more important than fast, first-come one. Media culture helps to orient and avoid pragmatism and commercialization in communication.

The information and communication must be humane and high cultural content oriented: Humanity is an indispensable element of media culture, reflected in the fact that media must promote, praise, and protect common cultural values of humankind, of each nation and people, for the sake of the people's life and legitimate interests. The media reflects the negative sides of the ongoing social life and arouses positive values. Only this way can develop and strengthen the public's trust and loyalty, creating positive social effects and directing people to believe in beautiful cultural values. Humanity shows the professionalism and culture of media by creating works with high cultural content.

The information must be predictive and guide public opinion: In the communication process, information quickly becomes outdated due to the appearance of new information. The predictability of information about impending situations helps the authorities find handling measures, prevention solutions, or timely solutions. Moreover, information must consistently perform the function of orienting and guiding public opinion according to a definite goal. Information directly affects social life, people's thoughts, aspirations, and emotions, thereby changing their perceptions, concepts, attitudes, and behaviors and developing public opinion and social pressure for a particular phenomenon or event. Therefore, information is required to be selective, systematic, and purposeful to create quantitative changes and ultimately result in qualitative changes in thinking and acting. Information is only valuable when it meets the recipient's needs and purposes, helping them solve the raised problems.

The information must be ideological: Information, whether directly or indirectly, always bears the imprint of a particular ideology. Communication cannot be out of the interests and objectives of the classes, parties, or organizations that use it. Each class, each ethnic group, and each different political organization uses the media to reflect social phenomena from its viewpoints, primary interests, and traditions. The purpose of information and communication is to influence the public broadly, including all classes and social groups with very different characteristics and needs. Therefore, the information must suit each subject's psychology, knowledge, and cognitive characteristics. In addition to conveying information, the media also plays a role in educating, persuading, and guiding ideas.

Expressing language must be accurate: In the current information explosion period, various types of the press - media develop strongly, and the mainstream (from press

agencies) and unofficial flows (on social networks, new media channels) of information are intertwined, and media culture is to ensure the ideological, objective, and truthful information, for the sake of the nation and the people. Expressing languages must be accurate, familiar, standard, lively, attractive, and highly cultural. Words are expressed in such manner to be easily understood, read, and listened. Errors and deviations in the language used in the press and media will have a negative impact, sometimes are quickly spread, and become adverse social effects.

2.2. *Media subject's culture*

- *Culture of agencies, the culture of leadership and managers*

The culture of press and media agencies reflects the unique values of each agency, press, and media. The culture of press and media agencies is also reflected in the cultural identity, in the branding logo, in the form of the interface, in behaviors in human relationships among themselves, and between them and the surrounding environment, etc.

Agency culture has a substantial impact on the activities of the agency, on the relationships within the agency area, developing a trustful environment, sharing values, being the driving force for voluntary efforts and contribution of each individual, making the operation convenient, productive and effective. To perform its functions and tasks well, a press and media agency must build a cohesive relationship among its leaders and reporters, editors, cadres, civil servants, and public employees, building standards of conduct, a sense of discipline, and responsibility at work.

Leaders and managers are the key cadres who play a leading and decisive role in the sustainable development of press and media agencies. President Ho Chi Minh once said: "Cadres are at the root of every work" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p.309), and "every success or failure is the result of the good or bad cadres" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p.280). The success of each press and media agency depends significantly on the qualifications and management capacity of the leadership team. The cultural level of the leaders is the level of culture, education, expertise, management capacity, political theory, scientific working method, seriousness, and willingness to take responsibility for the common good. That are their honesty, responsibility in life and work, self-respect, decency and cultured behavior, a transparent and healthy lifestyle, and being a guideline for their subordinates to follow. The leader's culture is also reflected in the responsibility and obligation to implement ethical standards, cultural lifestyle, strategic vision, clear direction, purpose, forecast of the development process, and development of long-term plans for agencies and organizations. The leaders' decisions not only affect their own activities but also affect the whole collective, which is the driving force in promoting the development of press and media agencies.

- *Culture of reporters, editors, and collaborators*

Media workers must satisfy the following requirements:

High educational and professional qualifications: In the current social development

trends, journalism and media activities are a particular field that requires professional qualifications, adequate knowledge to understand the information correctly and deeply, as well as to be critical, accurate, and alert. In addition to equipping themselves with political knowledge, living information, and professional knowledge help journalists understand the principles, processes, and caution for their works. No matter how good or experienced they are, journalists must always follow the process and rules so as not to make unfortunate mistakes while working. To create a good article, journalists, in addition to their natural talent, have to always be creative, apply the proper method to find the right topic, hit the topic, present the work, and especially have both in-depth and comprehensive knowledge, experienced skills in using journalistic language, technical equipment, being good at foreign languages, being dynamic, creative, and knowledgeable in law, have professional ethics.

Professional ethics, strong political courage: Professional ethics is important in developing media culture, reflected in the attitude and responsibility towards society and the public. For communicators, it is objectivity, fairness, and honesty for the sake of the common good of the nation and people and the benefit of the community. A qualified journalist, through his journalistic works, makes readers understand fully the nature of things and phenomena without highlighting or blackening, and he must know how to find and choose correct information. When presenting any information, it is required to consider its social effectiveness because, in addition to the function of information and entertainment, the other important function of the press is the orientation of public opinion and education. Truthful information is the top requirement, but not all facts are presented in the media. The truth must be beneficial for the country and the people. The OIJ's manifesto clearly states: that journalism is not only a profession, but first and foremost, it is an important social responsibility.

Understanding and respecting the public: The public has a critical role in assessing the capacity and effectiveness of the impact of media products, "the public is the object of appraisal, establishment, brand development, prestige, social strength of the press agency, as the appraiser, the public is the object of receiving and replying with direct impressions and evaluation of the quality of journalistic products" (Truong, 2001). Therefore, to communicate effectively, the press must find out what information the public wants and needs, how products are made and how readers perceive those products to meet their needs accurately, convince and win their trust. Without impressing and attracting the public, the media and press will not be able to exist and develop.

2.3. Culture of readers' receipt and feedback of information

Today, the relationship between the media and the public is no longer a one-way passive one; the public is not only the recipient and affected by the media but also plays a role in interacting and responding to the expressed information. These activities have become a trend in the public's approach to and reaction to the media. As a result, the public

is not only the receiver, consumer, and respondent of the media but also the co-creator of media products and the subject of media product creation; they can actively capture and control information and simultaneously participate in the process of information provision and transmission.

The culture of receiving information from the public has also changed in diversifying needs and improving quality. Therefore, the public's requirements for information content and forms of information transmission by press agencies are becoming more and more stringent. The public requires information that is not only fast and accurate but also attractive.

2.4. Communication channels and messages

The development of communication technology has been fundamentally changing today's communication channels. The technical facilities used to process information and facilitate communication are infrastructure and the internet, satellites, server systems, computers, intermediate devices and application software, artificial intelligence, 3D technology, robots, etc. In addition, they are smartphones, camcorders, audio, and video processing equipment, video staging, etc. Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected world, the interplay among devices, systems, and people are increasing dramatically.

Technology has changed the media and communication culture, from passive communication with limited channels to receive information to an active one where the public can actively create their information channel. With the development of the internet, digital television, mass media – audiovisual, etc., there are many choices to receive different information. Radio and television channels exist everywhere, new websites are established, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. also participate effectively in communication activities. Communication technology with new media channels helps to remove the boundaries of space and time, make people more confident in society, supplement and improve their cultural level, and expand their knowledge of science, socioeconomic, access to the most modern and advanced technology, exchange, learn and integrate with the world.

3. Matters of media culture in journalism activities in Vietnam today

3.1. Regarding the media value of media products

Basically, with rich and comprehensive information content, the media and communication products of press agencies over the past time have timely, truthfully and comprehensively reflected political and economic life, culture, society, foreign affairs and national security and defense at home and abroad, which were highly critical of society and a truly reliable forum for the people. Press agencies have thoughtfully implemented the leadership, direction, and information orientation of the Party and State, sticking to the goal of maintaining political stability, social consensus, and people's trust in the Party and the regime.

However, in the context of extensive international integration and the impact of the market economy, in particular, some press and media agencies have moved far away from their operating principles and purposes; their published information is not following the regulations in the license, lacks selectivity, heavily reflects the negative social side. Commercialization in press activities has been slowly settled; many offensive news content and headlines that focus on attracting customers have reduced the truthfulness of the press. There are also many low-quality journalistic products, serving the unhealthy tastes of a section of the public with limited awareness and cultural level. Some journalistic products, media, and entertainment programs on television have inferior quality in content evaluation, without high educational value and aesthetics, and do not conform to cultural standards and make the public dissatisfied.

3.2. Regarding the qualifications and qualities of the team of reporters and editors

As of November 30, 2021, in Vietnam, there are 816 press agencies, of which 114 newspapers and 116 magazines operate in the two modes, 557 print newspapers and magazines, 29 electronic newspapers and magazines; 72 agencies have licenses of audio – television operation with 02 national stations (Vietnam Television, Voice of Vietnam), 01 VTC Digital Television, 64 local stations, 05 television units with their television broadcasting infrastructure (People’s Television, News Television, Vietnam National Defense Television, People’s Public Security Television, National Assembly Television). Currently, about 40,000 people are working at press agencies with 17,161 official press cards (Vietnam Journalists Association Online Newspaper, 2021).

In general, the majority of reporters and editors of press agencies are well-trained in professional qualifications, operational skills, political theory, and professional ethics, basically satisfying their career requirements.

However, besides the advantages, there are still certain limitations in some reporters’ and editors’ competence and ethical qualities. A number of reporters and editors who lack formal training, professional experience, political bravery, and adequate cultivation and training, have followed evil forces, leading to violations of professional ethics, breaking the law, and taking advantage of journalistic activities for personal gain, offending the dignity and honor of citizens, causing troubles to agencies, organizations and enterprises, adversely affecting the integrity and professional reputation of genuine journalists who actively follow all provisions of the law.

3.3. Regarding the culture of receiving and enjoying the value of journalistic products of the public

The public plays a significant role in the operation of the press agencies. Nowadays, under the influence of modern communication technology and socio-economic development, the media's public are mostly educated and able to use electronic devices and information technology. They are no longer passive recipients of press information; on the contrary, they actively receive and express their wishes and requests for information, even

participating directly in the communication process. The public is the one who appraises media products, actively chooses journalistic products, finds out reliable information, rejects poor quality products, and boycotts destructive and harmful news on social media and the press. This is the driving force and pressure for press agencies to constantly innovate and develop to increase the cultural value of media works.

The public's needs in the media are increasingly diverse and rich. However, besides legitimate needs, there are also unhealthy ones. With the help of technical means, it is easy for the public to interact with press agencies, especially electronic press products. However, not all express a good attitude and civilized behavior. There have been many negative comments, hateful attitudes, and a lack of objectivity in their interaction processes in cyberspace. Thereby, there are certain apparent limitations in the attitudes and behaviors in communicating, dealing with the press, and the culture of receiving media products of a part of the public.

3.4. *Regarding communication channels and modern journalism technology*

The rapid development of information and communication technology has placed many vital impacts on the media environment, changing the way of information production and dissemination. Journalists and media agencies must state their changes from awareness and working methods towards promoting professionalism to create valuable products.

In the past time, many press agencies and media have been very active, proactively “innovating and approaching modern journalism technology to present press information on different communication infrastructures and platforms to promote the best accessibility of readers, applying artificial intelligence (AI) technology in production, meeting the needs and preferences of the public” (Vietnam Journalists Association Online Newspaper, 2021). In addition, scientific journals are actively transforming into electronic journals to maximize public access to information.

However, the number of press agencies in Vietnam that follow this direction is still modest. This also reflects that communication technology in journalistic activities is still limited by outdated technology and media that have not kept up with the trend of modern journalism.

3.5. *Recommendations*

To improve the media culture in journalism activities in the coming time, it is necessary to focus on the following solutions:

Firstly, continuing to renovate the contents and methods of direction and management of state agencies on journalism and media activities in a professional, humane and modern direction, based on considering the culture as the foundation, the driving force promoting the development of press and media agencies. Constantly innovating thinking to lead, direct and manage the electronic press, social networks, and other forms of communication on the internet to keep up with the development of information technology. Actively orienting,

providing timely information to dominate and master it; using official and active sources to conquer and fight against false, distorted, malicious, and hostile details on the internet.. Communication to raise cultural awareness in journalism activities, promoting the artistic element in the creation of works, implementing the “Criteria for cultural journalism agencies and culture of Vietnamese journalists” recently issued by the Vietnam Journalists Association (Vietnam Journalists Association, 2022).

Secondly, continuing to perfect the organizational structure, rearrange the organizational structure, merge press and media agencies, form a converged newsroom, gradually overcome the situation of investment overlapping and spreading, loosen management, failure to follow the principles and purposes, to satisfy the development requirements of the press and media in the new situation. Completing institutions, policies, and regulations in operation organization, especially in content, personnel, and finance for press agencies, creates conditions for the press to perform its political services, information, and communication, as well as its function of education and entertainment. There should be a mechanism of remuneration, timely honoring press officers who have made typical contributions, and at the same time, promptly correct and strictly handle wrongdoing agencies and journalists.

Thirdly, constantly improving the quality of press information.

Press and media agencies need to invest many efforts in publishing high-quality news, articles, and communication programs that reflect good examples of good people, good deeds, good models, and effective ways to develop economic, cultural, and social development, contributing to spreading positive energy in society. The quality of press information depends on the team of reporters, editors, and technicians. Therefore, to improve the quality of press information, it is necessary to promote the creativity of the press staff, and at the same time, to increase investment in modernizing facilities and information technology infrastructure, and develop the transfer of information digital transformation, technology, and technical infrastructure according to the model of a converged and multi-media newsroom for press agencies. In this way, new programs, news, and articles in the press will be able to become more attractive, vivid, practical, in-depth, with clear messages, and closer to reality.

Fourthly, continuing to improve the quality of the contingent of those working in the field of journalism, especially highlighting the roles and responsibilities of the heads of the press and media agencies; Paying more attention to education and training, and fostering to improve the quality of the contingent of reporters, editors, and technicians; Attracting and recruiting talented, capable, and ethical people to build up high-quality human resources for press and media agencies because this team contributes to the quality and value of journalistic works. In addition to cultivating political, educational, and professional skills,

the press staff must constantly practice their professional ethics; Building press and media agencies that are typical in terms of the culture.

Fifthly, continuing to improve people's intellectual level, capacity, aesthetic taste, and behavioral culture for the press public.

The public's receptive culture is an important driving force in promoting the innovation efforts of the press agencies and the creativity of the team of journalists. For the press public to become an intelligent receiver in appraising, evaluating, and enjoying the value of journalistic products, the public needs to be equipped with the knowledge and fostered in terms of competence, beauty, and lifestyle. To do so, not only media agencies but also educational entities such as families, schools, and society need to join their hands to foster a worldview and a human outlook for each individual and society, especially the young generation. A comprehensive education in knowledge, ethics, qualifications, and aesthetics is a sustainable way to promote the capacity to receive different values, including the value of journalistic products, as well as create resistance against the bad, evil and countercultural phenomena.

4. Conclusion

From a cultural perspective, it can be affirmed that media culture in journalistic activities is the totality of the expressed values (value of work, culture of the creator, culture of the audience, and communication channels) in which the value of journalistic products plays an important role, influencing to change the perception and cultural behavior of the public and the whole society in a positive direction. In the context of the rapidly developing information technology revolution, Vietnam is increasingly integrating deeply with the world in all fields, to promote the achieved results and overcome any existing challenges and limitations, it is necessary for the leading and managing agencies and press agencies to solve many problems synchronously so that media culture in journalism activities will spread values into social life, making practical contributions to the construction and realization of the aspiration to develop a prosperous and happy country.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Author have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**VĂN HÓA TRUYỀN THÔNG TRONG HOẠT ĐỘNG BÁO CHÍ
Ở VIỆT NAM HIỆN NAY: VẤN ĐỀ VÀ GIẢI PHÁP**

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Ngày nhận bài: 14-6-2022; ngày nhận bài sửa: 15-7-2022; ngày duyệt đăng: 25-7-2022

TÓM TẮT

Xã hội càng phát triển thì truyền thông càng có vị trí, vai trò đặc biệt quan trọng trong đời sống chính trị – xã hội của một quốc gia. Trong bối cảnh ấy, văn hóa truyền thông đóng vai trò định hướng, dẫn dắt hoạt động báo chí hướng tới các giá trị, tạo dựng uy tín, chất lượng và hiệu quả. Các sản phẩm báo chí, truyền thông của các cơ quan báo chí thời gian qua với nội dung thông tin phong phú, toàn diện đã phản ánh kịp thời, trung thực, toàn diện đời sống chính trị, kinh tế, văn hóa, xã hội, đối ngoại và an ninh quốc phòng ở trong nước và quốc tế, có tính phản biện xã hội cao, thực sự là diễn đàn tin cậy của nhân dân. Tuy nhiên, bên cạnh những ưu điểm, văn hóa truyền thông trong hoạt động báo chí vẫn còn có những hạn chế nhất định. Bằng phương pháp liên ngành văn hóa học và xã hội học văn hóa, bài viết tập trung làm sáng tỏ các vấn đề về văn hóa truyền thông, nhận diện các thành tố của văn hóa truyền thông trong hoạt động báo chí; đề xuất một số giải pháp để giải quyết những vấn đề đang đang đặt ra, nhằm nâng cao văn hóa truyền thông trong hoạt động báo chí ở Việt Nam hiện nay.

Từ khóa: hoạt động báo chí; văn hóa truyền thông; Việt Nam