

The Impact of Digital Transformation and Current Requirements for External Communication in Protecting Vietnam's Maritime Sovereignty

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Abstract: *In recent years, external communication has played a significant role in protecting Vietnam's maritime sovereignty as well as enhancing Vietnam's position on the international stage. The current context of digital transformation has had a strong impact, necessitating new requirements for external communication to protect Vietnam's maritime sovereignty. In promoting the role of external communication, it is necessary to raise awareness among stakeholders regarding the importance of external communication, boosting digital transformation, and diversifying methods of external communication to further protect Vietnam's maritime sovereignty.*

Keywords: *digital transformation, external communication, protection of Vietnam's maritime sovereignty.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, external communication has played a significant role in protecting Vietnam's maritime sovereignty as well as enhancing Vietnam's position on the international stage. Entering the third decade of the 21st century, the impact of digital transformation has created both opportunities and challenges for external communication in protecting Vietnam's maritime sovereignty. Digital transformation also poses requirements and necessitates finding suitable and effective strategies and solutions for external communication to protect Vietnam's maritime sovereignty.

2. The impact of digital transformation on external communication in protecting Vietnam's maritime sovereignty

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is occurring on an increasingly large and profound, indeed, global scale, deeply influencing the development of humanity. Rapid technological breakthroughs in many fields, such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, the Internet of Things, robotics, 3D printing, and nanotechnology, have all brought about significant changes in living quality, productivity, and business operations.

“Digital transformation is often understood as the process of changing from traditional operating models to using digital technology by applying new technologies such as big data, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing to change management, leadership, workflows, and the culture of an organization”⁽¹⁾.

With increasing internet speeds as well as continuously improving mobile devices and modern technology software, social media communication is increasingly prevailing over traditional media. Due to the advantages of speed and information richness gained through digital transformation, the ability to access information and attract the public to follow information about maritime sovereignty globally and domestically is becoming easier and more convenient. According to Digital’s statistics, as of January 2023, Vietnam has 79.3 million internet users, equivalent to 79.1% of the total population, an increase of 5.3 million people (an increase of 7.3%) compared to 2022. There are 70 million Vietnamese social media users. The number of mobile devices in Vietnam is currently 161.6 million, meaning each Vietnamese person owns an average of 1.64 mobile devices (Vietnam Digital Report 2023).

In Vietnam, alongside the rapid development of the internet and the benefits of digital transformation and information technology application, the country also faces many risks and challenges due to hostile forces exploiting cyberspace for terrorism, subversion, implementing “peaceful evolution” schemes, and the spreading of false and harmful information. Currently, hostile and reactionary forces are actively exploiting cyberspace to conduct activities to undermine ideological foundations, aiming to carry out the strategic scheme of “peaceful evolution,” and opposing Vietnam. They mainly use social media, especially Facebook and YouTube, to propagate, destroy ideological foundations, promote “self-evolution,” and “self-transformation” internally, gradually implementing the goal of changing the political regime in our country. In 2020, the Ministry of Public Security detected over 3,000 websites with harmful content, including 31 websites, blogs, 55 YouTube channels, 49 fanpages, 765 Facebook accounts, 149 extremist opposing groups, posting over 800,000 articles, videos, and clips with harmful content. During important political events of the country, hostile forces continually exploit cyberspace to propagate, destroy, and spread wrong and hostile views to oppose our Party and State⁽²⁾.

In reality, Vietnam is a country with fast internet development in the region and relatively high information security assurance. *According to the International Telecommunication Union's report in 2021, Vietnam ranked 25th out of 194 countries and territories, 7th in the Asia-Pacific region, and 4th in ASEAN in terms of cybersecurity*⁽³⁾. However, Vietnam still has limitations and weaknesses in network security and safety. There is a risk of state secrets being leaked through cyberspace. In 2021, the Chief of A05 Department of the Ministry of Public Security discovered 30 cases of state secrets leaking, involving 202 documents. Authorities recorded over 8 million cybersecurity alerts, including over 2,700 attacks targeting domestic information or portal websites⁽⁴⁾. Additionally, the security system for providing telecommunications and internet services is outdated and too slowly upgraded, leading to inadequate information security when using devices and software provided and installed by foreign entities. *According to the Vietnam Computer Emergency Response Team (VNCERT), millions of malware attacks target Vietnamese computers annually, with thousands of new computer viruses appearing and hundreds of websites of agencies and enterprises being attacked and infiltrated*⁽⁵⁾. In 2022 alone, Kaspersky detected and blocked a total of 41,989,163 different online threats from the internet on the computers of KSN participants in Vietnam⁽⁶⁾.

Furthermore, the ethical degradation of a segment of officials and the public has caused network effects that significantly influence the behavior of a portion of young people; the current legal framework does not fully meet the requirements for preventing, combating, and handling violations of law in using cyberspace.

In this context, Vietnam needs a new approach to social media, not merely managing it, but actively using and promoting it as an information channel and media tool to enhance the quality and effectiveness of external communication in protecting maritime sovereignty in the new situation.

3. Requirements for external communication in protecting maritime sovereignty in the context of digital transformation

First, in the context of digital transformation, the application of information technology, digital technology, and new media is an objective necessity. Social media - *new media*, with its advantages in form, speed, information richness, accessibility, and public attraction, has become

an increasingly significant information channel, gradually changing the traditional mindset about external communication in protecting maritime sovereignty. With diverse and rich targets and audiences, external communication on maritime sovereignty on social media requires legitimacy, steadfastness in stance, and a flexibility and softness in the way information is conveyed.

Second, social media is user-generated content, making it difficult for authorities to monitor and lacking content quality control. Even unverified information that has not been agreed upon by event participants can spread and negatively impact stakeholders, even affecting the national position and interests. Digital transformation has been facilitated, but security issues are always a top concern in external communication to protect maritime sovereignty; technological security vulnerabilities can cause data leakages and be stolen easily stolen by hackers. Therefore, ensuring information and data security is essential in external communication for protecting maritime sovereignty. Besides, information security with manifestations such as “information war” and “cyber war” also creates risks of distorted and false information, causing internal leadership divisions, eroding public trust, leading to misalignment of external communication content on maritime sovereignty.

Third, in the context of digital transformation, exploiting the strong development of cyberspace, hostile forces and political opportunists continually distort the Party and State’s policies, including external communication to protect maritime sovereignty. This poses requirements such as: 1) External communication for protecting maritime sovereignty needs to be timely, accurate, and mainstream public opinion, preventing gaps for adverse elements to exploit social media, negatively impacting communication content; 2) External communication for protecting maritime sovereignty must be creatively deployed, avoiding “stereotypical” information; 3) The development of digital media and social networks has increased the risk of fake news, so external communication must quickly engage public opinion and counter false and distorted information from hostile forces; 4) External communication for protecting maritime sovereignty must utilize and promote the strengths of digital technology by implementing new, modern communication methods that meet the demands of technology users; 5) Ensuring information security in external communication.

4. Conclusion

External communication is crucial in protecting Vietnam's maritime sovereignty. The current context of digital transformation poses new requirements for external communication to protect Vietnam's maritime sovereignty. To promote the role of external communication today, it is necessary to recognize its importance and have solutions to boost digital transformation while ensuring information security in external communication to protect maritime sovereignty.

(1) Đỗ Thị Hùng Thúy, Doctoral Thesis on External communication through organizing external events in Vietnam today.

(2) <https://tuyengiao.vn/bao-ve-nen-tang-tu-tuong-cua-dang/bao-ve-an-ninh-quoc-gia-tren-khong-gian-mang-trong-boi-canhh-cuoc-cach-mang-cong-nghiep-lan-thu-tu-theo-dinh-huong-dai-137538>.

(3) <https://thanhtra.com.vn/chinh-tri/doi-noi/con-tinh-trang-lo-lot-bi-mat-nha-nuoc-195911.html>.

(4) <https://antoanthongtin.vn/an-toan-thong-tin/bo-cong-an-phat-hien-30-vu-ro-ri-lo-lot-bi-mat-nha-nuoc-107746>.

(5) <https://tuyengiao.vn/bao-ve-nen-tang-tu-tuong-cua-dang/bao-ve-an-ninh-quoc-gia-tren-khong-gian-mang-trong-boi-canhh-cuoc-cach-mang-cong-nghiep-lan-thu-tu-theo-dinh-huong-dai-137538>.

(6) <https://kaspersky.nts.com.vn/cac-moi-de-doa-truc-tuyen-tai-viet-nam-giam-manh-trong-nam-2022>.