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Tác giả: Thi Truong Giang NGUYEN (Academy of Journalism and Communication)

The quantity and frequency of articles published in the three above-mentioned news sites

During the screening and selection of the investigative reporting regarding corruption from May 2016 to April 2018, Zing had a total of 936 pieces of news and articles, VnE had 495, and TN had 2,668. For the case of Trinh Xuan Thanh, Zing led the publication of 169 pieces of news and articles (18.1% of its respective total). VnE followed closely with 168 (33.9% of all its investigative articles), and TN had 129 (4.8% of its total of news and articles on corruption). Thus, despite having the highest number of articles on corruption, TN had the fewest articles on Trinh Xuan Thanh's case compared to VnE and Zing,. The three news sites have different frequencies of publication. This study analyzes the participation of the three news sites in the following three phases of the case:

Phase 1: Detection and clarification of signs of wrongdoing and corruption

Phase 2: Prosecution and trial process

Phase 3: Judgement and sentencing

The media kept a close watch on the case of Trinh Xuan Thanh

Phase 1 – Detection and clarification of signs of wrongdoing and corruption

The landmark case of Trinh Xuan Thanh began with information about a blue-plated Lexus spotted on the streets in the western region of Mekong Delta. This was posted in the news sites and culminated when Government authorities investigated and determined Trinh Xuan Thanh's implication of wrongdoing and ultimately took disciplinary actions against him.

Photos were captured and posted on social networks by residents at the end of May, 2016. The pictures showed a 5 billion VND Lexus 570 with a privileged blue public plate - 95A-0699. It proved to be owned by Trinh Xuan Thanh, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of Hau Giang Province. Those photos quickly attracted public attention; most of them agreed that the car was too luxurious to be used as a public car for an official at the provincial level. It was obviously wrong to use the government budget to buy such an expensive car. The news circulated quickly and gained coverage in dozens of reporting agencies from print and radio to television and the internet. Among these, there were Zing, VnE, and TN were not exceptions with articles titled, "A private Lexus had a privileged number plate in the southern province," (Zing.vn on May 31, 2016). "The Lexus car worth more than 5 billion dong of the Vice Chairman of Hau Giang Province had a privileged number plate," (VnExpress on June 1, 2016). Shortly after the articles were published, Trinh Xuan Thanh and leaders of Hau Giang Province explained that because the province budget could not afford to arrange a government car for Mr. Thanh, he had borrowed his friend's car. This was his explanation for using of the expensive vehicle. He also countered that the car was registered in Hanoi and he used it to travel and perform his duties. With the consent of the Provincial Party Committee and the People's Committee of Hau Giang Province, the Traffic Police Department (PC67) of the Hau Giang Public Security temporarily assigned a privileged registration plate to Mr. Thanh's car. However, on May 31, 2016, Mr. Thanh returned the privileged number plate 95A-0699 and replaced it with the private number plate 29A-790.93.

However, the media did not readily accept such an unsatisfactory explanation of Hau Giang's leaders, Trinh Xuan Thanh and his return of the license plate. Many news agencies joined the investigation to clarify the case and finally revealed many shocking stories about violations of the law and Trinh Xuan Thanh's notorious history of amassing substantial financial losses.

First, pursuant to legal regulations, the Vice Chairman of Hau Giang Province is not allowed to use a government car for personal purposes.

Second, according to the provisions of the Road Traffic Law, guidance decrees, and the Circular 15/2014 of the Ministry of Public Security on vehicle registration, a car

that is certified for on-road use is issued only one numbered plate. In case the vehicle is resold, the vehicle user must register for a title transfer and a reissuance of the license plate. The fact that the Hau Giang Provincial Police had issued an additional license plate without following the purchase and sales procedures is a violation of the legal procedures for vehicle registration.

Third, there is no regulation by the Ministry of Public Security on granting privileged number plates to private vehicles. Temporarily granting a public plate to Thanh's car violated the law.

Fourth, from 2007 to 2013, Mr. Trinh Xuan Thanh worked as General Director of PetroVietnam Construction JSC (PVC) under the Vietnam National Oil and Gas Group (PetroVietnam), and ultimately became Chairman of the Board of Directors of PVC. During his tenure, PVC lost more than 3,262 billion VND.

Fifth, despite the substantial business loss, PVC was awarded the title of Hero of Labor in reform era of Vietnam in 2011, and Trinh Xuan Thanh was appointed Deputy Chief of the Ministry of Industry and Trade's (MOIT) office, and then Chief Representative of the Central Office of MOIT based in Da Nang in September 2013. Following this he was appointed Director and Head of MOIT's Enterprise Innovation Department, and finally Vice Chairman of Hau Giang Province.

The dramatic intervention of the media with dozens of articles from major news sites helped fuel public outrage toward Trinh Xuan Thanh's case. The intervention began with the article "Private car with privileged license plate and the massive 'legacy' of the Vice Chairman of Hau Giang" (TN, June 3, 2016) which was considered critical in raising public awareness of the big case. The article revealed data related to Trinh Xuân Thanh's mismanagement when he was the Chairman of PetroVietnam Construction Joint Stock Corporation (PVC). These transgressions included squandering of charter capital, investment capital, and revelations of PVC's loss when investing in subsidiaries and other associates. This extensive data was essential to authorities when they ultimately specified PVC's losses under Trinh Xuan Thanh's leadership.

On June 9, 2016, three days after the article on Thanhnien.vn was published, the Office of the Party Central Committee issued document No. 1200-CV/ VPTW to the relevant authorities notifying them of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's instruction of assigning the Central Inspection Committee to coordinate with the Central Committee for Internal Affairs, the Central Organization Committee, the Ministry of Public Security, the Party Personnel Committees of the Ministries of Industry and Trade, Finance, the State Audit, Hau Giang Party's Committee, and the Vietnam Oil and Gas Group to immediately examine, review, and report on the contents mentioned in the article on the Thanhnien.vn website.

Thanks to their continuous coverage of the case, news organisation sorganizations jointly created a push to the authorities to take serious and drastic action. This was accomplished by publishing dozens of online articles analyzing Trinh Xuan Thanh's offenses, including his violations of using a Government vehicle and his manipulation of the appointment process, as well as revealing the financial losses of PVC. The media and the public also expanded the discussion about Trinh Xuan Thanh's eligibility as a member of the National Assembly when he won by a landslide, accounting for 75% of the votes, in the provincial election of National Assembly deputies in 2016- 2021 with up to 75% of the votes in the province. Some articles on this topic included "What is wrong about the appointment of Trinh Xuan Thanh?" (Zing. vn, June 14, 2016) and "Intransparency in the appointment of Trinh Xuan Thanh" (VnExpress, July 12, 2016).

Through the use of diversified means, such as news stories, interviews, investigation, legal consultation with lawyers, collection of the opinions of National Assembly deputies, experts, managers, and former officials, the media provided the public with a multi-dimensional portrait of Trinh Xuan Thanh during his time as a public cadre, Party member, and National Assembly member. The media helped raise public outrage and put pressure on the Government to become seriously and drastically involved. In Phase 1 of Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, the three news organizations published a variety of valuable information, clarifying the mistakes of Trinh Xuan Thanh.

Phase 2: The prosecution and trial process. It started with a review of Trinh Xuan Thanh's case and suggested disciplinary measures until he was brought to the court of the first instance

From July 11, 2016 onward, news sites continued to update forthcoming information about disciplinary measures against Trinh Xuan Thanh. For example, "Considering the discipline to Trinh Xuan Thanh" (Zing.vn, July 11, 2016). On July 15, 2016, the National Election Council voted to reject Trinh Xuan Thanh of his membership of the 14th National Assembly. News sites kept a close watch on this event by publishing articles such as "Stripping of Trinh Xuan Thanh of his status as a deputy of the National Assembly," (Zing. vn, July 15, 2016), "Trinh Xuan Thanh were deprived of his membership of the National Assembly," (TN, July 15, 2016), and "Prosecuting agency eyes on the case of a nearly 3,300 billion VND loss at PVC," (VnExpress, August 23, 2016).

At the 6th meeting from September 6 to September 8, 2016, the Central Inspection Committee proposed a Secretariat disciplinary measure by expelling Trinh Xuan Thanh from the Vietnamese Communist Party. His serious violations of the law raised public outrage, in turn affecting the authority of the Party and the State. Zing.vn described the situation in an article titled, "Proposal to exclude Trinh Xuan Thanh from the Party," (Zing.vn, September 8, 2016). The Secretariat voted by secret ballot, and unanimously agreed to expel Trinh Xuan Thanh from the Party. followed by an article from Zing.vn, "Trinh Xuan Thanh has been expelled from the Party," (Zing.vn, September 9, 2016). On September 16, 2016, the police investigation agency prosecuted Trinh Xuan Thanh for intentionally violating the State's regulations on economic management, causing severe consequences according to Article 165 of the Penal Code. At this point, Trinh Xuan Thanh fled Vietnam. The Vietnam Public Security Ministry issued an international arrest warrant.

News sites continued to publish many articles on Trinh Xuan Thanh's escape, including "Internationally wanted Trinh Xuan Thanh," (Zing.vn, September 16, 2016), "The Public Security Ministry pursues Trinh Xuan Thanh," (Thanh Nien, September 16, 2016), and "Interpol issues an arrest warrant for Trinh Xuan Thanh," (VnExpress,

November 17, 2016). At that time, news sites also continued to follow the discussions on disciplining other individuals related to Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, with an example of an article titled as "Prosecuting Trinh Xuan Thanh for property embezzlement," (Thanh Nien, March 15, 2017). There were articles and news feeds on Trinh Xuan Thanh's return to the country to give himself up to the police, for example: "Trinh Xuan Thanh has given himself up after nearly a year of hiding" (Zing.vn, July 31, 2017), "Trinh Xuan Thanh gives himself up" (Thanh Nien, July 31, 2017), and "Trinh Xuan Thanh: 'I give myself up'" (VnExpress, August 3, 2017).

However, millions of Vietnamese people need the Government to address the root of the problem and to determine which organizations and individuals allowed Thanh to insinuate himself into his Government position in Vietnam. The media has followed the authorities closely during the investigation and handling of the case and quickly reported the results so that the public can understand and grasp the weighty details of the case. Simultaneously, the media conveyed the Party and State's decisive condemnation of the corruption and determination to withstand any pressure or intervention from any individual or organization.

On the other hand, the media also encouraged the investigation and persuaded the legal authorities to expeditiously handle and adjudicate the case. Moreover, the media also called for the State authorities to respect the people's right to access the inquiry and receive transparent information about the State's management, especially in the financial matters, of public property, the taxpayers' money, and the appointment process. From Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, the public has detected many problems arising in the current time. These include the other notorious, high profile matters involving corruption by several cadres and Party members. They include illegal lobbying and bribing for personal promotion, the appointment of unqualified cadres, and the role of the political system in general. All of these present challenges to the Party leadership.

Shortly after the story came to light, trials took place, and newsrooms publicized in detail the offenses on the trials. When the trial of the first instance took place on January 8, 2018, the media provided: detailed information on escorting Trinh Xuan Thanh and his accomplices to court, the identities of individuals standing with him in

front of the court, photos taken in the courtroom, and the indictments against Trinh Xuan Thanh and his accomplices. In addition, news sites also provided analysis of some of the extraordinary details of Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, such as a suitcase containing 14 billion VND, four fraud contracts that helped Trinh Xuan Thanh and his accomplices pocket 13 billion VND, and so on.

In Phase 2, newsrooms also provided in-depth commentary, directly or indirectly expressing their views on the violations committed by Trinh Xuan Thanh in the two severe economic crimes. For example, Thanh Nien wrote several articles including, "Right procedure can still lead to errors," by reporter Nguyen Thong on July 15, 2016, and "Farmers are the primary victims of the huge losses," by reporter Hanh Thien on September 27, 2016. Articles such as these have raised public awareness, while affirming and emphasizing the severe damage done to the people by this high-profile corruption case. Once again, the media brought pressure to bear on the authorities to handle the corruption thoroughly and aggressively.

In conclusion, Phase 2, with the advent of electronic news sites continued to present the details of the case to the public. Their diversified approaches in collecting and distributing the information have helped the public to fully visualize and closely follow the event.

Phase 3 – Judgement and sentencing

On January 22, 2018, more than ten days after the trial of first instance of the case began, the judge sentenced Trinh Xuan Thanh to a whole-life order for the crime of embezzlement at PVC. Zing.vn, VnExpress, and Thanh Nien immediately informed the public about the verdict by articles such as, "Dinh La Thang sentenced to 13 years in prison, Trinh Xuan Thanh sentenced to life in prison," (VnExpress, January 22, 2018), "The verdict of Dinh La Thang and Trinh Xuan Thanh" (Zing.vn, January 22, 2018), and "Trinh Xuan Thanh handed a whole life prison sentence," (Thanh Nien, January 22, 2018)

Besides reporting the news, the three news sites also published in-depth articles reflecting, analyzing, clarifying, and commenting on the sentence of Trinh Xuan Thanh. A typical headline was, "What did the lawyer say when Trinh Xuan Thanh was

sentenced to life in prison?" (Zing.vn, January 22, 2018). The story included opinions of Trịnh Xuân Thanh's two defense attorneys, Le Van Thiep and aNguyen Van Quynh, on their client's life sentence. It was these sources that provided new perspectives and information for readers. The article titled, "How does the embezzlement defendant benefit from the application of the new code?" (VnExpress, January 22, 2018), analyzed new issues in applying the Criminal Code of 2015 to the crime of embezzlement. The article also provided information relating to Trinh Xuan Thanh's sentence, discussing and comparing the law provisions concerning the crimes of embezzlement and corruption.

Two days after the end of the trial of the first instance relating to the violations at PVC, Trinh Xuan Thanh continued to appear in court to clarify his crime of embezzlement at PVP Land. On February 5 2018, the trial ended with a whole-life order given to Trinh Xuan Thanh for the crime of embezzlement. News sites continued to post articles about the trial's outcome and Trinh Xuan Thanh's second sentence.

After the second judgment was passed, news sites also posted articles clarifying Trinh Xuan Thanh's role in his violations at PVP Land. Zing.vn had an article titled, "The role of Trinh Xuan Thanh in the property embezzlement case at PVP Land" and VnExpress had "How Trinh Xuan Thanh embezzled 13 billion VND." These articles described and analyzed Trinh Xuan Thanh's violations, explained why Trinh Xuan Thanh served a life sentence and confirming that the order was justified in light of his violations and the subsequent losses he caused.

Conclusion

Those who followed Trinh Xuan Thanh's case should have been satisfied with the outcome. In an irreproachable pursuit in this case of corruption while enforcing the policy of "no forbidden zone" of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the State to remove the loopholes related to Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, the Central Inspection Committee reviewed, handled, and disciplined many senior Party members and Party organizations. The case was investigated and dispatched with a resolute attitude of intolerance for the corrupt behaviors. After two years of raising public outrage, the media helped make Trinh Xuan Thanh's case one of the most discussed stories in

many years at agencies and offices, in both rural and urban areas throughout Vietnam. Through this survey, it becomes apparent that the significant involvement and contributions of the media, the commitment of journalists, the strong voice of experts, and the resulting education of public opinion, gave authorities and the people a comprehensive view. The case also attracted the attention of elders, former generals, National Assembly deputies, experts, and intellectuals both domestically and internationally.

Throughout Trinh Xuan Thanh's case, the media played an integral role in uncovering, investigating, oversight, and publicizing negative and corrupt behaviors in Vietnam's society and the Government's anti-corruption measures and outcomes. The media encouraged people to fearlessly denounce such crimes, prompting the investigation of these denunciations and creating a public forum for discussion. The prompt attention to prosecuting Trinh Xuan Thanh's and other serious and complex cases has helped the public understand and create consensus in society. The anti-corruption efforts of the Party and State will not be successful without the full involvement of the media.

This survey has proven that timely reportage from the media can help people understand and creates public confidence in Vietnam's rule of law. Closely tracking the flow of information helps the media ensure the relevance of an investigation of this magnitude, while it also helps satisfy the public's need for information. It serves a great purpose to accompany Government prosecutors in fighting corruption and ultimately pressure on authorities to act decisively. The survey data also shows that when covered by the media, the topics that come with fighting corruption are diverse with multi-dimensional perspectives. Timely clarification helps the public to clearly and comprehensively envision the nature of each incident.

So when spotting a privileged license plate Lexus car on western province streets in the southern region, the news sites reported the information and exposed the fact that a provincial leader was driving the luxury car and was using a Government car for private purposes. It is a credit to their investigative skills that some articles determined the true origin of the Lexus. On reporting the trial of Trinh Xuan Thanh, the media reported the trial's outcome and focused on analyzing its details.

By analyzing this trial's expose, this survey's result demonstrates that there are still more articles of discovery, which prioritized updates of the current behavior of public officials. The Law on prevention of and fight against corruption affirms, "The State encourages news organisationsorganizations and reporters to report on corruption cases and anti-corruption activities." However, corruption detection and investigation by the media continue to run into difficulties, and the right to information of Vietnamese journalists is still inadequate. According to the Press Law of 2016, the authorities must provide information to the media upon request. Nevertheless, in reality, journalists still encounter many obstacles in data and information collection. The promulgation of specific procedures, policies, and regulations for the media in reporting corruption has not been timely and adequate. Thus, the media do not yet have a solid fulcrum to promote its role in anti-corruption. In this arduous and dangerous struggle, the media do not have enough avenues of recourse to seize the initiative in doing their work unencumbered. The media have not been effectively protected. The people are still reluctant to openly support and provide information to journalists.

Because corruption usually relates to interlaced interests and relationships, it remains a complex and arduous struggle for society. However, it is inevitably for the good of the public to improve anti-corruption measures. However, in addition to an individual's effort and the involvement of the media, the process of building an ethical society requires a strong political will. In a meeting with voters in the Ba Dinh and Hoan Kiem Districts on August 6, 2016, Secretary General and President Nguyen Phu Trong emphasized, "Voters say that they hope the General Secretary continues to tap the struggle vigorously, but the General Secretary alone is not enough, the entire people and the whole system must carry the struggle out together."

Under the close direction of the Party, the gravitas of the Government, as well as the participation of the entire government legal apparatus, with the oversight and supervision of political, social, and professional organizations, the close watch of news organisationsorganizations, the attention of the people all over the country, Trinh Xuan Thanh's landmark case was thoroughly investigated and litigated. All those found in violation of the law paid the price. Thus, it has been demonstrated that

the journalists' fight against corruption will probably never end.

Tài liệu tham khảo

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