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Social media

The Oxford Dictionary defines "media" as "the main means of communication (radio-television, publishing and the Internet)" (1) "Media" is often used to refer to traditional means of communication such as radio, television, and print newspapers. "Social" is "related to human society or organizations", (2) which is a concept regarding the activity of many people. "Social media" are "websites and apps that allow users to create and share content or engage in social connections", (3) meaning that they are related to modern forms of social communication such as social networking sites.

"Social media" is a broad term covering a wide range of websites. These sites' common characteristic is that the public can interact and converse with the sites' owners and audiences. Some websites report news and "interact" with the audiences at the same time. Interactions can be as simple as asking the audiences for comments, doing a multiple-choice survey, or complicated ones like asking the audiences to join an online game with others or discuss a social issue. Social media sites are divided into groups such as social bookmarking (Del.icio. us, Blinklist, Simpy); social news (Digg, Propeller, Reddit); social networking (Facebook, Hi5, Last.FM); social photo and video sharing (YouTube, Flickr); encyclopedia (Wikis) (Wikipedia, Wikia). These social networking sites have different ways for the audiences to interact and talk to the websites' creators of the websites or other visitors.

In fact, any website that invites the audiences to communicate, discuss with them or their visitors fits within the definition of social media. If the information was previously exclusive to the mainstream media, now social media allows netizens to create their

own channels. Those channels of information can be created and operated by an individual (blog, Twitter), or run by a collective (Wikipedia). Today, social media is growing strongly. In Denmark, people consider social media the most reliable channel of information while in France, about one-third of the population aged 18 to 24 trust information posted on social media.

Social media supporting the press

Social media helps journalists search, verify sources, get to know people who need to be interviewed, and contact them. This is the advantage of social networking sites in media activities. Not only can they track unexpected events, but they can also interact with netizens in social media, thereby capturing the sources of information.

This interaction is displayed in listening to comments by the audiences and motivating the audiences to participate in the process of producing and transmitting the information. Currently, the audiences can make immediate comments on press works, events and related figures in the press works as they read, watch, listen to the news online, and have the devices to comment on the articles. The feedback from the audiences enables newsrooms and journalists to assess part of the papers' appeal. In many cases, audiences' comments help journalists expand their topics and perspectives, publish more profound editorials, and "expose" hot issues of society. In the 2018 National High School Exam, after the Ministry of Education and Training declared the test results, a group of exam preparation teachers in Hanoi saw an anomaly in the results based on transcript statistics and other available information from local students. From such ground, this group of teachers raised the issue on Facebook and gained the attention of the press. After that, many newspapers got involved. The Ministry of Education and Training inspected the results and found "loopholes" of exam cheating in Ha Giang province and misdeeds in some other provinces and cities.

The press takes advantage of the agility of social networks and the audiences' habit of using social networks to deliver news, helping the audiences capture information more quickly. Press agencies can use social networks to communicate directly with

the audiences, making the interaction not only limited to responding to information, but also going deeper into exchanging emotions, messages, and opinions. That interaction helps the audiences sympathize with the journalists, boosting the friendliness of the press agencies. As a result, the audiences directly and actively consume media products of the press agencies, and at the same time actively participate in the production and transmission of informational content.

Besides promoting interactions between journalists and readers, social networks are also a channel for exchanging information between and among journalists. Social media contributes to the dissemination of information by the press and enriches the news source of the press. Except for the junk information and low-value information, social networks provide much helpful information with sources or solid bases, new and hot information, and topics from different perspectives of the audiences to support the work creation process. Social media also facilitates reporters to contact insiders or people with information. When a witness or source broadcasts a message or uses the GPS function of a cell phone to mark their current location, reporters can quickly approach them to conduct an interview. If they encounter complicated professional problems in the course of their work, reporters can also post them on social networks or contact experts through social networks to seek help.

However, most information on social networks is subjective, so plenty of innocuous information is posted online, confusing the public and irritating its followers. In journalistic activities, many journalists will become workshy. They are not willing to go into the field but instead sitting at home surfing the web for information on forums and turning unverified information online into click bait articles. Therefore, reporters need to screen, select valuable sources, and conduct verification, so information exploited on social networks is valuable for the press.

The change in the audiences' need of obtaining information

The audiences' need to obtain information through social networks increases day by day. The number of visitors to news websites has soared along with the increasing number of Internet users and news transmission devices. According to the report of

the We Are Social in 2018, the number of social network users in Vietnam reached about 55 million people (57% of the population), of which the number of people using social networks on mobile phones was 50 million. The average time Vietnamese people spend using the Internet and social networks daily is about 7 hours and 2.5 hours, respectively. Facebook and YouTube are the most used social media, accounting for 61% and 59% of users respectively.(4)

According to the Department of Telecommunications (Ministry of Information and Communications), the percentage of Internet users in Vietnam has reached 53%. Vietnam ranks 16th in the top 20 countries with the highest number of Internet users in Asia, and most Internet users are young people, accounting for more than 50% of the total population. In the statistics table of leading countries based on Facebook audience size, Vietnam ranks 7th with a total of 64 million monthly users.(5)

The development of science and technology with the trend of digitization is irreversible in the development of journalism and media, bringing a substantial impact on the audiences. New media technologies help build and supplement content from sources provided by the audiences. The conveniences of new media have contributed to creating new audiences with ever-increasing demands. It is a gradual shift to a cross-platform communication method; converged media with the conglomerate of different types of journalism supported by digital technology. The rise of social networks continues to create itself a competitive edge against traditional newspapers.

The audiences participate more actively and positively in social decisions. Through mass media, the audiences express their thoughts and attitudes and propose ideas and recommendations to the authorities to decide and implementing policies for economic, political, cultural and social development. In fact, several policies promulgated by the State have received much criticism from the public and have been adjusted accordingly.

For example, when it was proposed to tax properties, including houses and cars, the Ministry of Finance held a press conference and published the information widely. In return, they received many comments and feedback from people from all walks of life

through the press and social media channels. This is a new and effective way of communication. The process of making the Property Law has been discussed and commented on actively by the people. Thanks to that, when enacted, the policy was accepted and supported by the people. In contrast, policies that were not well communicated to all strata of the population for them to pay attention and feedback through public comments from the very beginning often received little consensus from the society.

Then there were arbitrary or capricious proposed regulations in the field of education such as: "Students majoring in Education will be expelled from school if they provide sexual services for the fourth time"; Specific fines are prescribed for teachers when there are acts of violence against students... The public expressed their opinions and aspirations through the media, especially social networks. The lawmakers read and acknowledged their comments, nullifying the proposed regulations. The public is independent in receiving information. The development of modern communication devices such as computers, smartphones, etc., together with different working conditions, helps groups of the public find their ways of receiving information at any time that suits them best, such as in leisure time, at break time, when traveling in cars, and on planes,... Independence in the public's receiving information is increasing. Gone are the days when people gathered to listen to a radio program through the public loudspeaker system, gathered at someone's home to watch a television program, or gathered in groups to read a newspaper. Today, each individual can stay at a convenient place for them such as their home, office, car, etc. watching television, reading online newspapers, listening to the radio as they wish. Even each family member has a different way of accessing information simultaneously, thanks to the increasing number of electronic media in each household. The audiences receive information the way they want and whenever they want.

The increasingly diverse and selective need to receive information will impact the public's thinking and behavior and is a direct factor in determining the content and level of information acquisition of the public. People are more and more educated, and through the social media environment, they become proficient in interacting and debating with media subjects and participants. Therefore, they can be completely

independent in choosing information according to the content they need and their time.

When exposed to information, the "high-tech" audiences often integrate multimedia elements, use new media, interact with the press, and want to use direct methods. More and more radio and television programs are broadcast live. Online categories on online newspapers are increasingly attractive, meeting the audiences' demand for quick and timely information acquisition and discussion. The new mass media system has a tangible and direct impact on the modern public. It is the effective combination and the rapid and synchronous development of all types of journalism, creating a unified whole with synergy in providing a large amount of information to the public quickly and accurately.

The achievements of the information technology revolution and the Internet have created a global information explosion. The Internet makes the "ecological environment" of traditional media outlets change drastically. The use of social media helps promote the images, names, and quality information to billions of people in the online community. This means creating richness and diversity of information for members. The effects of social media can open up a diverse and multidimensional information environment that is convenient for the public to spread.

Tài liệu tham khảo

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