Mass Communication Activities from a Professional Perspective

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Abstract: *In Vietnam, mass media is usually approached as a communication activity. This article introduces other approaches to mass communication, in which the author focuses on researching the socio-professional perspective. Besides identifying requirements for mass media human resources, the article also gives brief introductions to different occupations in the field of mass communication.*

Keywords: *mass communication; occupation; human resources; content creation; organization of production.*

1. Mass Communication Concepts

There are three main groups in communication: interpersonal communication, mass communication and social media. The term mass communication or mass media was first used in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter for Education, Science and Culture – UNESCO – in 1946.

Perceiving mass communication as a communication activity forms the largest group. In Vietnam, this group is approached from different points of view such as communication, technical means, recipients, the nature of mass communication, etc.

From the perspective of communication, Tạ Ngọc Tấn believes that "mass communication is an activity of a broad social communication, using mass media."[(1)] According to this view, mass communication is essentially "a new expression of communication activities in society. When it comes to mass communication, it first refers to the subjects participating in broad social groups and communities, that is, mass media meets and satisfies the communication needs of the common people and produces effective results on a large social scale." According to Mai Quỳnh Nam[(2)], mass communication and interpersonal communication both fall under the influence of mass media. Mass communication is communication through technical media that takes place vertically from the source of information to the public. Feedback is slow to form because mass communication is indirect communication. Horizontal interpersonal communication also participates in the effective replication of messages received by the public from the mass communication system. According to Sibermann (1981), mass communication is the transmission of large and identical information to people and groups of people in a society, based on the technique of collective propaganda.

From the perspective of communication channels, the authors Nguyễn Văn Dũng and Đỗ Thị Thu Hằng[(3)] assert that, "mass media can be understood as a

system of communication means directed to influence the majority of the public, composed of people in every region, country, or the international community to inform, share, entice, educate, persuade and organize a large number of people to participate in solving economic, cultural and social issues that have been occurring." Another definition put forth by Phạm Thành Hýng is, "mass communication is an activity of transmitting and receiving information with a large scale of social impact, simultaneously and with great communication efficiency"[4].

From its many aspects, mass communication is generally understood as a specific activity aimed at conveying mass information to mass target audiences through mass media to serve a stated purpose with a maximum level of communication efficiency. Some typical forms of mass communication include books, newspapers, advertisements, movies, video and audio tapes, as well as forms of communication on the internet. In mass communication, the press, including print press, radio, television, and online newspapers occupies a central position and plays a fundamental role, dominating the strength, nature and movement of mass media.

From this perspective, mass communication includes the following elements: 1) mass media providers including media companies, as well as mass media agencies and organizations; 2) mass media recipients, i.e. the public; 3) targeted communication objectives and mass communication activities, including content, form, and a method of mass communication.

Mass communication as a media industry is understood as an industry with high intellectual and entertainment properties that introduces products, goods, services, commercial businesses and aims to create great benefits for the recipients of the communication.

The mass media industry is associated with the development of science and technology. Along with the current explosion of information and communication technology, mass communication in the digital era creates a strong influence on socio-economic life in both level and scale. The strong development of the mass media industry sets the stage for the sublimation of the entertainment industry, especially movies and music. The world has witnessed the formation of large entertainment markets and cultural waves such as those found in the United States, Europe, Korea and elsewhere. According to UNESCO and UNCTAD (United Nations Commission on Trade and Development), the cultural industry contributes about 7% of total global GDP with 3% in developing countries. In Vietnam, the current development model of the press and media industry is considered "unprecedented in the world" [5].

From this perspective, mass communication includes managers, producers, mass media products, customers, and mass media markets.

Mass communication as a professional field is understood as a profession according to its forte or to its assignment of activities. "A field of activity is considered a profession when it has a role in society, a social background, provides

service to the society, contains different types of training and has professional principles and behaviors which are accepted by society"[6]. Mass media basically meets the above requirements. Press and communication institutions have created a field of industry that employs thousands of professional workers with specific qualifications, a tight organizational structure and operations directed toward specialization. At the core of mass media are human resources with job positions of management, administration, content creation, organization of producing mass media products, implementation of development and application activities, application of mass media at press agencies, media organizations and enterprises, as well as domestic and international media training institutions. Mass media human resources are the team that builds a brand with a critical role in revenue generation of the media subject.

According to this perspective, mass communication includes employers, managers, training institutions, staff and specialists, and other jobs related to the field.

2. Requirements for Mass Media Human Resources

Job and career descriptions applied in the field of mass communication are very diverse.

– *Management and administration* of all fields in their activities, organization and mass communication channels.

– *Creating mass media content* including copywriting, script writing, creation of works, photography, videography, design of mass media products.

– *Mass media production* including traditional media product lines and multi-platform media products such as brand identity packages, promotional media products, videos, music videos, and movies.

– *Developing and applying mass media products* including researching, developing and applying mass communication channels. Organizing and operating business activities while developing copyright processes. Creating public media program formats, business marketing and image management. Supervising brand management, reputation management, crisis management for agencies, organizations and individuals. Continuously developing cooperation projects and communication links.

While the existing press and media agencies are adapting and moving toward mastering the digital transformation process with a vision toward the digital economy, the human resources in the field of mass communication are making great efforts in self-transformation in terms of thinking, method, and multi-skill training. The trend of integrated communication requires agencies, organizations and businesses to have human capital assets that possess professional capabilities. Employers always value employees who are able to multitask. A media person can act both as an idea and content creator, and also be a person who directly implements those ideas, producing images, audio, viral clips and advertising television commercials (TVCs).

The basic competencies for people entering this field must include the ability to integrate communication knowledge, skills and qualities displaying knowledge of the various types and understanding the proper channels for the use of mass communication. They must have skills in creating content and organizing the production of mass media products while applying theories and skills of mass communication in organizing communication programs and projects. Their skill set must include developing and applying mass communication products, channels and types in all fields of socio-economic development, culture, art, technology, education, and entertainment.

3. Some Professional Activities in the Field of Mass Communication

We introduce a number of specific career paths in the field of mass communication which are trending today.

– Creators

This is a career of creative activity for popular mass media products such as newspapers, books, portals, and websites. This type of creativity requires a lot of initiative in:

1) Forming topics, ideas and messages
2) Anticipating suitable media genres, objects and transmission channels
3) Develop outlines and scripts
4) Collecting and verifying information and materials for the work
5) Producing the work
6) Posting and following feedback

People working in this path are usually journalists, writers and media specialists who have mastered the skills of creating the content and form of works which are suitable for the public as well as specific types and genres. For example, at Zing News journalists write in the long-form genre with a magazine-style presentation, combined with digital media (quotes, numbers, photos, videos with tables, charts, and maps) and with no limitation for special topics. However, to apply long-form effectively, articles need to meet some specific criteria of the newspaper such as: Minimum length of 1,500 words but optimally 2,500 - 3,000 words. Content must have decorative elements and aspects such as statistics and high quality photos and videos. The entire article must tell a unified story about a personality, an event, or problem-synthesis. The content must prioritize creating an emotional and engaging article.

– Scriptwriters

Scriptwriters mainly work for audio-visual products such as movies, music videos and advertisements. Writing scripts usually includes the following content: 1) the overall script of the movie, program or music video; 2) a detailed script for each segment, scene, or stage production; an emcee's (MC) words, each character's words, and supporting information. This is a form of content creation that requires logical thinking, agility, and flexibility in script structure as well as

good judgment in arising situations. In particular, the creativity is a key factor determining the success of a professional scriptwriter. With different subjects and media types, scriptwriters must meet common standards and also meet their own style, characteristics and requirements.

– Designers

Designing professional media products is a career that requires doing a part or all of the work, including ideas, content, image design, as well as infographics to serve the media campaign activities. Branded product design is often used in advertising in order to increase brand recognition with other companies and organizations. It expands the visibility of their brand and affirms their own prestige and identity. This is a basic but difficult form of content creation that requires strong strategic thinking skills. Brand design usually includes the following content: naming; logo design; slogans and tag-lines; a complete set of brand identity; and generating marketing documentation.

For example, in 2020, the designer for Viettel succeeded in changing the logo and shortening the company's slogan "Say It Your Way" to "Your Way" while introducing a new logo. The goal was to express its more open conception and adaption of Industry 4.0 technology with a new strategy and vision. Viettel's new logo and slogan bring forward the core value of a digital ecosystem to fully serve the needs of customers. It does this by addressing six key areas to create a digital society including: 1) digital infrastructure; 2) digital solutions; 3) digital content; 4) digital finance; 5) cybersecurity, and 6) high-tech industrial production research.

– Cameramen and editors

With the recent popularity of smart electronic devices, the Industry 4.0 revolution has made videos and short clips more attractive than older types due to their extended capacity to transmit information. Video allows for concise storytelling but also allows conveying a powerful, memorable message which can easily be measured for effectiveness. The video marketing trend is a new direction in the field of communication and advertising. Therefore, filming and editing videos is one of the hot jobs today.

– Communication programs, campaigns and projects managers

This is the activity of building, implementing and developing a series of communication activities, to convey the media message of an entity to the targeted public through different forms of communication. This job can be part of a non-profit program, a campaign, or a project of a State or government agency. Or it might be part of a social program, a campaign, or any kind of project such as smoking prevention, environmental protection, or programs, campaigns, or projects with business goals of organizations, enterprises, or individuals. The implementation and development of communication programs, campaigns, and projects will achieve the goals of measuring the breadth and the depth of the

communication campaign. Key activities include making content, synchronized scheduling and resource management.

– Brand and image managers

Brand and image management concerns the activity of building, managing and dealing with crises related to an organization's brand or the image of famous personalities it employees. This is the process of building and consolidating a brand, its prestige and forming a robust image within its communication channels. The goal is to incorporate the interests and beliefs of the public within the brand and image. Requirements for brand and image management activities include:

– Brand and image research
– Brand and image building
– Brand and image communication
– Handling crisis communication

Currently, almost all famous organizations or individuals have professional organizations, units and teams in charge of brand and image management. For example, a manager for a famous celebrity will have to capture all the information and images of the celebrity currently in the mass media, determine the frequency for presenting the information, and drive toward a continuous presentation on channels with high levels of visibility. They need to focus on creating a positive appearance and counter negative appearances. If any bad information appears, the manager must immediately verify the source, contact the press, and handle the crisis.

– Mass Communication Researchers

People working in this field do not directly create media products, but rather observe social phenomena affected by the media industry and look for relevant documents appropriate to each industry in order to find all related theory and research. Then, media researchers will apply to the community and society to find suggestions, solutions, recommendations and conclusions for their research. The study of mass communication covers many different aspects:

1) Theoretical research on messages, mechanisms, roles, functions, and development trends of mass communication.

2) Experimental research on issues of mass communication, the effectiveness and impact of mass communication, mass communication management.

3) Researching the mass media public.

4) Researching content creation activities and organizing mass media production.

5) Mass media market research.

6) Research on mass communication application activities.

– Mass communication trainings and services

Mass communication services are activities of consulting, connecting, building and implementing forms of mass communication services: developing

applications, legal consulting services, brand development consulting services, organizing and communicating events, promoting movies and fashion products, such as developing Over-The-Top (OTT) services in mass communication. Along with the popularity of mobile devices, more and more people are choosing entertainment through applications on phones and tablets instead of sitting in front of a TV screen. Low cost, a high level of utility, no data limit by carrier or device, and satisfaction of entertainment needs anytime and anywhere are among the strengths that have contributed to the creation of OTT applications on smartphones. The result is full content, from politics, culture, entertainment, to sports and movies.

Mass communication training means consulting, connecting, building and implementing forms of mass communication training at schools, centers, organizations, media enterprises and other organizations by individuals who are expert in mass communication. For example, on internet communication channels, there are many websites of organizations and businesses offering training in skills such as message design, graphic design, digital content creation and marketing skills./.

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