

Communicating Vietnam's National Image through historical events

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Abstract: *Based on the Strategy for International Communication and Promotion of Vietnam's National Image for the 2026–2030 period, with a vision to 2045, this article examines the role and current state of communication surrounding historical commemorative events in shaping Vietnam's national image. Drawing on theories of national image and communication studies, the research employs a quantitative analytical approach, with a focus on two representative case studies: the A50 and A80 commemorative activities in 2025. The findings reveal three prominent trends: (1) the increasing visibility of Vietnam in international media; (2) a shift from the transmission of historical information toward a “nation storytelling” model; and (3) the emergence of a multi-platform digital communication ecosystem. On this basis, the article proposes recommendations to enhance communication effectiveness, thereby contributing to the consolidation of Vietnam's national image, the strengthening of its soft power, and the elevation of the country's standing in the context of global digital communication.*

Keywords: *national image; communication strategy; historical events; digital communication; soft power.*

1. Introduction

Journalism and communication have increasingly become strategic instruments for constructing and disseminating a nation's image in the international arena, thereby shaping the perceptions, emotions, and attitudes of global audiences toward individual countries. In Vietnam, this orientation has been clearly institutionalized in Decision No. 173/QĐ-TTg, issued on 27 January 2026 by the Prime Minister, on the *Strategy for International Communication and Promotion of Vietnam's National Image for the 2026–2030 Period, with a Vision to 2045*. Within this framework, Vietnam is distinctly identified as a nation that is developed, humane, innovative, responsible, and trustworthy - an emblem of peace, stability,

national solidarity, and cooperative development in the region and globally. The strategy underscores the need to renew communication thinking by moving beyond one-way information dissemination, in which information is transmitted from institutions to audiences with limited interaction, toward multidimensional and audience-centered communication that fosters engagement, shapes perceptions, and contributes to the construction of Vietnam's national image, nation brand, and soft power. It prioritizes the cultivation of goodwill, while strengthening multidimensional and authentic communication to ensure content that is engaging and tailored to the characteristics of each target audience group.

In the promotion of national image, historically significant events function as particularly valuable "communication resources," helping connect the past with the present and shape national identity. However, in the context of digital communication and the profound transformation of the global media environment, the use of historical events can no longer remain limited to the mere reproduction of information; rather, it must be transformed into creative and compelling communication practices.

The year 2025 witnessed a dense concentration of Vietnam's major political and historical events, most notably the series of activities commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the South and National Reunification (A50), and the 80th anniversary of the August Revolution and National Day (A80). These two events were communicated extensively and effectively, making significant contributions to the international promotion of Vietnam's image.

Although numerous studies have addressed national image and the role of communication in nation branding, there remains a significant gap in systematically analyzing the mechanisms through which national image is communicated through historical events within Vietnam's digital media context. Existing scholarship has yet to adequately clarify the transition from short-term event-based communication models to long-term, ecosystem-oriented approaches to national image construction. In response to this research gap, the article pursues two main objectives: first, to establish the important role of historical factors and events in national image building; and second, to examine, analyze, and evaluate the achievements and lessons learned from representative communication activities, thereby proposing recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of promoting Vietnam's image in the coming period.

2. Research Methodology

To address the research objectives, the study combines several principal methods.

First, document analysis is employed to systematize the theoretical foundations of national image and the role of communication in national image construction, while also collecting communication performance reports related to the A50 and A80 campaigns. The study draws on national image theory to interpret the historical factors and events that are commonly positioned within a country's image. According to Kenneth E. Boulding, national image is closely associated with the accumulation of historical memory, in which a community's level of historical awareness and consciousness may influence the strength and durability of that image [2]. As he notes, "many stereotypes about nations are transmitted across generations; therefore, long-standing historical events continue to play a decisive role in shaping a country's image" (p. 4). Likewise, Simon Anholt argues that the image of a nation is formed through a complex combination of political, economic, cultural, and historical factors [4]. In journalism and communication studies, scholars have consistently affirmed the significant role of media in promoting national image. Media institutions play a central role in portraying countries to the world [5]. Public perceptions of nations and their leaders are shaped by major events and public responses to them, as well as by public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy efforts, and the wide range of national representations generated through mass media (Samoilenko, 2020, p. 5). [7]

Second, content analysis is used to collect and examine a systematic body of published materials, communication messages, and audience responses. The analysis focuses on frequency of occurrence, thematic patterns, interpretive frames, and symbolic elements employed in the communication of national image. The dataset was collected throughout 2025, a year marked by numerous major historical events in Vietnam.

Third, empirical observation is conducted to examine audience reactions, behaviors, and levels of participation throughout the commemorative events, both in physical settings and in online environments. This method provides an additional perspective on audience reception and the co-creation of content within the digital communication ecosystem.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Strengthening Vietnam's Interaction and Visibility in International Media

Within the framework of the A50 and A80 commemorative events, Vietnam's external communication efforts extended beyond merely increasing the volume

of information appearing in international media. More importantly, they gradually shifted toward actively shaping how Vietnam is *perceived* through strategically constructed framing processes. This reflects a transition from passive communication to strategic communication in the construction of national image.

During the commemorative ceremonies, the Press Center provided broadcast signals from Vietnam Television to major international news agencies, including Reuters, Agence France-Presse, and Associated Press. At the same time, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued press credentials to numerous journalists representing media organizations worldwide.

Table 1 presents the number of foreign media organizations and accredited international journalists involved in communication activities during A50 and A80.

Event	Number of foreign media organizations	Number of foreign press credentials issued
A50	58	169
A80	50	150

From the perspective of media visibility, these figures indicate that the events attracted dozens of international media organizations and hundreds of foreign correspondents, demonstrating the growing level of global media interest in Vietnam. However, the significance of this phenomenon lies not merely in its scale, but also in Vietnam's proactive efforts to establish favorable reporting conditions and facilitate access to information for major international news agencies. These measures strengthened the country's capacity for strategic communication and contributed to a more consistent projection of its national image.

More importantly, international media coverage of these events extended beyond pure factual reporting to present increasingly positive interpretations of Vietnam. The reports consistently emphasized three key themes: (1) historical depth and national identity; (2) developmental achievements and the capacity to organize large-scale events; and (3) the image of a modern, dynamic, and globally integrated nation.

A notable example is the exhibition "*80 Years of Independence – Freedom – Happiness*," which received extensive coverage across international media platforms. Reports highlighted that the Vietnam Exhibition Center in Hanoi attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors and offered vivid insights into Vietnamese history, culture, and national achievements. They emphasized the strong connection between the country's historical legacy and its contemporary

accomplishments, portraying the center as a symbol of a modern and globally integrated Vietnam. Several outlets also framed the exhibition as a contributor to Hanoi's rise as a leading MICE destination for business, cultural, and international networking opportunities, while simultaneously symbolizing Vietnam's long-term vision of integration and innovation. The repeated circulation of these themes across multiple international media platforms suggests that historical commemorative events have generated positive discourses about Vietnam within the global communication space.

The combination of political-diplomatic elements and communication strategies in event organization further expanded the international reach of Vietnam's national image. The participation of foreign delegations, including the Russian military parade contingent, combined with media cooperation initiatives and connections with global communication platforms, created a synergistic effect. As a result, Vietnam not only gained greater international visibility but also secured a more distinct and favorable position in the perceptions of global audiences.

That said, increased media visibility does not automatically translate into full control over how a national image is ultimately received by international audiences. In today's polycentric global communication environment, international media actors may still reconstruct messages according to their own editorial perspectives. Therefore, the challenge for Vietnam lies not only in expanding media reach, but also in strengthening its capacity to guide and sustain the consistency of national image across international discourses.

3.2. Leveraging "Vietnam Stories" from Historical Materials

One of the most prominent trends in the communication of the A50 and A80 commemorative events is the shift from a model of straightforward historical information transmission to a model of "nation storytelling," in which historical elements are reconfigured into symbolic and emotionally resonant narratives that appeal to contemporary domestic and international audiences. In the past, communication surrounding historical events primarily focused on reconstructing timelines, events, and key figures through a linear narrative approach that emphasized factual accuracy and comprehensiveness. However, in the digital communication environment, where audiences increasingly favor rapid and experience-oriented forms of information consumption, this approach has gradually revealed its limitations in capturing attention and achieving broad dissemination. As a result, the transformation of history into compelling "Vietnam stories" with engaging narrative structures has become an inevitable communicative requirement.

Communication products in 2025 clearly illustrate this trend. A representative example is *Nhan Dan*, which developed a series of panorama print supplements linked to major historical figures and landmark events, such as the special issue commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the South and National Reunification (30 April 2025), and the supplement marking the 135th anniversary of the birth of Ho Chi Minh (19 May 2025). This model was first initiated by *Nhan Dan* in 2024 and has since received international recognition through two prestigious awards from WAN-IFRA. Its *Dien Bien Phu Victory* panorama supplement won in the category of Best Product for Young Readers at the 2024 Sustainability and Print Innovation Awards held in Vienna, Austria. In addition, the newspaper's communication campaign on the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu received the Gold Award in the category of Best in Newspaper Marketing at the 2024 Asian Media Awards in Singapore, also organized by WAN-IFRA.



Figure 1: An article on WAN-IFRA featured *Nhan Dan*'s *Dien Bien Phu Victory* panorama supplement [10]

This mode of historical storytelling has also been recognized and amplified by global media outlets. A notable example is the article titled “*Vietnam’s Nhan Dan sparks Gen Z frenzy with panorama print edition*,” which was featured in the *Top Stories* section on the official website of WAN-IFRA on 6 February 2025. The international acknowledgment of this communication model indicates that Vietnam’s historical narratives are no longer confined to domestic commemorative discourse but are increasingly circulating within transnational media spaces as innovative forms of storytelling.

From an analytical perspective, this transition signifies more than a change in format; it reflects a deeper transformation in the logic of national image construction. Historical materials are no longer communicated solely as records of the past, but are strategically reimagined as emotionally engaging narrative assets capable of linking collective memory, contemporary identity, and future national aspirations. In this sense, “Vietnam stories” function as a symbolic resource that enhances the country’s attractiveness and soft power in the global communication environment.

In the field of cinema, in September 2025, *Red Rain* - a movie produced by the People’s Army Cinema that reconstructs the story of the fierce battle at the Battle of Quang Tri Citadel in 1972 - became the highest-grossing film in the history of Vietnamese cinema, while also being widely released across multiple international markets. As of 11 September, the film was listed by Box Office Mojo, one of the world’s leading box-office tracking platforms, at 68th place in the global box-office ranking for 2025. In the international box-office chart (excluding North America), Vietnam ranked fifth and was the only Southeast Asian market represented with revenue of USD 3.1 million (over VND 81 billion), driven by *Red Rain*’s earnings in the first week of September 2025. This performance demonstrates *Red Rain*’s capacity to translate historical memory through cinematic language by integrating emotional depth, production techniques, and an international distribution strategy. In doing so, the film significantly expanded the reach of Vietnam’s historical narratives while enhancing the international influence of the country’s image.

In the contemporary context, the nation storytelling model is no longer limited to traditional communication actors but has expanded to include a broader range of participants. Content produced by domestic and international creators contributes to the reconstruction and circulation of ‘Vietnam stories.’ Emerging storytelling formats, such as short videos, animation, and podcasts, further expand their reach and influence in shaping Vietnam’s national image. This transition also presents certain challenges. The increasing emphasis

Rank ^	Release Group	Worldwide ↕	Domestic ↕	% ↕	Foreign ↕	% ↕
65	God Save the Tuche	\$23,288,475	-	-	\$23,288,475	100%
66	The Salt Path	\$21,580,304	-	-	\$21,580,304	100%
67	Madly	\$21,445,787	-	-	\$21,445,787	100%
68	Red Rain	\$20,947,401	-	-	\$20,947,401	100%
69	The Poet	\$20,714,790	-	-	\$20,714,790	100%
70	Batya 2. Ded	\$20,557,184	-	-	\$20,557,184	100%
71	1st Kiss	\$19,593,569	-	-	\$19,593,569	100%
72	KPop Demon Hunters	\$18,000,000	\$18,000,000	100%	-	-

Figure 2: *Red Rain* ranked 68th in the global box-office rankings for 2025 [11]

on emotion and creativity in storytelling may lead to the oversimplification of historical values if not grounded in accuracy and responsible narrative framing. In addition, the participation of multiple actors in the storytelling process requires effective coordination mechanisms to ensure the consistency of the national image.

3.3. Establishing a Comprehensive Digital Communication Ecosystem for Disseminating the National Image

In addition to the increased visibility in international media and the rise of nation storytelling based on historical materials, communication activities within the A50 and A80 frameworks also reveal the increasingly clear formation of a multi-platform digital communication ecosystem for disseminating Vietnam's national image. Media outlets and communication actors implemented synchronized content strategies across multiple platforms, ranging from online newspapers and news portals to social media, video-sharing platforms, and mobile applications. This has created an extensive content distribution network, enabling Vietnam's image to reach diverse domestic and international audience groups. This development represents not only an expansion of communication channels, but also a restructuring of the ways content is produced, distributed, and received in the context of digital transformation.

On digital news platforms, according to the Press Department's report, the A50 campaign generated a total of 32,877 news items and articles from 1 April to 3 May 2025, while the A80 campaign recorded 15,844 items from 1 August to 3 September 2025. Media outlets with particularly high levels of coverage included *Tuoi Tre*, *Tin Tuc*, *Nhan Dan*, *Tien Phong*, *VietnamPlus*, *VOV*, *Dan Tri*, *Sai Gon Giai Phong*, *Thanh Nien*, *Van Hoa*, and *Nguoi Lao Dong*, among others. The large volume of news output during these peak periods reflects not only communication intensity, but also the mobilization and coordination

capacity of Vietnam's journalism and communication system in generating broad information coverage.

On social media, numerous communication campaigns related to historical events were widely amplified across platforms by organizations, institutions, individuals, and key opinion leaders (KOLs). A representative example is the TikTok campaign titled "*I Love My Fatherland – 80 Years of a Glorious Vietnam*," which called on the community to co-create and disseminate meaningful, positive, and inspirational videos using the hashtags #ProudVietnam, #RangRoVietNam, and #TetDocLap. This user-generated content interpreted major historical milestones through creative storytelling, animation, and musical innovation. They also promoted stories of individual and collective contributions to the nation, showcased Vietnamese culture and heritage, and created artistic works celebrating the homeland. Notably, the campaign also encouraged the use of digital technologies, modern visual effects, and artificial intelligence (AI) to communicate historical and cultural content in innovative ways that resonate with younger audiences. The campaign generated substantial public engagement across online communities. By September 2025, approximately 600,000 videos had been tagged with the campaign hashtags, reaching nearly 1 billion views, close to 20 million likes, and 2 million shares.

The application of digital technologies such as AI, digital graphics, visual effects, and emerging content formats has significantly renewed the modes through which historical and cultural values are represented. The combination of traditional elements with modern technological tools has made historical content more vivid, accessible, and aligned with the preferences of younger generations, who are playing an increasingly important role in disseminating national image in online spaces.

However, the development of this digital communication ecosystem also presents considerable challenges. The fragmented and highly saturated nature of digital platforms makes content governance and message consistency increasingly difficult to maintain. At the same time, the risks of information noise, content distortion, or the excessive commercialization of historical values may undermine the accuracy and depth of the national image in the absence of appropriate guidance mechanisms.

3.4. Recommendations for Enhancing the Quality of Vietnam's National Image Communication Through Historical Events

Based on the above findings, it can be observed that Vietnam's national image communication through historical events has achieved positive

outcomes in terms of media coverage, dissemination, and the ability to attract the attention of both domestic and international audiences. However, in the context of intensifying competition over national image, particularly as countries increasingly advance nation branding strategies and strengthen their soft power - the achievements to date remain disproportionate to both Vietnam's potential and its developmental requirements. Moreover, the implementation of the *Strategy for International Communication and Promotion of Vietnam's National Image for the 2026–2030 Period, with a Vision to 2045* requires systematic adjustments aimed at shifting from event-based communication thinking toward a long-term, sustainable, and in-depth approach to national image construction. On this basis, the article proposes several recommendations.

First, communication should move from isolated event-based campaigns toward the construction of a continuous “national image ecosystem.”

At present, communication activities remain largely concentrated around peak periods associated with major events such as A50 and A80, creating short-lived “communication peaks” without sustained continuity in the intervening periods. This results in a national image that is strongly amplified in the short term but lacks durability and cognitive depth in the perceptions of international publics. It is therefore necessary to develop a long-term communication ecosystem in which historical events serve not merely as highlights, but also as “memory anchors” connected to continuous and cross-cutting streams of content. Such an ecosystem should be designed through the integration of traditional and digital media platforms, domestic and external communication, as well as state and non-state actors, thereby creating a continuous, coherent, and cumulative flow of national image over time.

Second, the nation storytelling model based on historical materials should be further developed through integration with digital technologies.

Representative cases such as Nhan Dan's panorama supplements and the film *Red Rain* clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of transforming history into experiential, emotionally resonant, and accessible communication products for modern audiences. These cases provide strong evidence of the shift from information-centered communication toward emotion- and experience-oriented communication. In the coming period, historical archives should be further digitized, and open-access data repositories should be established to support content creation. At the same time, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality and augmented reality (VR/AR), and big data should be applied to develop multi-platform storytelling formats.

More importantly, a systematic content strategy is required in which “Vietnam stories” are intentionally designed as symbolic narratives capable of adapting to diverse cultural contexts, thereby enhancing both attractiveness and global dissemination potential.

Third, the role of social media and user-generated content should be strengthened in the dissemination of national image.

Recent social media campaigns demonstrate that audiences are playing an increasingly active role in the co-construction and circulation of national image. User-generated content not only expands the scope of outreach but also enhances the authenticity and relatability of the national image. In this context, it is necessary to promote an open communication space in which state communication actors assume the role of strategic guidance and content leadership. High-diffusion campaigns using hashtags, short videos, podcasts, and other emerging content formats should be deployed strategically, while also effectively collaborating with KOLs, content creators, and overseas Vietnamese communities to establish a multidirectional and transnational dissemination network.

Fourth, greater professionalism and strategic depth should be introduced into international media cooperation.

The large number of international media organizations participating in major commemorative events is a positive signal of Vietnam’s growing appeal in the global communication arena. However, to improve long-term effectiveness, cooperation should evolve from event-specific collaboration into strategic partnerships with clear planning and orientation. Vietnam should build sustained partnerships with major news agencies, global communication platforms, and reputable media institutions in order to increase access and influence. The proactive provision of high-quality, multilingual content tailored to the cultural characteristics and reception habits of different countries and regions is a key factor in improving the framing effectiveness of national image. In addition, it is essential to strengthen the training of professional international communication personnel capable of operating effectively in multicultural and multi-platform environments.

Fifth, the system of indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of national image communication should be further refined.

At present, communication effectiveness is still assessed primarily through quantitative indicators such as the number of articles, views, and levels of interaction. Although the national communication strategy has established goals related to enhancing Vietnam’s international standing and soft power, the

measurement of core dimensions of national image, such as favorability, trust, and public perception among international audiences, has yet to be implemented in a comprehensive and systematic manner. It is therefore necessary to develop an integrated evaluation framework that combines quantitative and qualitative indicators while also benchmarking against international indices such as the Global Soft Power Index and the Nation Brands Index. Establishing such a measurement system will not only enable more accurate assessment of communication effectiveness, but also provide an important basis for strategic adjustment, resource optimization, and the enhancement of Vietnam's long-term competitiveness in national image construction.

4. Conclusion

Journalism and communication play a crucial role in constructing and disseminating a country's image in the international arena amid globalization and intensifying competition over national image. Through an analysis of communication activities surrounding the representative historical events of 2025, particularly A50 and A80, this article demonstrates that Vietnam has begun to develop a national image communication model that integrates journalism, multi-platform communication, and the participation of both domestic and international audiences.

The findings identify three prominent trends:

- (1) the increasing visibility of Vietnam in international media through cooperation and the proactive provision of content;
- (2) the transition from the transmission of historical information to creative and emotionally resonant historical storytelling;
- (3) the emergence of a digital communication ecosystem in which audiences play an increasingly important role in the co-creation and dissemination of national image.

These trends reflect a broader transformation from a one-way communication model toward a multidimensional, interactive, and experience-oriented communication approach. Achieving Vietnam's goal of becoming a nation with a strong brand and substantial soft power by 2045 requires continued renewal of communication thinking and practices in a more strategic, professional, and sustainable direction. In this process, historical events should no longer be regarded merely as commemorative occasions but should be strategically leveraged as distinctive communication resources that contribute to shaping Vietnam's identity and position in the perceptions of the international community./.

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