

Policy Communication in the Context of Digital Transformation in Vietnam to Successfully Implement the 13th Party Congress Resolution

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Abstract: *The Political Report of the Central Committee of the Party at the 13th National Congress sets out the direction: “Building a professional, humane, and modern journalism and communication system... Enhancing the management and development of media and information types on the Internet. Resolutely fighting and eliminating harmful, distorted, reactionary products and information that negatively affect political and social stability, and traditional customs... Focusing on developing information and telecommunications infrastructure, creating a foundation for national digital transformation, and gradually developing a digital economy and society”⁽¹⁾. To successfully implement the 13th Party Congress Resolution, this article aims to clarify the understanding of policy communication in the context of digital transformation; examine the current state of policy communication during digital transformation in Vietnam; and propose tasks and solutions to strengthen policy communication in this context in the near future.*

Keywords: *policy communication; digital transformation; current state and causes; tasks and solutions.*

1. Understanding policy communication in the context of digital transformation

‘Communication’ is usually defined as the process of exchanging information and interacting between two or more people to enhance understanding and perceptions, leading to behavior and attitude adjustments that align with the development needs of individuals, groups, communities, and society as a whole⁽²⁾. ‘Policy’ is defined as a set of measures taken by the state in general and the government in particular, institutionalized and ensured for implementation to address social issues and promote social development⁽³⁾.

Based on these concepts of communication and policy, and the views of various authors, we concur with author Nguyen Dinh Thanh, that “policy communication is the continuous process of exchanging information

*about state policies to implement the Party's guidelines over a specific period and in particular fields, aiming to enhance mutual understanding among social actors, contribute to changing perceptions, and lead to behavior and attitude adjustments that meet the development needs of individuals, groups, communities, and society as a whole*⁷⁽⁴⁾.

Digital transformation is another concept that emerged in the era of the Internet and is increasingly becoming popular, describing the application of digital technology or digitalization to all fields, including policy communication. It fundamentally transforms the elements constituting communication activities, enhances interaction efficiency, optimizes work performance, and delivers highly practical and swift value to communication audiences.

Digital transformation in policy communication primarily involves using digital tools and solutions to innovate models, methods of operation, production, and content distribution, optimizing the organizational model of policy communication agencies. Essentially, it means converting paper-based information and manual processes into digital formats and using digital tools to automate and improve current working methods. This is considered the initial step in the digital transformation process, which many policy communication agencies in Vietnam are currently implementing, contributing to innovation and enhancing operational efficiency, especially in the business activities of policy communication products and services. However, merely investing in technology to digitalize existing functions and processes in policy communication is insufficient to genuinely transform a business unit or the entire field of policy communication.

Digital Transformation in policy communication involves implementing a series of technological and human changes to restructure how policy communication operates, thereby creating new opportunities and value in policy communication. Based on digitized data and processes from the environment where policy communication activities occur, digital technologies are used to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions to fundamentally transform operational methods and business models, and provide new values to the customers of business units. In other words, digital transformation is often understood as the process of shifting from a traditional business model to a digital business by applying new technologies such as Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), and Cloud Computing to transform management, leadership, workflows, and corporate culture, creating new

products, services, values, and consumption methods. Playing both a role in information dissemination and orientation, as well as becoming an active participant in digital transformation, policy communication can even develop into a digital media economy. Currently, policy communication has many advantages but also numerous challenges. In the digital transformation effort, policy communication plays a crucial role, with the mission to disseminate the Party's policies and the State's laws, fostering social consensus and trust, and creating internal momentum accurately, fully, and promptly for the successful national digital transformation. At the same time, as a sector in society, policy communication must also undergo digital transformation in line with the general development trend, potentially evolving into a digital media economy sector.⁽⁵⁾

2. Current state of policy communication in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam

Digital transformation is fundamentally about the degree of information transformation, and when discussing information, it inherently pertains to the core function of policy communication. Policy communication and mass media serve as intermediaries, acting as a binding force connecting individuals within society. Modern society cannot function without policy communication. In other words, all areas of modern life requires the connectivity provided by media as an intermediary in the information society. Thus, policy communication must be **the key conduit** and driving force for all activities. However, in the current context, policy communication seems to be positioned secondarily.

Although the digital transformation process in policy communication in Vietnam has achieved significant results, it is still slower than the general trend. There is still hesitation in implementing digital transformation in policy communication. Digital transformation not only involves changing processes and machinery but also transforming people. Digital transformation in general, and specifically in policy communication, is a new and challenging program of action. Due to the ever-changing nature of the media field, constructing mechanisms and management policies that keep pace with reality requires a "Sandbox" approach: *"If we don't know how to manage something, we don't manage it, allowing it to develop autonomously, but within a certain space and time, so issues can be revealed clearly, usually not as many as initially predicted by managers. Then, policies and management regulations are formed. This approach is suitable for the Fourth Industrial*

Revolution, appropriate for welcoming new business models, and accepting disruptive innovations⁽⁶⁾.

The reasons for the slow implementation of digital transformation in policy communication are as follows:

First, there is a lack of understanding regarding the role and necessity of the digital transformation process. Digital transformation is an inevitable trend in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, not all those responsible in policy communication units fully comprehend the role and benefits of digital transformation. This is one of the reasons why the digital transformation process in Vietnam's policy communication agencies has been slow. Most media and press agencies are only at the initial stage of applying information technology in their operational processes.

Second, there are challenges related to the quantity and quality of human resources for the digital transformation process in the field of policy communication. The role of human resources, especially high-quality technology personnel, is crucial in digital transformation. However, this is currently a major barrier that makes it difficult for Vietnamese businesses and policy communication agencies to undergo digital transformation. It is also a bottleneck for the development of the Vietnamese information technology sector. In 2020, Vietnam faced a shortage of 400,000 IT personnel, and this number was around 500,000 in 2021. Successful digital transformation requires not only skilled reporters and editors but also those with an understanding of new technologies. This is a weakness in the training provided by the system of policy communication training institutions in Vietnam. Currently, only about 30% of IT graduates meet the requirements of businesses for digital transformation.

Third, the investment resources of many policy communication agencies are a significant challenge for the digital transformation process. Along with the shift to market mechanisms in the production and business activities of the economy, policy communication has also made some transitions but at a slow pace. The number of self-financing media agencies is not large. According to the Press Department, in 2019, only 39% of press agencies were fully self-financed, while 36% were partially self-financed. Difficulties in revenue generation directly impact investments in infrastructure renewal, technical solutions, and the implementation of digital transformation.

Fourth, the institutionalization of viewpoints and policies into specific regulations for digital transformation activities is still slow and does not meet

the necessary requirements. For instance, there have been no innovations in financial mechanisms or technology startups, and there is a lack of regulations on issues related to assets and investments. In digital transformation, data is a crucial resource. However, whether data is considered a trade secret and how it should be protected is not clearly defined. The protection of various types of intellectual property in the digital economy, how to protect and exploit user data, and other related issues need to be institutionalized. To promote journalism based on digital technology, there needs to be a verified large data source and mechanisms for policy communication agencies to connect, exploit, and enrich this digital data source. Currently, there is still a separation of data sources between different sectors and ministries within the economy.

Fifth, the current legal framework reveals limitations and inadequacies compared to the changes happening, gradually becoming loopholes or hindrances to innovative development. Many researchers and leaders argue that it is necessary to accelerate the revision of the Press Law to encompass a broader scope for state management in policy communication and communication suited to new conditions (for example, there should be clear distinctions and quantifications between electronic newspapers and magazines, regulations on the depository regime for special publications, newsletters, and general information websites). This will create an institutional framework for developing policy communication, including media on the Internet.

In the current development of the information space, protecting personal information and the relationship between personal information and policy communication must simultaneously rely on a system of multiple laws, such as the Cyber Information Security Law, Civil Code, Consumer Protection Law, Telecommunications Law, and Electronic Transactions Law. However, these laws currently address the issue from different perspectives and are not synchronized. Therefore, in the context of new media, facing challenges regarding information security in general and personal information security on the Internet in particular, there is a need to study and enact a law on personal information protection. Currently, around 40 countries worldwide have enacted legal regulations on protecting personal information online.

Talking about digital transformation in policy communication also involves the renewal of policy communication technology infrastructure. Promoting new technology infrastructure must be based on appropriate

technology laws. Thus, it is necessary to expedite the process of amending the Telecommunications Law and quickly develop the Digital Technology Industry Law. After more than 10 years of application, the Telecommunications Law has shown some outdated aspects that need to be adjusted to resolve implementation difficulties and meet the development trends of new service types and business models. This also includes promoting the formation of new telecommunications infrastructure combined with other technical infrastructures to serve the development needs of society and the digital media environment, where policy communication plays a crucial role.

Sixth, the success and effectiveness of digital transformation depends on ensuring information security in the context of the policy communication market. Updating advanced solutions, from technology and services to people and processes, to ensure information safety and security is crucial. In the field of policy communication, if information security is not guaranteed, it can lead to data loss, financial damage, unauthorized use, interface changes, distortion of information content, public confusion, and reduced public trust in the Party's and State's policies for national development.

3. Tasks and solutions to enhance policy communication in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam in the near future

To enhance policy communication in the context of digital transformation, the focus should be on the following fundamental tasks and solutions:

First, increase information dissemination and communication to raise awareness and clarify the content, role, and policies of the Party and State on digital transformation in general, as well as in the field of policy communication, specifically to foster determination and consensus. Digital transformation is the path for policy communication to develop and fulfil its functions in the digital era. Policy communication units need to intensify this process, considering digital transformation as a central development strategy and forming a digital transformation strategy suitable to the conditions and common development goals. Of course, digital transformation in policy communication is not only the responsibility of policy communication units but also a collective effort involving the entire society, from state management agencies, governing bodies, and the social community, including beneficiaries of policy communication products and services.

Second, develop a "Digital Policy Communication" training program. The issue with digital policy communication, converged policy communication,

or multimedia policy communication is not merely about technology, but about people. Two core factors related to people in digital transformation are public demand and the capacity of information providers. Among these factors, public demand is evident through recent surveys on the usage of various platforms for receiving information. The President of the Vietnam Journalists Association, Le Quoc Minh, has affirmed that the core goal of digital transformation is “*to better serve readers*”. The remaining issue lies in the capability, mindset, and habits of the information providers, specifically the leaders of policy communication agencies and the policy communication entities themselves, as well as the journalists providing information to the public.

To have a professional policy communication entity that effectively meets the development needs of policy communication and the public depends on policy communication training institutions, professional training units, and the policy communication entities themselves. Among these factors, the role of policy communication training institutions is very important.

Third, invest resources in modernizing infrastructure, ensuring security, and creating favorable conditions for working in the digital environment. Ensuring the security and safety of business operations in the digital environment, in addition to legal regulations, awareness, and the skills of journalists, requires modern technological infrastructure. Therefore, it is necessary to exploit resources and invest in modernizing infrastructure, while also selecting reputable partners for security when renting infrastructure.

Fourth, research and build a regulatory system related to the business activities of policy communication in the digital environment. Digital transformation is not only a technological revolution but also an institutional revolution. Institutions need to take a proactive stance and be flexibly adjusted to embrace the new: new technologies, new products, new services, and new models. Business on digital platforms has its own distinct characteristics, thus requiring appropriate regulations to pave the way for the development of new models, new products, and services, as well as to establish compatible communication mechanisms regarding content, finance, and ownership rights in the digital environment. As this is a new field, practical experience is needed to formulate appropriate regulations. Therefore, initially, based on foreign experience and the specific characteristics of the Vietnamese market, pilot models can be implemented, followed by summarizing experiences

to develop suitable regulations that ensure the harmonization of interests among market entities.

Fifth, establish a “Digital Transformation Evaluation Index for Policy Communication”. Without a scientific foundation and practical relevance, policy communication digital transformation activities may be merely superficial or promotional. Hence, there must be a system of verification to determine the effectiveness of digital transformation for each policy communication agency and the entire policy communication system. This system would identify the level of achievement and the limitations that need improvement, thus guiding the issuance of appropriate directions and policies. In this regard, the digital transformation evaluation index for policy communication would serve as a crucial indicator to assess the effectiveness of digital transformation and identify areas for improvement. One of the requirements of the Vietnam policy communication digital transformation strategy vision 2030 is to establish suitable evaluation criteria, indices, and recommendations. Initially, the synthesis of information and the construction of annual digital transformation assessment reports must be carried out systematically, objectively, and fairly. It should not be a mere ranking operation but rather help formulate specific recommendations for state management agencies to adjust and promote the successful implementation of the digital transformation strategy.

Sixth, establish a “Policy Communication Digital Transformation Practice Space”. Annually, the CPV Central Committee’s Publicity and Education Commission and the Ministry of Information and Communications can coordinate with various organizations, departments, and sectors to organize major forums gathering many policy communication managers, policy communication analysts, and technology experts. State management agencies in policy communication should pay more attention to the idea of collaborating with current policy communication training centers in the North, Central, and South regions to develop practical, innovative models for policy communication. This investment is for both the present and future generations.

Instead of solely relying on public budget sources for investing in equipment and infrastructure, a mechanism for socialization could be established with the participation of technology giants to leverage the latest equipment systems. Rather than depending on technology personnel from outside sources, retraining and providing lifelong learning opportunities in

the digital environment for the large workforce in policy communication today could be explored.

Seventh, implement digital transformation and new technology applications in policy communication activities. Digitizing documents, materials, and multimedia publications is a key output of the project for storage in the national shared database. Enhancements and additional content should be developed to maximize the utilization of digitized data (multilingualism, creation of supplementary electronic publications), aiming to build a policy information ecosystem in the online environment. Practical applications such as virtual reality, augmented reality, 3D websites, models, and apps should be employed to provide interactive experiences, gradually increasing public awareness, maximizing interest, and creating impressions to encourage public participation in propagating human rights achievements and promoting the nation. Applying digital technology in monitoring information on the internet to timely detect and analyze information streams for research, forecasting, and advising authorized agencies on coping measures is essential. Proactive communication, information guidance, and the fight against fake news and malicious information infringement on human rights in Vietnam should also be prioritized. Establishing and operating a policy database to serve the storage, connection, sharing, and efficient utilization of policy communication products⁽⁸⁾ should also be emphasized.

Eighth, The Ministry of Information and Communications takes the lead in promoting digital transformation in policy communication. The Ministry of Information and Communications, in coordination with relevant ministries, sectors, agencies, organizations, and localities, directs and guides press agencies and information systems to innovate forms and means of communication, promoting the application of technology and digital platforms in policy communication activities. Collaborating with ministries, committees, sectors, and localities to direct press agencies and information systems in renewing methods, content, and forms, enhancing the application of modern technology to improve the effectiveness of policy communication. Working in conjunction with the CPV Central Committee's Publicity and Education Commission, the Vietnam Journalists Association, and relevant ministries, committees, sectors, and localities to closely manage information, press, and social media activities; rectifying and promptly addressing violations in information and press activities, as

well as on the internet. Coordinating with the Ministry of Public Security and relevant ministries, sectors, and agencies to build strong information channels on social media platforms in multiple languages to proactively combat malicious information and safeguard national sovereignty and cybersecurity in cyberspace. Utilizing techniques and technologies to support the detection and handling of violations in press and communication activities.

Ninth, press agencies actively adapt to new media, diversify their methods and content of communication to effectively serve the mission of safeguarding the homeland and enhancing the nation's international position. They closely combine domestic and foreign information in the press and media that aligns with the interests of the country and its people. Ensuring a good amount of positive information about social life is the primary flow. People's newspapers, People's Army newspapers, People's Police newspapers, Vietnam Television, Voice of Vietnam, and Vietnam News Agency are leading agencies tasked with constructing in-depth communication forms regarding the mission of protecting the homeland, such as special sections, columns, and key communication articles. Strengthening information and communication on social media platforms, basic information systems, and new media platforms./.

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