

**THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN POLICY
COMMUNICATION IN VIETNAM**

***O PAPEL EDUCACIONAL DAS REDES SOCIAIS NA COMUNICAÇÃO DE
POLÍTICAS NO VIETNÃ***

***EL PAPEL EDUCATIVO DE LAS REDES SOCIALES EN LA COMUNICACIÓN DE
POLÍTICAS EN VIETNAM***

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ABSTRACT: Deeply aware of the advantages of social networks, the Government of Vietnam has soon used social networks as a new means of communication in the policy cycle. As a result, social networks have actively contributed to mobilizing people's participation in social management, creating people's trust in the government and social consensus. Social networks have played a certain role in policy communication. This study clearly shows the use of social networks in policy communication in Vietnam also has many limitations and inadequacies that need to be overcome soon. Based on studying state documents on policies, assessing the current situation of policy communication policies in recent years, which emphasizes the role of education of social networks; this study continues to clarify the educational role of social networks in policy communication, and at the same time recommends solutions to improve the quality of policy communication in the coming time.

KEYWORDS: Social network. Policy communication. Democratization. Social consensus.

RESUMO: Profundamente ciente das vantagens das redes sociais, o governo do Vietnã logo usou as redes sociais como um novo meio de comunicação no ciclo político. Como resultado, as redes sociais têm contribuído ativamente para mobilizar a participação das pessoas na gestão social, criando confiança das pessoas no governo e consenso social. As redes sociais têm desempenhado um certo papel na comunicação de políticas. Este estudo mostra claramente que o uso de redes sociais na comunicação de políticas no Vietnã também tem muitas limitações e inadequações que precisam ser superadas rapidamente. Baseado em estudo de documentos estaduais sobre políticas, avaliando a situação atual das políticas de comunicação política nos últimos anos, que enfatiza o papel da educação das redes sociais; este estudo continua a esclarecer o papel educacional das redes sociais na comunicação de políticas e, ao mesmo tempo, recomenda soluções para melhorar a qualidade desta nos próximos tempos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Rede social. Comunicação política. Democratização. Consenso social.

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RESUMEN: *Profundamente consciente de las ventajas de las redes sociales, el Gobierno de Vietnam pronto utilizó las redes sociales como un nuevo medio de comunicación en el ciclo de políticas. Como resultado, las redes sociales han contribuido activamente a movilizar la participación de las personas en la gestión social, generando confianza en el gobierno y consenso social. Las redes sociales han jugado un cierto papel en la comunicación política. Este estudio muestra claramente que, además de las ventajas, el uso de las redes sociales en la comunicación de políticas en Vietnam también tiene muchas limitaciones e insuficiencias que deben superarse en un futuro próximo. A partir del estudio de los documentos estatales sobre políticas, se evalúa la situación actual de las políticas de comunicación política en los últimos años, donde se destaca el papel de la educación de las redes sociales; este estudio continúa aclarando el papel educativo de las redes sociales en la comunicación de políticas y, al mismo tiempo, recomienda soluciones para mejorar la calidad de la comunicación de políticas en el futuro.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Red social. Comunicación política. Democratización. Consenso social.*

Introduction

The first social network to appear in Vietnam was Facebook in 2006. Up to now, Vietnam has hundreds of international social networks being used by the public. According to Digital 2021, the number of social network users in Vietnam as of January 2021 is 72 million. In which, the number of users on YouTube accounts for 92%, Facebook: 91.7%, Instagram: 53.5%, TikTok: 47.6% (VNETWORK, 2020).

Vietnam currently has more than 600 social networks of domestic organizations and businesses that have been licensed and are operating. As of January 2020, the total number of Vietnamese using social networks in the country is about 73 million. In which, Zalo has about 51.9 million, Mocha about 8.7 million, Gazo about 2.62 million, other social networks about 10 million users (VNETWORK, 2020).

Social networks have comprehensively and strongly impacted all areas of Vietnam's social life, including the field of media in general and policy communication in particular. Overcoming concerns about the negative effects of social networks, the Party and Government of Vietnam soon considered social networks as a tool in policy communication, contributing to speeding up the process of implementing civil rights. political life, building trust, and social consensus.

In the past, communication was mainly used in the policy implementation phase and was identified with propaganda. Currently, social networks are actively involved in all stages of the policy cycle. In particular, social networks have played a good role in detecting and reflecting the needs and aspirations of the people to policy-making agencies, participating in policy criticism and formulation, monitoring and evaluating the effective price of the policy.

Literature Review

In the world and in Vietnam, there are many research works on the advantages of social networks for political life in general and media activities in particular, some typical works are as follows:

The book "The culture of connectivity" by Jose Van Dijck, published in 2013 by Oxford University, has discussed quite deeply the nature and impacts of social networks on all areas of social life. In particular, the author has considered social networks as a resource to promote social development and that it is necessary to build a social network culture. The book "The Hybrid Media System" by author Andrew Chadwick, republished in 2017 by Oxford University, discusses the impact of social media on politics and power. In it, the author has pointed out the profound effects of social networks on presidential campaigns, on the press, parties, and government.

Thomas Friedman, the author of "The World is Flat", said that: On social networks, most users are more inclined to give their opinions than to listen and discuss, they seem to prefer shallow opinions over content. People log on to social networks to speak to everyone, not to discuss together. However, people are also willing to spend money to have access to reliable information, honestly reflected and analyzed, commented in a sharp, convincing way.

In his follow-up book "Thanks for being late" (2018), he addresses the role of social media and social media in social life from many different angles. In it, the author points out the strong effects of social networks on social psychology, forming virtual crowds and turning virtual crowds into actual crowds that have the power to change an entire regime. Politics is not only in one country but spread over a large area. Social networks also make it easy to create virtual crowds with characteristics that are not much different from real crowds. Crowd psychology is often characterized by irrationality, loss of control, extreme action, and unconsciousness. At the same time, they are very easily manipulated, hinted at by a few short, flowery sentences on social networks. By these means, netizens can gather people with similar interests and views through fan pages and forums, and thereby turn the crowd from the virtual network into an out-of-control crowd on the Internet. real life. Many netizens today like to become "keyboard heroes" and attack others or encourage others to attack individuals, organizations, and even state organizations.

According to the author, the public often believes in influential people, personal pages with a lot of followers such as KOLs, Vbloggers, hot bloggers, etc. Sometimes they trust them even more than state official information.

Author Araud Mercier in his book "Political Communication" asks whether the new media have a better impact on democracy and, indeed, can they contribute to the strengthening of democracy. owner or not. The authors made three postulates:

- New media are high-performance tools capable of promoting social progress and democracy.
- Internets and social networks correspond to a break in the history of dictatorships
- What is implied here is that other media are not as high-performing tools like the media, etc. The hopes of political freedoms extended by the younger generation are addressed by the younger generation. driven by the possibilities created by the internet and new media (MERCIER, 2020, p. 213).

Authors Jermy Heimans and Henry Timms (2019, p. 6) in the book "New Power", argue that: The role of social media has created a new kind of power, carved out of the closed old power, difficult to access, centered on the top and going in a top-down direction, power now is horizontal and bottom-up, created by many people. It is open, participatory, and peer-oriented. It goes from the bottom up and is widely distributed".

In Vietnam today, there are also many studies on the impact of social networks. Some typical books such as "Industrial Revolution 4.0 - Problems for Vietnam's socio-economic development and international integration" edited by Tran Thi Van Hoa, published in 2018, and the book "The Fourth Industrial Revolution - The Revolution of Convergence and Savings", by author Phan Xuan Dang, published in 2018 considered social networking as an element of the revolution. fourth industrial network. The two books mentioned quite clearly the origin and nature of the impact of social networks on people's lives. In general, the authors affirmed that social networks have both positive and negative impacts on all areas of social life.

The book "Social networks in the context of the development of Vietnam's information society - Theory, practice and experience" by two authors Pham Huy Ky and DO Thi Thu Hung (co-editor), published in 2019 is a book. The book presents quite fully and systematically the impacts of social networks on the fields of Vietnamese social life. According to the authors, social networks, especially Facebook, Twitter are becoming essential tools for many politicians. Social media is really important to politicians because it allows them to connect directly with the people without going through other traditional media like newspapers. So, they can proactively communicate their message. Social networks also help politicians effectively reach a larger number of people instead of just one group of people for each event.

Thanks to social networks, politicians also better understand people's thoughts, thereby helping them to have more appropriate directions and actions; at the same time, it also helps their politicians to be known to more people, helping them to build their own image in the public eye.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (2018) especially highlighted the impact of social media on politics in the current era. "The power of social media today is that it can point out to governments where they are going wrong and prevent them from diving in the wrong direction", he said. Many people refer to the Internet and social networks as the "5th power", after the four "powers" that have been "recognized" by the Western world: legislative, judicial, executive, and press powers. This "5th power" has become a great power, going beyond the administrative or technical measures of a particular country.

However, social media is also a source of much negative news, where people comment and share bad news causing many media crises. Social networks are also a source of tension and incitement to violence between ethnic and religious communities. Social media can be used as a warning or prevention tool, in military campaigns, in the war on terror, and as an institutional communication tool. It plays an important role in information warfare, cyber warfare. Protest the government continuously took place in the following countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya... from the beginning of 2011 that the press called "The "Arab Spring" is influenced by social media. The "yellow vest" protest movement in France in 2018; The protest movement on the streets of Hong Kong in 2020 all have the role of social networks, in which Facebook plays a key role in allowing people to use this platform to organize and plan protests. love.

This fact has become a global problem. As commented by J. Rappoport, a freelance investigative researcher and reporter, now living in San Diego, California (USA) published on the No more fake news page, said that on social networks, most of the billions of people who are daily

preoccupied with posting pictures of themselves, making short-sighted and shallow statements, or being turned into hypnotized subjects, caught up in a huge, global-scale straw, receiving fake news has been molded to appear important, sure, like the real thing. The passive mind will be even more passive to fake information born out of a virtual world that is perceived as real (HA, 2019).

Results and Discussion

Social networks have contributed to raising people's knowledge and promoting people's ownership of politics

The biggest advantage of social networks today is to provide an endless, multi-dimensional, fast, and timely information source for users. Therefore, together with the education, training, and mass communication system of the State, social networks become a "big school" providing information and knowledge to users. In other words, social networks make a positive contribution to the cause of raising people's knowledge in Vietnam. Social networks have become a tool for civilizing for ethnic groups in remote and isolated areas, overcoming obstacles of natural geography and economic difficulties. Social networks help people pay more attention to political issues. This is a good opportunity to mobilize the people to participate in the policy cycle.

Policy communication has traditionally been seen as imposing the will of state agencies. People do not have conditions to express their opinions or have no choice when receiving propaganda content. On the other hand, Vietnam belongs to the ethnic groups in East Asia under the influence of Confucianism, so people often lead a closed lifestyle, show little personal ego, and many other reasons that make the culture of political debate in the country. Vietnam is still very limited. Thanks to social networks, people can now express their opinions about the State's policies without going through any censorship. This is a manifestation of the democratization of the country's political life, creating favorable conditions for policy communication. According to the survey results, 76.4% of people surveyed confirmed that social networks make it easier for them to express their emotions and express their personal opinions.

Currently, in cyberspace, different social groups have formed. Many exchanges and debates within groups and between groups around socio-political issues help to raise people's awareness in many aspects. Many movements have great significance such as communication about Vietnam's sea - islands; supporting people in disaster-affected areas; Covid-19 pandemic prevention and control has been launched by social networks and spread widely in society

Social networks contribute to realizing the ideology of respecting the people and serving the people of the Party and the State of Vietnam

One of the lessons that the Communist Party of Vietnam has learned from the VI Congress is the idea that "people are the root". The document of the 13th National Party Congress continues to affirm the lesson: "all undertakings and policies must really derive from the people's requirements, aspirations, legitimate and legitimate rights and interests." (COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM, 2012, p. 96). The State of Vietnam is a socialist rule of law, of the people, by the people, for the people. The Party and State always uphold the role of the people according to the motto "people know, people discuss, people do, people monitor, and people benefit". Social networks are a tool to help these views and ideas step by step become reality in life.

Thanks to the information-sharing function of social networks, nowadays, most of the concerns, frustrations, and conflicts that arise in life are shared publicly by netizens and receive a lot of interaction and access. Farmers' frustrations about the abuse of power by grassroots officials, inadequacies in land policy; issues of salary, income, health insurance, social insurance, working hours, shift meals, labor relations of workers; The issue of appointment and promotion of cadres, salary policy, social evils... are all posted on social networks. Most of the "hot spots" in the whole country are videotaped by people, calling each other to share on their accounts, pages, Facebook groups, YouTube etc. for the purpose of letting superior agencies know and get into the solution quickly. Many ministries, sectors, and localities have actively assigned staff to monitor and capture the situation of public opinion on social networks, thereby advising and proposing policies for timely resolution.

Recently, the phenomenon of school violence, child sexual abuse, violence against women, violations of traffic laws, violations of regulations and standards in the appointment of cadres, etc. have all been reported on social networks. Associations originate and become a hot issue in cyberspace and are quickly resolved by the authorities at all levels by policies and other measures. According to the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, trade unions at all levels have: "Actively participated in workers' associations, groups, and Fan pages to promptly grasp thoughts and aspirations, especially hot issues, and develop them in a timely manner. Born in labor relations at the enterprise, thereby proposing guidelines and policies to suit workers" (VIETNAM GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR, 2019)

Social networks have well promoted the role of policy critics, contributing to the process of social democratization

Vietnam has committed to implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966. To fulfill that commitment, the 2013 Constitution stipulates: “Citizens have the right to participate in the management of the state and society, participate in discussions and make recommendations to state agencies on local, local and national issues”. One of the contents of "participating in state management" is citizen participation. Social criticism is a high development step in the form of citizens actively participating and giving comments in the process of policymaking and implementation to which Vietnam has been committed.

In recent years, governments at all levels in Vietnam have promoted the role of people's supervision and criticism, in which social networks are considered an important channel. People, with civic responsibility and constructive spirit, quickly and directly express their opinions on the contents, tasks, and decisions on socio-economic fields through social networks; law enforcement situation; consultation on reform of administrative procedures of the country and locality; reflects the moral cultivation and training of cadres and civil servants.

Typical cases such as the project to cut down 6,700 trees by the Hanoi government in 2015, the National Assembly discussed the promulgation of the Law on special administrative-economic units in 2018, the draft increase university tuition fees. 2020 has become a topic of discussion on social networks. As a result, the authorities have considered canceling and adjusting the policies above mentioned.

The social network promotes the transition from propaganda to policy communication

Previously, communication in the policy implementation phase was usually one-way from the top, in which the press was the main means to bring government policies to the people. At present, state policies are disseminated through fan pages of state newspapers and spread quickly to the public throughout the country. Most of the official media of the Party, the State, and socio-political organizations have fan pages on social networks to quickly bring information to the masses, especially young people. Particularly, Vietnam Television Station has 40 fan page pages and 36 pages of affiliates. Voice of Vietnam Radio, regional and local television stations all have from 01 to 02 fan pages. Major newspapers such as People's Online, People's Army Online, Communist Magazine, Propaganda Magazine, Communist Party of Vietnam Electronic Newspaper, etc. all have fan pages.

The State's policies that reach many people on social networking sites set up by the authorities have markedly changed in terms of content and form of messages. They are expressed through specific events and people, current, vivid, easy to remember, easy to understand, through images, videos, etc. creating access, connection, and exchange in the community, receiving a large and positive response from the people. Through the survey, 55.8% of respondents said that information on social networks is faster, more dimensional, and more attractive than traditional information.

Most localities in the country have created fan pages on social networks to communicate local socio-economic achievements, products, cuisine, landscapes, historical sites, traditions. The glorious system, good examples, good business model, etc. create a movement to emulate, learn from each other in labor, work, study, etc.

Thanks to social networks, the two-way dialogue method in communication has been used more commonly. By taking online classes, live, or recording video playback on the YouTube network, subjects can receive several direct and quick responses. Through social networks, communication officers promptly answered the concerns and problems of interested people.

The form of communication has also changed through the organization of online conferences, group exchanges, sending documents via social networks, and organizing learning contests that have been held regularly. Many rallies, festivals, visits to historical sites have been posted on social networks by Livestream users with vivid, authentic images and sounds that have a strong impact and receive attention of the community.

In fact, many “traditional” press agencies in Vietnam, such as printed newspapers, have put content from paper newspapers to online versions. Likewise, radio and television stations also put channels of program content on websites to serve audiences, along with the rapid delivery of news that occurs on websites to compete through information. news with other media (HANG, 2020).

In the prevention and control of the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred at the end of 2019 until now, the fan pages of organizations and localities have done a great job communicating about epidemic prevention and control measures on social networks. Along with that, the guiding documents on epidemic prevention and control of the central and local levels, the epidemic situation, the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and especially the epidemic situation related to the locality, The news on collectives and individuals with good examples and good deeds in epidemic prevention and control in the area is constantly updated, making an important contribution to the successful control of this dangerous disease.

Changing perceptions about the role of social networks in policy communication

Social networking is an achievement of mankind, along with the benefits it brings, it also entails many undesirable consequences. In terms of scale, speed, richness, diversity, and multidimensionality of information on social networks, it is very noticeable. However, social networks, which are technological products from developed countries, are difficult to manage. On social networks, they often spread a lot of bad news, fake news, and unverified news, which easily leads to apprehension and anxiety listening, probing, even discriminating, banning from leaders and managers. Only when the Party committees and authorities have the right awareness will they pay attention and create conditions for the application of social networks in policy communication.

In the new context, the perception of leaders, managers, and direct communicators needs to change. Leading and managing agencies need to renew their thinking and actions, especially proactively forecasting the situation so that they can adjust policies in line with the development of information technology. Improving knowledge, skills of synthesizing, analyzing, and building information content is an important requirement for media workers. Therefore, it is the responsibility of policy communicators to provide authentic and convincing information. The ability to organize and administer the object's ideology must also be respected. Must have knowledge of technology, especially information technology, and future development trends of information technology (DUC, 2019, p. 155).

Social networking is a new technology and social trend, which is developing at breakneck speed. This is an inevitable trend that requires a change in thinking, awareness, and practical actions of Party committees and authorities at all levels for policy communication to perform their roles and responsibilities more effectively.

When there was no internet and social networks, people had only one source of information, which was from the media of the Party, the state, and political and social organizations. Previously, communication officers often only grasped a one-way source of information from the top down, in which most of the information was positive, standard, and stereotyped information. At the same time, their job is also to spread the message according to the unified direction from above. Now, this has changed. In addition to the official information flow, communication staff has access to a richer, more up-to-date, and multi-dimensional information source.

The social network is considered a virtual society, but policy communication on social networks requires the real qualifications and capacity of propaganda officers. If

communication officers do not have faith, enthusiasm, and responsibility for the common good, they will not have the courage and resolute attitude in the face of malicious, multi-dimensional information, no passion, and creativity in their work. If morality and lifestyle are not pure and healthy, media officers cannot become KOLs leading public opinion and cannot survive the "stoned" of netizens. Without capacity and skills, communication staff cannot create messages with rich, vivid, and attractive expressions and cannot use all the benefits of social networks in policy communication.

The characteristics of information on social networks are fast and abundant, which requires communication messages to be short and prominent. Deep but lengthy speeches and articles are not for the masses on social networks. Simple, patterned information will be processed by artificial intelligence and robots. Short, simple, vivid, convincing, colorful, emotional messages will survive and prevail because that's what robots are still a long way from being able to do. In addition, public opinion-oriented official information, which mainly appears on state television and printed newspapers, has very little impact on young people, because the source of information reaching them is mainly through smartphones. Netizens are mostly young people, with little interest in politics, so policy messages will face great competition from information on social networks which is short, specific, emotional, so this is a huge challenge for policy communication

If the communicator does not turn the policy into communication messages suitable for the network environment, it is very difficult to reach the audience. Therefore, it is necessary to turn policy messages into short videos and animations; funny text messages; vote with emoticons on Facebook; photo albums; reviews, memes, inspired by famous people, from movies, famous song lyrics.

In terms of form, social networks should not be considered as copies of official newspapers, because currently, Vietnam is implementing a plan in the direction of reducing the number of press agencies. Therefore, the information on the newspaper's fan page needs to be diverse and vivid, suitable for young people's psychology, and a multimedia platform to help users access information easily and conveniently.

Improving and effectively using fan page pages really become the extension arm of the mainstream press. Press agencies must actively build and create a source of positive information to post on fan pages. Based on surveying the needs of the recipients of information, capture the issues of interest to readers to provide correct and relevant information to that need. It is necessary to actively create information about new, positive things in all fields, be topical, honest, objective, bring educational and human values, and

orient public opinion. Must select featured articles and images in the mainstream press to edit briefly, in accordance with the language of netizens to post on fan pages and share to groups and communities to spread positive information.

The mainstream press needs to create an attractive and new multimedia news package in terms of both form and content, such as videos, songs, infographics, news in line with events (Timeline). In the future, with the rapid development of the Industry 4.0 era, the form of social media reporting must also develop towards new platforms such as smart wearables. such as fitness bracelets, headphones, smartwatches, smart glasses etc. These new platforms will change the way journalism provides content, the way journalists report or tell stories. At the same time, Vietnamese social media must seize the opportunity to pioneer in the digital era, including Big Data (big data), AI (artificial intelligence), and robot reporters, etc.

Innovating mechanisms, policies, facilities, technical and technological solutions to facilitate policy communication on social networks

In terms of human resources, it is necessary to pay attention to strengthening the training and fostering of journalists in terms of political bravery, professional capacity, technology, ethics, sense of professional mission well implement regulations on responsibilities and standards when participating in social networks.

Another problem posed in the technology platform is that the competition between domestic and foreign social networks is still low. In fact, at present, more than 600 social networks in the country have been licensed to operate, but the number of users is low, the level of impact and social influence is not high. Although the number of foreign social networking sites that provide cross-border access to Vietnam is small, the number of users is very high (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, 2017). High impact, high level of impact, and social influence. Therefore, more than ever, to be successful, social networks need to have a supportive ecosystem. It must be an ecosystem of Vietnamese digital products.

Technically, it is necessary to continue to invest in and apply new technologies for press agencies. Focusing on innovating and improving interactive software and interfaces to keep up with modern devices such as smartphones, mobile devices, and other new technology devices, creating favorable conditions for many netizens, especially young people can easily access, exploit, search, share and interact with official information of the press. In addition, it is necessary to open more fan pages and blogs on social networks in the direction of increasing quantity, ensuring quality with many addresses to create many different contact channels, focusing on social networks many people used Facebook, YouTube, Google,

Yahoo, Twitter, Instagram, Zalo etc. At the same time, constantly improving existing pages and addresses, taking investment measures, building images, improving quality and prestige Trust pages with focus and focus to increase their attractiveness and attract many visitors.

In addition, there should be coordination between the Government of Vietnam and other countries in the world and with major foreign social network service providers in preventing, handling, and eliminating the risks that social networks pose to society can bring.

Conclusion

Social networking is a step forward of human intelligence, a scientific and technological achievement of mankind. The birth and development of social networks strongly influenced all areas of social life, including policy communication.

As a new and modern means of communication, social networks have also become a means and tool for communication in general and policy communication. Therefore, taking advantage of and overcoming the negative impacts of social networks in policy communication is an objective and irreversible necessity.

To make good use of the advantages of social networks, governments and authorities at all levels must continue to renew their thinking and unify their awareness of the role of social networks in society in general and in policy communication in general, actively innovate the content and methods of policy communication, pay attention to and create favorable conditions for policy communication to keep up with the strong development of social networks as well as the practical situation of the whole country and in each locality.

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